



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

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Monday, April 26.

Staff meeting this morning. Got into the whole question of our position re: the demonstrators, following up on our PR staff meeting yesterday afternoon. The general feeling was that the President should say something to show that he's not frightened, but also not insensitive to the demonstrators, feels that the absence of a statement is evidence of-- or no that the absence-- his absence from Washington is evidence of the fear of being here and his insensitivity to the problem. They generally felt that it got through that the demonstration is now respectable, and that we need to keep that in under consideration. I discussed this later with the President, and we got into quite a discussion as to what the statement should be. The President's first inclination was to say-- to recite all the bad things that they did, after saying that he was pleased the demonstrations were peaceful on the whole, but that it's too bad they tore down the US flags at the monument, burned the benches, stopped traffic in New Jersey, threw bottles at the police, etcetera. After Ron came in, we went back over that ground and decided rather to make the point that the message of the demonstrators is that they want to end the war, and there's no argument with that, the President does too. The question is ending one war and preventing others. The President's building a structure of peace so that the teenagers who are there demonstrating won't have to fight in a war. This takes long-range planning and hard decisions, and the track record of those who have shouted "Peace Now" in years past is not one that speaks very well for their leadership. He then wants to make the point of his speech at the Woodrow Wilson dedication, where he gave his philosophy on foreign policy generally and made the point that he feels that the demonstrators were saying-- that what the demonstrators were saying is that they're against this war. The President's view is that he's against all wars, and that he must end this one in a way to avoid others. The general feeling was that last week's press coverage of activities is bound to have an effect, but our people are over reactive; they feel that we have to do something fast, and this is the problem that LBJ became obsessed with. The important thing for us is to maintain serenity and calm. The President made the point that anyone who had been through the Hiss case



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wouldn't get excited about all these other things. The question now is just to see it through. You'll either win or lose, and you can't let it be personal.

We got into quite a discussion of press conference timing, the concern that we're looking worried if we run a press conference this week. He decided that wasn't the case and that we should go ahead and do it. So we will on Thursday evening. We got into quite a question on Hill activity today. The demonstrators went up and disrupted the Senate and some of the offices, and this got everybody stirred up, but didn't get very much media coverage, unfortunately. The result at the White House was that we called a PR staff meeting to discuss the whole process of how to handle the upcoming demonstrations and didn't get a lot covered, although in general we agreed that we should not take any action before the fact of the demonstrators' action. In other words, we should let them move first.

We discussed various possibilities of preparedness for breaking up the blocking of the roads, which is going to be the important problem next week. The feeling is that the District police are going to be able to handle it themselves, unless the numbers become really massive, in which case the National Guard will have to help. It turns out that we can use the National Guard without declaring a state of martial law, and this, of course, is something we wanted to avoid at any cost. As a result of all this, the President called tonight, saying that he had decided not to stay in California, but rather to come back on Monday. So as of now, that's the plan.

We got onto the Cabinet officer problem again and to the question, particularly, of how to remove Hardin. The decision now is to have Harlow talk with Hardin if he will, and see if he can ease him into taking the Purdue job as a way out. The President met with Senator Long this afternoon; and he was very pleased with the Senator's strong praise of the President for standing firm in the face of the demonstrators and also saying that they were really a bad bunch of people, and he was clearly not pleased with them.

The President talked with Henry about the problem of the effect of the demonstrations on Hanoi. Henry's all concerned that they may misinterpret the thing and weaken our position, which of



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course, to some degree they will, but there's no point in worrying about it. The President made the point to me that we're going to have to play the propaganda role more skillfully, and that he's only going to let Henry go to Paris once, or at the very most twice, and then we'll give up on the negotiations. He feels that if we wait more than a couple more months, we twice, and then we'll give up on the negotiations. He feels that if we wait more than a couple more months, we won't have anything left to negotiate anyway, except the residual force and the bombing versus the release of POW's. The problem is that we need one more stab at negotiations, so we can't set a time certain yet. After we've taken that stab, if it doesn't work, we'll just go ahead and set the time certain, and that's it.

Going back to Long, when the President was commenting on him, he was really impressed and said he's clearly the ablest man in the Senate, and that it's a real pleasure to talk to a guy with that kind of brilliance once in a while. He was regretting that we didn't have anyone of the same caliber. He also made the point in a phone call that sometimes we really dodge a bullet, and that he was sure glad this morning he didn't make a statement praising the peaceful protests, because it would have ridden right with the reports of today's activities and would have really looked bad for us.

End of April 26.