

Haldeman: No Full Disclosure

Nation's 'Welfare' First

By Marlise Simons
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ACAPULCO, Mexico, April 2 — Former White House Chief of Staff H. R. Haldeman said last night that the nation would be better off if some Watergate details were not made public.

But Haldeman, who has been indicted for perjury, conspiracy and obstruction of justice in connection with Watergate, told almost 1,000 young executives that if it were simply a matter of his own defense he would favor the release of all White House tapes and documents.

"If I were calling the shots, and the presidency were not at stake," he said, "I'd like nothing better than have them pull up their trucks at the back of the White House and take away the tapes and everything."

"The more probing they do, the better off I am," he said, but that, he continued, would be "a purely selfish point of view."

Yet "for the welfare of the American nation" he explained, it was "better that not all the details become known," just as it was better that not all details were known of "the Bay of Pigs, the bombing halt, Chappaquiddick, and the personal finances of other presidents."

In the first appearance of its kind since he left the White House, Haldeman addressed the Young Presidents Organization holding its annual "university . . . a week of lectures and seminars aimed at making young chief executives "better company presidents."

Actor, author and political activist Jack Linkletter introduced Haldeman as a man, "who has many friends in this crowd. A crowd he feels confident with."

Haldeman did look confident, relaxed and tan as, in a mostly solemn tone, he answered questions from Linkletter for close to two hours.

Haldeman often appealed to the audience's "sense of fairness" not to judge the President and his staff until all the activist Jack Linkletter introduced details were known.

"Let me tell you that it is very difficult for me to be here, when I am a major figure in one of the major dramas of history and I cannot discuss it with you openly and fully," he said. "I would like nothing better than telling all the details, especially to an audience like this . . . but I have to go through a judicial process."

The only time Haldeman appeared less than relaxed was when his interviewer insisted on the question of the "missing tapes."

Before anyone knew about the tapes, people were prepared to go ahead and solve the case regardless, he replied with visible irritation. "But now that it is known that the tapes exist, suddenly the case cannot be solved without them. These are two positions that do not match."

The audience appeared fascinated although sometimes restless. "Why isn't he thrown open to questions from the floor, let's have a little fun," one Young President from New York said to his wife. "I'd like to see him showing his teeth," his wife responded.

Haldeman expressed unabashed admiration for President Nixon, "who I have called Dick since 1956," saying he is "very tough in the abstract but has a very soft heart in his relationships with people."

The President, he said, found it "hard to fire or reprimand people. He doesn't call them in and chew them out." The President's "indirect and delicate way with people," he said, "sometimes would get into our way," for he would leave some of the people problems to his assistants.

When Linkletter asked about Mr. Nixon's relationship with Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, who is honeymooning here, Haldeman replied that they "complemented each other . . . They have a symbiotic relationship . . . The two of them mesh."

Haldeman also pointed out that despite Kissinger's great intellect and accomplishments, the secretary did not have Mr. Nixon's capacity for "taking decisions and sticking by them." Kissinger's tendency to "weigh and reweigh alternatives" after decisions have been made, he said, sometimes "would drive the President up the wall."