



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

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Monday, December 14.

John Connally day. We got cranking early and hard this morning. President had breakfast with the Connally's at 8:30, while we had our regular staff meeting, at which I could say nothing. Very awkward since Finch and Rumsfeld do not know-- or did not know about the Connally appointment. I was under orders from the President from last night not to tell them until 10:15. At a little before 10:00, the President called me over to the Residence to meet with him and Connally in the Map Room and settle our plans. The first thing we did there was to place a call, which I placed, to President Johnson. The President came on first and gave Johnson the background of his problem on the need for bipartisan support of Treasury, the resignation of Kennedy and his decision to appoint Connally. Johnson apparently took it in a very approving fashion. The President then put Connally on, who chatted briefly with Johnson with some jokes about taxes going up, etcetera. Connally made the point that the only one who is going to get hurt financially out of this was him. Then we laid out the plan for the announcement, made some minor revisions. The President spent some time discussing the thoughts he had regarding his part of the announcement and giving Connally a little insight into how he was going to position him.

We left Connally at the Residence and the President and I went over to the Oval Office where he was supposed to make a few phone calls, one to Arthur Burns and one to the Vice President, before the Cabinet meeting. Time had run out by then since it was about 10:25; so instead, he had his meeting with John Tower, which had been scheduled for 10:15. While he was doing that I met with Rumsfeld and Finch, gave them the word. Finch received it with considerable pleasure. Rumsfeld was totally non-committal and looked as if he was deeply distressed. I then went quickly into Chapin's office where the operation team was gathered. Gave them the word, told them to get started on the general follow-up plan.

On my way down to meet with Finch and Rumsfeld, I had been handed the handwritten letter of resignation from Kennedy and also a brief handwritten note to the President which, inadvertently, I read and discovered that Kennedy was making a pitch to be named Ambassador-



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at-Large. I waited over in Steve Bull's office for the President, and Tower, and Mitchell to emerge from their meeting so I could catch the President and tell him about this. I did this by getting him back into the Oval Office. By this time we were 15 minutes late for the Cabinet meeting. I told him very briefly what Kennedy had said in his note, that he did not want the UN job or Ambassador to Japan or Counselor to the President, but would like to be an Ambassador-at-Large. The President asked very quickly if Rogers knew about this and I reminded him that Rogers had suggested it to him, but it had not been discussed further. The President said fine and shot through into the Cabinet room for the Cabinet meeting.

He built up somewhat the announcement by leading gradually into what Kennedy was going to do as a follow-up, and went through the UN post and other things and ruled them out, and then announced that he would be taking a post as Ambassador-at-Large. Through this buildup both Kennedy and I were panic stricken because we thought the President had misunderstood and was building him up for the UN job, which he very definitely did not want. It turned out fine in the long run, however. Bill Rogers rose to the occasion beautifully and responded as if he had known all along that this is what we were going to do. The President then made his pitch on Connally and told them about that appointment.

The Congressional leaders were also present at the meeting and Tower was included. They were all pretty much stunned at the announcement. The President called on Mitchell who started off the response very effectively, and then the President moved around the room calling next on Kennedy then Rogers, Tower, Volpe, Gerry Ford, Arends, Scott, Laird, Williams, Bennett, Byrnes. All of them spoke very favorably for the Connally appointment, and things got set in pretty good fashion there.

Following the Cabinet meeting, or at least his part of it, the President turned it over to George Shultz for an economic briefing and went back to the Oval Office where we placed phone calls to Mansfield, Russell Long, Wilbur Mills, Arthur Burns, the Vice President and George Mahon. The President got all of them except the Vice President, who I contacted later. All of them



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responded very favorably, apparently, except Arthur, who was absolutely stunned, according to the President. Following these calls, Connally, Mrs. Connally, and Mrs. Nixon were brought into the Oval Office. And then Kennedy and Rogers were brought in from the Cabinet room. We finalized the presentation plan. Then the group went from there directly to the press room where the President made his announcement first of Kennedy's new post, then of the Connally appointment. Press corps was absolutely flabbergasted. They were all craning to see who was coming in behind the President and were totally bewildered by the parade of the President, Kennedy, Rogers, the Connallys, and Mrs. Nixon. As they figured it out, they were-- appeared to be completely astonished. It was fun to watch because the surprise was total. For the first time, we really did keep an announcement confidential until the zero hour.

After the announcement the President took Connally into the Cabinet room to shake hands with the members of the Cabinet, then back to the office for a little chat with the wives. Then the Connally's left to return to the hotel for lunch. The President then had to go through his open office hour and a couple of other odd appointments. Connally came back at about 2:45, spent a few minutes with Ehrlichman and Shultz, went over to see Arthur Burns, then back for another session with Ehrlichman and Shultz, and then on for the day. He'll be back tomorrow after spending some time in the morning on the Hill to get into budget briefing with John and George. All in all, the whole thing was a monumental coup.

The President sort of coasted through the rest of the afternoon. Called Colson, Nofziger and me in during a session with Barry Goldwater to emphasize the need to use Goldwater more effectively. Apparently no one's really taking advantage of him as a spokesman, and he wants to be used. We also had some discussion of the Dole RNC question. The President feels that Mitchell should take over the strategy on this and get something going so that Dole gets it locked up in the next day or so.

The President called me at home to reiterate the same thing. He particularly wants me to get some real heat put on Rog Morton to get aboard or get out. I'm to tell him that as a result of the



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story in the *Star* tonight, the President's reconsidering the Morton appointment. And then, we've got to start getting some discipline here, that we can't have it both ways. And that Morton's got to get aboard on the Dole deal.

Dole called me later giving me his report. He says he's now got 28 Senators signed up, which sort of refutes Scott's claim that he had 21 against him. Both Arends and Ford told the President at the Congressional reception at the White House late this afternoon that they were backing Dole. So, the support is building up now. We've still got Morton going against, but we'll have to get him turned around. The President got trapped by Mrs. Nixon into standing in a receiving line at the Congressional open house today, shaking hands with everybody, although his intention was just to come in and sort of stroll through and let it go at that. Also, Mrs. Nixon called me at home tonight. Very upset about her discovery that they were planning to light the Commerce, and FTC, and Archives, and Justice buildings. She feels that this should not be done, that only the monuments and the White House should be lighted, and that the White House is, in fact, a monument. That it downgrades it by having the buildings done. And also that it causes a political problem because of the big effort to get people to hold down on their consumption of electricity. I don't know whether we can do anything about it at this point.

End of December 14.