



H. R. Haldeman Diaries Collection, January 18, 1969 – April 30, 1973

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Thursday, April 26.

Another all day shot on the Watergate. The President had me in at 9:00 for an hour and a half. Said we've got to be sure that we go to the grand jury first, not to the Senate committee, and that we should request an opportunity to see the committee as soon as we're through with the grand jury. This arises because the Committee counsel has notified Len Garment that they want us up there next week. He said on Segretti, that Petersen told him that he apparently had something to do with the Jackson thing on Muskie (that's the sex letter), and also that they're questioning whether he did the Canuck letter.

He wants to be sure Buchanan is preparing a counterattack on their campaign tactics and get ready to hit them. Said I should tell Ehrlichman that they may call Dean out to the Ellsberg trial and he'll have to reveal the Hunt operation on that psychiatrist office break-in. Says Ehrlichman and I should put together, for Ziegler to put out, the Presidential initiatives within the staff to get this out. Says that I should be prepared before the Ervin Committee to defend the White House and the campaign, and defend the campaign itself. And that Ehrlichman has to get out the Nixon record on the Watergate, and why his effort to try and get the record out. He agrees with the recommendation that we have a staff meeting and should shoot for it for Monday.

On the tapes, he says that he's given me the directive that the tapes are only made for national security information. All other stuff will not be transcribed. The question that he has is, did the President at that time order Dean to do anything? And the answer is, no. Regarding clemency, he said the matter was discussed. There was talk about pre-Christmas, but we couldn't even consider it until '74. The President may have called Dean. The question about what's been done on that. But he's trying to find out how deep this ran. The question is why the President didn't go right to the AG with this information. The reason, of course, was he was running an investigation and that this was not related to the Watergate, in any event.

Raised the question of when McCord's hush money story was to be put out. Says Ehrlichman and I have to develop a game plan on how we handle Dean. The question is how Dean will be most



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vindictive—as a witness with immunity or as a defendant. Also the question of when did Dean's attorneys go to the US Attorney and when did he get an attorney? In no way can Dean now do any more to Ehrlichman and me than he is. So Ehrlichman's theory of firing Dean has to be examined. The question of whether it unnecessarily gives Dean a motive to go wild, and that it's no problem against Haldeman and Ehrlichman, because he already is, but the question is against the President, and we have to look hard at that. So we can't fire him and put the blame on him. That would justify Haldeman and Ehrlichman, but it wouldn't help except to discredit Dean, which, of course, would be valuable, but not to the President. We can't give him immunity and let him blackmail, but the question is how to deal with him.

Dean apparently was lobbing threats at Petersen. Dean told the President that when he talked to him on Easter that he may want to see the President before his pleading. Petersen's told the President not to see him. The only purpose of bringing Dean in to see the President, which he still thinks maybe he should do, is the human factor, which he says you, oddly enough, understand better than Ehrlichman. Dean says that he expresses the greatest respect and affection for the President and maybe it would do some good to see him. Petersen doesn't see Moore as a defendant. Also, he doesn't see Kalmbach as a defendant, except possibly on the money stuff. Moore was very close to Dean, how about having him talk with Dean and see what he has in mind. I didn't think that was too good an idea, but the President wanted at least to have it thought about.

John and I met with the lawyers from 10:30 to about 1:30. Wilson said that Hersh, of the *New York Times*, called him this morning, just before he came over, and said that first, the press has investigated Wilson thoroughly and he's clean. Second, and Wilson thought he was giving notice on this, probably that Mitchell in an off-the-record statement, which Hersh heard with his own ears, said that Haldeman and Mitchell engineered the cover-up. This was an off-the-record statement yesterday. And his third point was that Charlie Rhine is coming into the White House to clean it up. Wilson also said he had a call from Strachan's lawyer, mainly he wanted to correct the point that was in the Jack Anderson column, that Strachan did not say to the grand jury that I



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directed the dollars be given to LaRue, I directed they be given to the Committee. Also they reported to us that the President told them, yesterday, about the fact that Dean told him of the blackmail threat and that surprised them substantially.

I then spent considerable time listening to the tape, and then at 4:00 went over to the EOB, reviewed the tape findings with the President, reviewed my files through the whole March 20-28 period, and we had a general discussion of Watergate. The President called Kleindienst to get a report on the Ellsberg break-in deal. And Kleindienst had no report.

Then the President called Ehrlichman to tell him that, and Ehrlichman reported to him that the *New York Times* has the Pat Gray story. That is, that Gray had destroyed the evidence out of Hunt's safe. So the President told Ehrlichman to come over to the EOB. Then the President called Kleindienst regarding Gray and said, don't you feel under these circumstances Gray has to resign. And also told him to find out what Petersen thinks we should do about it. The President says I want the whole thing out. If these things have happened, I as President have to get them out. It's my responsibility. The President then called Petersen regarding his reaction to the Gray situation in the *New York Times*. Then he said he's a needless casualty in doing a dumb thing. He asked him what Gray's line is regarding why, and apparently he will say that he had explicit confidence in Ehrlichman and Dean. The President said that won't wash, they didn't tell him to destroy it. He will say he was told that the papers should be destroyed. The President asked Petersen what his view is as to what Ziegler should say. And Petersen told him that Gray now says, I was told to destroy them. The question is, does Dean corroborate Gray's story. He told Kleindienst and Petersen to meet with Gray and that probably there should be no statement tonight. The problem is if Gray leaves, Felt becomes acting Director, and we would have to make that move in the morning. We should just say we're investigating it, and we don't even have Dean under oath yet. So we don't know about this.

He asked Petersen, what about the meeting with Dean, he should get that done with. He said you've got to decide the Dean thing, but don't be concerned about a trump card. There's no



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blackmail here. Magruder's and Dean's stories vary. But we want-- they want Dean to plead and then they'll have a case. They're still short on both Ehrlichman and Haldeman. The President is not trying to run the case, he says, but you have to wrestle with the Dean problem, not just Ehrlichman and Haldeman, and the President can't move on Dean without jeopardizing the prosecution, so I'll wait for you. But Dean's decision should be made soon. Don't be concerned regarding blackmailing anybody. Not the President, not the President's men, and not you. Don't let him get any club on you. Dean now has about as much credibility as Magruder, which is not very much.

By this time, it's 6:20, and the President calls Kleindienst and says there's a story to the effect that Gray came to Ehrlichman's office and recommended or received documents and was told by Ehrlichman or Dean to destroy them, and that that's not true. What happened is that he was told they were not Watergate, they were political, and he must not say something that's not true. He's in a bad enough situation already. Dean apparently says there was discussion regarding destroying them, but it was not done. It's bad enough for the Director to say he destroyed them, but if he says he was ordered to, it would be terrible. By then Ziegler's in, and the President told Ziegler to call Dean and see what he's going to say on it. And the President's view is that Gray has to resign tomorrow. The problem is who do you move in as acting director? Ziegler left to make the Dean call, came back in and said he couldn't reach Dean, and a little later, the President told him not to try. Ehrlichman suggested Ambrose as acting FBI director and the President suggested Ruckelshaus. In this process, the President picked up the fact that Magruder is ready to plead, but they need Dean, too, and they're trying to get Dean to plead. So they're still talking to Dean's lawyers, and he guesses Dean lobs that stuff in to increase his bargaining power on the plea. There's not going to be any blackmail, though. We've crossed that bridge. The question is whether this changes our situation regarding a leave of absence in view of the barrage of innuendoes, especially the kind of thing to expect from Dean. By this time, Ehrlichman's out.



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[Begin tape reel AC-34(B)]

Meeting in the President's office this evening. Ehrlichman's left the meeting, and the President gets into the discussion of whether this changes our situation regarding the leave of absence, in view of the barrage of innuendo and the kind of thing we have to now expect from Dean. He says on a leave, we'd put out a lawyer's statement that there's no criminal liability. However, because of the charges made, the leaks in the grand jury, the stories in the press and so on, my ability to conduct my responsibilities has been seriously impaired. The only course is for me to take a leave until I am completely cleared of any wrong-doing. That it would be inconsistent with the high standards of integrity that you have insisted on in the White House. I believe under the circumstances, for proper functioning, you should appoint a replacement, so on.

At that point, the President stopped and called Petersen. Said he had checked his notes, and so on, and that Gray was not told to destroy this, and he must not say that or the President will have to say he lied. Petersen suggested that Gray should not necessarily leave.

Then we got back to the discussion of the replacement. He feels Rush is the only possible replacement, the real problem is getting the White House run. It won't work with Ehrlichman and me here, and so a leave becomes imperative for running the White House in terms of morale, and so on. Maybe let Larry stay to break Rush in.

Then Ehrlichman called to say he had given his statement to Clifton Daniel of the *New York Times*, and Daniel asked him two questions: first, does Dean know you're putting this out?; and secondly, the way we got the story is that you said to Dean, you live across the river, why don't you throw the stuff in the river on your way home tonight? Also we had the report that



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Woodward has the story in the *Post* that Ehrlichman and Haldeman were told by Dean on March 20 that the jig was up and they should be prepared to go to jail, if necessary, and that we agreed.

Then we got back to the discussion of the leave. The President said everyone else feels that there should be a resignation, the President doesn't agree. He won't condemn on unsubstantiated evidence. That would mean everyone under fire should resign. The President's responsibility is to see that all in government, especially in the White House, meet a higher standard than just not doing anything illegal, and that's the test I will apply.

By then it's 7:45 and Kleindienst calls back, gives a long report to the President, who says, mmhmm mmmm as he goes through it. And I picked up some bits and pieces, obviously. Kleindienst and Peterson feel nothing should be done tomorrow. That Gray should say nothing tonight. Regarding Dean immunity: no one's advising it, and there's no way to give it regarding suborning to perjury. Petersen told the President that Gray would say that Ehrlichman ordered him to destroy the documents. Now Kleindienst has given a different story, so the President says I know that Petersen hates Ehrlichman, and that's okay, but I don't want him to mislead me. I like Petersen myself, you trust him, don't you? I'm talking to him as if he's my counsel. Your judgment is that he should do it because he's due to change. He should say exactly what happened. The documents were sensitive, not related to the Watergate case. He didn't open it. That's why his destruction line won't work. Why didn't he look in and see what they were? No, no, Pat must not ever say that publicly. If he says the White House counsel ordered him to destroy, or that he drew that conclusion, he looks like a fool and the two would be conspiring to destroy evidence. He should not impute that to Dean, and he can't impute it to Ehrlichman, because he didn't say it. He was there, however. He's interested in the Presidency, and the worst thing he could say was that he was ordered or had the impression that he should destroy. He would resign tomorrow because of this charge. Under the circumstances, put it this way: this matter is to be heard before the grand jury, I don't think the grand jury will indict. Why not? Not of the view that he should resign because of a newspaper story. We'll be out shortly-- he'll be out shortly, anyway, so do nothing on the basis of the newspaper story. Tell Petersen I appreciate his



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hard work, but Dean floated this story. Dean's trying to sink everybody, I'm glad I never saw him. It's obvious from the reaction there that Dean had given Kleindienst the impression that he saw the President frequently on Watergate. He said, I don't want Gray's resignation in conflict with Ehrlichman. Gray will say nothing, he'll appear before the grand jury, and he will say to the grand jury that he came over to Ehrlichman's office, that Dean had him-- handed him a packet of highly sensitive national security papers, absolutely nothing to do with the Watergate, that should not see the light of day, therefore, they should not go the FBI. Gray gathered from that they should be destroyed, and he made the mistake of bad judgment, and destroyed it. They don't feel he's guilty of a crime, just bad judgment.

The President then resuming the discussion, said regarding Ehrlichman, his vulnerability is that he was there and heard this. There was never any intent of destroying it, he was amazed when he heard they had been destroyed, which we know, because we were watching him when he was on that phone conversation Sunday night of the 15th. On the resignation argument, the President says what they say is that we need to clean house, cut our losses, Caesar's wife, Presidency more important than any man, President cleans his own house. But the argument against it is that the President is then judging the case himself, on non-corroborated statements. Therefore, he should wait for the grand jury.

On the other hand, the leave is imperative from the standpoint of running the joint, and our own well-being. How to handle the problem of being paid, of course, until this is determined, we go on paying him. Problem of Dean in the same bag is a difficult one. Can't take a leave from us without him. He'll soon separate one way or the other. Kleindienst is totally opposed to immunity. Dean is thrashing out at everybody.

Told us to write up leave of absence letters, get them out on Saturday, before the weekend, and go before Dean goes, not with him. We have to avoid having Congress demand we go, just don't have any hard-liners that will stand up for us.



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He went on some more in this vein, and then as I was trying to leave, got into sort of the usual sentimental discussion of how he told Rogers he was tempted, because he had to tell Adams to go, that Rogers should tell us to go, but then said no, I totally reject that out of hand, I'll tell them myself. Of course, he's never gotten around really to doing that. He had Ziegler tell me, and then I told Ehrlichman. Which is even worse than having Rogers doing it. Another sidelight on the Adams story he said Len Hall had written him saying that not only did Eisenhower make Nixon call Adams in and tell him to leave, but when Adams went in to see Eisenhower, Eisenhower said he wanted to keep him. To a degree, the President is doing the same thing in getting the word to us indirectly and then backing off when we hit him with it frontally. Although now he's down to raising it on terms of a leave of absence, which he obviously thinks is going to be permanent, because his idea in bringing Rush in would be to put him permanently in the job, which I argued would do away with the leave of absence idea. Then he thought maybe he would just go without a Chief of Staff and see how that worked. Or be his own Chief of Staff.

After I got home, he called and said well, just wanted to let you know that I just had some corned beef hash, and a couple of eggs, and some bacon, and I told him that I just had some corned beef hash, a couple of eggs, and some creamed spinach. He suggested I check Connally about the leave of absence idea, that he feels it's the right decision at this time, and he feels best about it. I should tell him that, and see what he thinks. Also thought maybe I should check Rogers. I wasn't able to reach Connally, and the President called me a little later, and said talk to Ehrlichman about the idea of moving, that moving on Byrne because of the Ellsberg thing may be difficult for the judge and, therefore, we ought to get Ruckelshaus into the FBI permanently. Also he said what about Connally for Attorney General, would he be approved by the Senate? It would be part of a bold move. I told him I didn't think Connally would take it. He says that Connally says he'll do anything that he has to do, so we'll see.

End of April 26.