



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

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Thursday, October 5.

Press conference this morning went extremely well. One of the best he's done in the office. He was very low key, we got in some extremely good digs at the press. Hit them on their single standard thing, really knocked McGovern on his charges of corruption and cited a number of them. Got the Jerry Waldie quote in by saying one of the few members of his Party in Congress who support our opponent. He has vigorously criticized this kind of tactics and so on. After the press conference, he had a whole bunch in, Colson, MacGregor, Scali, Ehrlichman and Ziegler for sort of a general analysis and discussion. The President's feeling that he ought to do more press conferences. He felt pretty good, obviously, about this one, and the group tended to agree. They also decided to buy radio time, a half hour, and rerun the press conference, as well as to make it available to the networks. In the middle of this, Ehrlichman comes up with a problem on synthetic natural gas. The President gave him an instant answer, and said go ahead and do what you want to do, but call Connally first on the decision.

We had some discussion on the merits of a TV press conference versus in-office and the question of one in DC versus going out into the country somewhere. Nothing really came out of that. He had Colson and me over at the EOB a little later. Got into the general political thing, says there's only really four issues, then proceeded to enumerate six or seven being: amnesty, marijuana, welfare, tax increase, Communist government imposed on South Vietnam, and reduction of defenses. Feels that we've got to get our people to make that speech. Back up on the things like inflation, unemployment and taxes, but the main items are the ones he enumerated, that we've got to go with the issues that get to the people, like amnesty does; that we should do a commercial on it; that we should hit him on his low-road gutter tactics; that Nixon is not off the high road of statesmanship, is not going to get off the high road of statesmanship to get in the gutter with McGovern. He also thought we ought to pick up the Dulles vignette that he used in his press conference about the good discipline of having to prepare a speech even though it's a lot of hard work.



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He had political strategy group meeting at 3:00 with Dole, Mitchell, MacGregor, Harlow and Ehrlichman. Made the point that we need a big vote this year, that it's to our advantage. The problem of how to handle the interpretation of the victory, that we can't sell the idea of a close election and so forth, that we don't want to sell the idea of McGovern gaining now. All our advertising nationally should hit the big vote, the big vote helps us, the small vote helps him. The Connally organization can't do anything on getting out the vote. We need to work with Nixon superstates for big vote. Dole thinks that the fear of McGovern will get the votes out. The President hit on using the telephone himself, calling some of our phone centers, volunteers, and so forth and Dole and MacGregor both sparked to that. Said we could start this program for the last three weeks, especially using Saturdays and Sundays. He also OK'd using his signature on the "Get out the vote" telegrams. He told them he would not campaign against any Democrat that has strongly supported him. On his schedule, it was agreed that there would be no appearance for any one candidate. He'll do general regional things, but like the Southern thing, he described the Atlanta visit. Agreed that we should get more people in as Mitchell suggested, then for the Northeast he wants to do a gathering at Pocantico with Rockefeller's people, but also agreed maybe we ought to do Buffalo. Chicago for the Midwest, Denver for the Mountains and Southwest, then cover the Northwest by phone calls, no meeting. He mentioned the motorcade through Southern Ohio. Then they raised the point about bringing candidates in to see the President for individual appointments and doing a film, which he agreed to do. Also agreed to do phone calls for the hosts for President meeting starting the 17th and agreed to having Governor candidates come in. He hit again on the amnesty issue and defense and so forth. Wants to be sure that we have a good counter attack set after the 9th and 10th when McGovern cuts loose.

After that meeting we had a meeting with Samuel Bell, who was singularly uninspiring. He obviously writes much better than he talks. He's a weird little fellow and the President had trouble drawing him out, although he did get some rather interesting insights that will be covered in Colson's report of the meeting.

End of October 5.