



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

National Archives and Records Administration, Online Public Access Catalog Identifier: 7787364

Thursday, December 31st. The President called me late last night at home to say that he had decided, if possible, he wanted to go to Kentucky to visit the mine disaster, he hasn't, that occurred yesterday afternoon killing 39 people. I did some calling to see if we could set it up, and we agreed to wait until today to decide. He had a breakfast with Senator Williams, and then he came over to the office and decided to follow my recommendation not to go to Kentucky, although he still really wanted to go. The talking point we used to have him cancel the trip was the fact that the airports were snowed in. Without that, I think he probably would have gone. We felt he shouldn't go because it appeared to be a grandstanding move, since the disaster wasn't really great enough to warrant a Presidential trip and hadn't gotten that big a play in the news. The President did call Louie Nunn and asked him to express the Presidential concern and the fact that the President intended to come but couldn't because of the airport situation. He also had some points to cover with Nunn regarding the Governors' Conference and his appointment today with Marlow Cook, regarding his trying for the job of Campaign Chairman in the Senate. And he discussed with Nunn the question of Agnew handling the whole job of contacts with the Governors and the President's concern that Agnew needs a big man with him who can carry out things on this assignment. He asked Nunn to talk with the Vice President about this.

We had a flap with Teddy Kennedy, who is trying to capitalize on the decision of the Spanish government to commute the death sentences of some Basques. Teddy is going to put out the fact that he had wired the Spanish government before the decision and was wiring them his approval after the decision.

DECLASSIFIED - E.O. 13526, Sect. 3.4: by MS, NARA, June 12, 2013
Audio Cassette 2, Side B, Withdrawn Item Number 10 [AC-2(B) Sel 6]
Duration: 32 seconds



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

National Archives and Records Administration, Online Public Access Catalog Identifier: 7787364

The fact of the matter is, that we had intervened and our intervention had been helpful in the case, but it was greatly appreciated by the Spanish government, because we had not put it out in any way, shape, or form. So, now Teddy's going to come along and try to capitalize on it. This is sort of typical, and creates a problem, but we're just going to let it ride, because the Spanish government would be extremely upset if we tried to do anything about it. They're furious with Teddy and maybe they'll say something.

The President got into some guidance for the Monday television conversation. He now doesn't want to have any restrictions, wants to make it clear that they can raise any questions they want, that we're not trying to direct the press in any way; but, that for their guidance, he won't comment on partisan political questions of any kind, because that's not a proper use of public service time. Other than that, there's no restriction at all.

The PR item of the day was an article by Evans and Novak that blasted us for, our, a lot of the positions we've been taking and made a big deal out of the fact that there is strong Republican opposition to the Administration. The President was disturbed by this and wants to get some careful analysis, both of who's cutting us up and the degree of validity of the report, because he feels there may be something to it.

I had a meeting with Bill Rogers regarding ambassadorial and other personnel changes, and then we went in and talked with the President briefly. The President used most of his time with Bill to discuss some - his views on the whole PR area rather than getting into the personnel things Bill wanted to cover. The President had to, call, cut the meeting short because he had a bill signing, so we never really got into the things we were supposed to be discussing.



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

National Archives and Records Administration, Online Public Access Catalog Identifier: 7787364

The President spent most of the afternoon over at the EOB. He told Ziegler not to let the press leave because, as long as he was working, they might as well too. So Ron didn't put a lid on and some of the press had to stay around. At 6:00 the President called Ron and told him to bring whatever press was left, and there were only about six, over to the EOB for a drink. And this apparently worked out pretty well. The President gave them about a 40 minute Q and A session standing up. It was kind of funny when they walked in, Frank Cormier and Helen Thomas and Herb Kaplow were the only reporters plus a couple of photographers and a radio technician. Helen Thomas, while the President was mixing the martinis in his little bar, said, now I know why you spend so much time at the EOB office. The President apparently did make a number of pretty good points to these people. Ziegler was particularly amused by his statement that I, and the other key members of the staff, had the highest IQ's of any White House staff people at least since Roosevelt, and that, as a group, Ehrlichman, Shultz, Rum--, Weinberger, and I were the most brilliant White House staff in history, intellectually. Ron, for some reason, thought that was very funny.

The President called me later at home wanting to be sure that Ziegler was getting across the importance of this little meeting with the press, the fact that he just called them over and handled it on an informal basis and the subtlety of this as a special event. Ron's working to peddle it and we'll see what we can get going. The President also wanted to be sure we got the poll information out. Our latest telephone poll shows his popularity back up to 60 percent. The last poll, taken the 1st of December, had him down to 55. This appears to me to be a direct result of the press conference and the visibility gained therefrom. We're going to do another poll next week after the conversation, and I would guess he'll go up another couple of points, not much more than that, but, because he's pretty high, but I think he will gain some.



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

National Archives and Records Administration, Online Public Access Catalog Identifier: 7787364

End of December 31st.