



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

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Thursday, March 13.

Started out badly. President overslept and didn't get into the office until after 9:30. Immediately buzzed for me to raise hell because the press conference briefing book (due at the Residence at 8:00 last night) had not arrived - but was on his office desk. I had blown it by going out to dinner with Higby before Buchanan brought over the book. Pat just left it on my desk, assuming I'd be back, and it was still there in the morning. I explained to President. Then he discovered he had 10:00 appointment with George Meany (which he thought had been canceled). Then there was the problem of the Labor Manpower statement which he refused to approve and ordered rewritten, with hardly any time left. Then he had to meet with Laird (just back from Vietnam), and put out a wire to the astronauts (after deciding not to phone them). All this when he thought he was going to have the day free to prepare.

When this was finally all done - about 12:45 - he buzzed and told me he was not to be disturbed for the rest of the day. We left him alone. Did go in once to give him Bryce's message from DDE (Bryce had been summoned to the hospital) that he totally disapproved of ABM and urged no deployment. This after I'd been chewed out in the morning for giving him Garment's anti-ABM memo (didn't want arguments after decision made).

I had a key staff meeting in the afternoon to "game plan" the whole ABM reaction program. Assigned contacts, etc. Fascinating to see scope of what we have to cover to lay adequate groundwork for using our support and blunting the opposition. Tension fairly high as everyone realizes explosive potential of the whole issue. I think if we handle it right we'll come out OK - but this is clearly the first tough test. President is concerned and edgy, but I'll bet he brings it off well, although it will be a pretty unpopular decision.

Had dinner and a talk with Chapin tonight. Also during the day I locked up Ellsworth as NATO Ambassador, and I think Pete Flanigan for White House staff to handle personnel, plus Ellsworth's agencies.