



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

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Thursday, February 10.

In our staff meeting this morning, Shultz raised his concern about the economy. He feels that it really isn't looking good; that December retail sales were poor, the January preliminary figures are also poor, and that retail sales are the ultimate key to the economy, that Arthur Burns is back on his familiar cycle, and that we've got a real problem.

Ehrlichman has concern about the busing question and says he may suggest the President meeting with the Congressional sponsors of the busing constitutional amendments, with the idea that he could then get on record as having been involved in the whole thing, although not approving any action at this time, but at least get his hand into it before he leaves for China, in case there is some action taken, so he's not left out in the cold.

In getting into his final preparation for the press conference, the President got into a fairly extensive media analysis, and Buchanan's wrap-up on it, his concern that we haven't gotten across our role in the dock strike, and the fact that Congress acted at our insistence. Also, he was observing that the networks are going to put all the Democratic candidates on in opposition to anything that we say, so all of them get a chance to answer, and we, therefore, get outnumbered seven or eight to one on any major story. He feels we've got to maintain our Vietnam attack, keep hammering Muskie, saying that Nixon-- his line of saying Nixon criticized Vietnam so he's going to is 180 degrees off, because Nixon criticized how we got into the war, and criticized the conduct of the war, where Muskie is criticizing our efforts to get out of the war, and that we can't let him get away with the "everybody does this" line. It's unprecedented for a government to make a peace proposal and be undercut by a Presidential candidate.

President feels that our whole Haldeman flap gave the "State of the World" some visibility and that that was probably a good thing. He got back onto the subject tonight on the plane going down to Key Biscayne, and made the point that it's imperative that everyone follow the line that he took in the press conference today, which was really very good in that he made it clear he wasn't questioning the patriotism or sincerity of any of the candidates, but that he was a vigorous



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critic of the policies that got us into Vietnam, and the actions that contributed to the assassination of Diem, and of the conduct of the war. But once he became a candidate and the peace talks began, he said that as a man seeking the Presidency, he would say nothing that would in any way jeopardize the peace talks, and that's the position he feels a candidate should take.

Press conference overall went very well. It was an in-office deal, and the press was more than usually surly, partly because it's been so long since they've had a press conference. Jim Deacon, even after the "Thank you, Mr. President," asked if they could have some more questions and came in with a couple of snarling ones: the transcript on the press conference is fairly interesting.

Rogers was very concerned this morning before the press conference because President Thieu had attacked him on the basis that he'd said he'd be-- that we'd be flexible on the question of when Thieu should step down before a Vietnamese election, and Rogers obviously did have a blooper there, but wanted the President to stand behind him. Actually the President couldn't strongly stand behind him, but he did handle the question in such a way that Rogers could have no dissatisfaction. As a result of that, the President felt out of the press conference we came out in very good shape on Vietnam and on Thieu. He also hit busing very well at the press conference and should have his position pretty well established on that now, too.

End of February 10.