



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

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Friday, September 17th. The President had the bowling champions in this morning, and after greeting them in the Oval Office, took them over to the, his bowling alley at the EOB for a press photo. He put on his shoes and rolled his first ball, which went into the gutter, to everyone's amusement. Then he moved to the other lane, rolled another ball and scored a strike, which is now being billed as Nixon's latest comeback.

He got going again on the need for human, warm-type follow-up and said he had spent a lot of time last night with the astronauts' kids. They had all kissed him good-bye, etcetera, and the astronauts themselves were totally captivated by this. He feels this is a good story for Lucy to get out.

He got back on the thing of wanting an attack group put together, and wanted Colson, Buchanan, Kissinger and me to sit down and talk about an all-out assault on the Democrats for their partisanship that endangers the national interest, and felt we could get some activity going on that. He wanted to develop the line that a strong America is essential to an internationalist role, that a weak America inevitably would make us isolationist. He figures that Agnew should now be unlimbered, that he isn't going to get anywhere dealing with the Governors. He should assault the Democrats for their partisanship on the Defense issue, but also defend the President. Get the Right Wing off of the anti-President kick. Thinks we have to attack for obstructionism and partisanship that the ones who got us into the war are trying to sabotage our efforts to get out. Also hit them for their partisanship in the domestic programs.

He then got into a discussion of press conferences and TV plans and best use of time and exercise of leadership. Made the point that we are now in a situation where we probably should use our best asset more frequently. Although he can't do a scintillating performance every day,



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feels the office press conference is good, because it commands the news, disciplines our people, is leadership, and knocks everyone else out of the news. So we need to do more of them, more often. We may have been too cautious on doing this, and doing more other stuff instead. What do the appearances to the outside mean? Nothing. The read speeches are not leadership. The press conference is infinitely more effective for leadership. We have an advantage in those, because the President's words come through, where in a speech it's someone else's words. So he thinks we ought to almost quit making speeches, and in this nut-cutting period, we need stronger stuff. He makes the point that in the history of warfare, it becomes clear that sometimes it's a mistake to do, to try to do everything. It's better to decide what works best, and then not do the less effective things. Thinks we should consider the value of all the non-TV things versus doing one thing on television, or spending the same time making a big decision or thinking.

Ziegler was in, as was Colson, for part of this discussion and argued in favor of the office press conference as a means of press contact and a way to manipulate the press and move them. Their attitude affects what they talk about and, thus, what the TV guys say. The President generally agreed with this. He argues also that it's an inexpensive shot to give strong leadership. That we must not oversimplify how the public gets its impression; it's accumulated type of thing, not from any one source. The value of the office press conference, again he pointed out, is that it disciplines the Administration; it takes less preparation; and it affects the press people's attitude. It's more difficult for them to kick us. It forces them to compare the President to other people who don't do as well in those press conferences. He thinks we need to rethink the Q and A idea and find ways to do it on TV in daytime, as well as prime. Also, we need to do press conferences away from Washington.

Henry was in this morning regarding Vietnam. The President told him he thought it was important to give them a hard shot now to create in them the fear that the President may do more.



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So he ordered Henry to get a bombing attack going over the weekend, said to handle it on a low-key basis from a PR standpoint. That it's protective reaction, and dealing with their violation of our understanding regarding crossing the DMZ. He feels that it's very important to main, to make broadly the point that he did in the press conference yesterday, that the way we got into Vietnam was the overthrow of Diem, and the way to get out is not by throwing out Thieu.

Henry came in later to report that they had the attack deal worked out and would go ahead with it on Monday as an all-out blast at the DMZ. The, the military want to take five to ten days of bombing, but we can't do that. In that discussion, the President also...

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...was talking about his meeting with the Romanian ambassador this morning where he told them directly that he should warn the Vietnamese not to press us too far that we don't want them to be surprised at what we may do next.

Ehrlichman was in on a couple points, in the process of which the President agreed to meet with J. Edgar Hoover tomorrow to seek his resignation. The big news today was, came from a call I had this morning from the Attorney General saying that, at 3:00 this afternoon, Justice Black would be sending a letter to the President telling him he would resign at the pleasure of the President. The AG wants guidance from the President on what he wants to do on a replacement appointment. Feels that we've got to really think it through carefully and establish our position



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on it. The President said to consider Arlen Specter as a Jewish seat. He would look with favor still on William French Smith from California, but he definitely wants pop. It turns out that Harlan is meeting with the Chief Justice this afternoon, and he probably will resign, too, according to the Chief Justice, because of a serious health problem. The President later also talked to the Chief Justice and was sort of musing about the fact that we'll have two court seats to fill. He wrote handwritten letters to both Harlan and Black this afternoon while I was in his office.

End of September 17th.