



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

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Friday, November 19

The day started in Key Biscayne with the AF of L speech. The President looked pretty tired when he got on the helicopter, and all of us felt he had probably not slept much, been up most of the night working on the speech. He used the whole ride over on the helicopter to work on his notes again. The whole deal in the hall was somewhat incredible. He walked in without any announcement. Meany had canceled the band; refused our advance man's suggestion that they announce the President before he came in the hall; had him sit in the second row on the platform. We learned later he had tried to get the executive committee not to sit on the platform with him, and he had instructed the people not to give any kind of response, positive or negative. They did stand and applaud when the President came in and again when he left, and interrupted the speech a couple of times with applause because they really couldn't help it; but overall, they followed their rules pretty effectively. The speech was a real masterpiece. He followed his plan of saying he had distributed the text to the press and he stood by it, but he was going to throw it away and speak to them straight from the shoulder, the way they like to hear it. The text of the speech is well worth studying in the style of going back and forth that he used, and it was quite effective. They managed to avoid any in the hall reaction to the extent they could.

When we got back to the hotel, he called to say that he had forgotten to mention that it was important that we would have Moore and Scali follow up on this and he hoped they were there. They weren't, and he felt that was quite a mistake and obviously was a little pushed out of shape on that. Made the strong point to me of the need to get the whole drama of the moment over, that it's not a spot news story. The real point is the color and drama of his moving into this hostile situation, and so on. I got Colson and our crew on the phone up North and gave them a full feel on the-- feel of the thing, and we had Cashen and Bill Usery moving down here to-- in Key Biscayne to try and get something going. Bebe then called about noon to say in the strictest confidence that Pat Nixon isn't well and the President wants to go back this afternoon at 4:00, attend the Kennedy Center thing with Pat tonight, that Bebe also may go, and that is to be the reason given for the hasty departure. We all tried to turn that around some, but didn't get



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anywhere and actually ended up moving the departure up earlier to 2:30. That was fine by me because I was going to go home anyway, but it did make it look a little odd from a public viewpoint. There was then considerable telephoning from then until departure time. With the President coming up with more reactions, ideas, things that ought to be followed up, and I was lashing the Colson crew to get things moving, but there isn't an awful lot they can do except get some of these background items about Meany's rude treatment out. I covered Jerry Warren on that too.

On the plane going up, the President had me up in the cabin for a good part of the time. Made the point that we should distribute the pertinent portions of the speech to the business community, that the segments that mattered were telling Meany off, the Cambodia section on the intellectuals versus labor and the way they marched, and the dignity of work point. He made the point that we've got to recognize that Meany is totally partisan and that we have to deal with him on that basis, and that's now been proven. He was disturbed again with the lack of a Moore or Scali there, and especially because Ziegler is away on vacation also. The gutsy point-- the points of gutsy boldness and leadership are the things that we really need to have come through.

The networks tonight gave us what appeared to be pretty bad coverage, in the sense that they emphasized the hostile reaction. They did play our points on the rude treatment and the specifics about no band, no announcement, and so forth, and they made a big thing out of the fact of the President shifting at the last minute and returning to Washington instead of staying at Key Biscayne. Some of us felt that this was going to come off well, because it did build the confrontation—made the point of the President's courage and the planned hostility—and thereby made Meany, particularly, and the labor people, in general, look bad. The President was concerned that it was not going that way, but rather that it was-- we were losing the momentum on the story; and he felt we should maybe go to work on it, which of course, we had, but not to the degree that he seemed to be after.

He did go to the Kennedy Center with Mrs. Nixon, and that's the end of November 19.