



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

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Friday, January 30.

Press conference tonight. No schedule all day in preparation. President spent whole day at EOB till one hour before air time - then to the house to get dressed. Called couple of times on specific questions. Also on subject of Key Biscayne helipad. Buchanan included in briefing material a wire story on cost of construction, etc., which got him all stirred up. He wanted Ziegler to get straight story out - regarding not on his property, not built at his request but for Secret Service and defense evacuation. Went over whole thing several times. Then called back a little while later and started in again - said "Let me quietly try to explain it to you," and ticked off all the points.

Good press conference - he was more combative and hit harder than in others. Afterwards called me in Mess to get an evaluation - and asked that Ehrlichman, Kissinger, and I do a total evaluation of the whole drill. Made point that there are 178 questions in his briefing books, and only did 18 on air. So a lot of extra work. Said why don't we do it like de Gaulle - who would talk for thirty minutes then answer four questions that he had ordered asked, and only once or twice a year.

Called me later while in theater for Civilization movie and said David had raised good point - regarding why put President through all the work of preparation when sixteen of eighteen questions were antagonistic (even from our friends) - which made a good show for President but not really in the best interest of the country. A question of weighing the value against the effort and the risk. Wants us to take a hard look.

Also wants to see how many press conferences LBJ and JFK did in their later years, after they wised up to fact they were doing them no good. Feels it would be much better to get exposure on our ground and with our issues, i.e., mini press conferences once a week or so - one subject only - and look for other better ways of exposure. I believe he may be right - and that the fireside chat approach should also be considered. Would sure be better atmosphere for selling the points we want to sell.



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Huge flap today over leak of budget in *Washington Post*. President not too upset - but staff meeting was a real blow. Ziegler and Kissinger both pretty shook - and Ehrlichman really rough on Ziegler especially. Turns out leak was probably GPO. I called McCracken because it appeared CEA was the source, and he immediately offered to resign.

President later made point that these leaks are a real problem because they will necessitate his eliminating the planning and discussion meetings which he doesn't like anyway and only holds for therapy. Says LBJ and other Presidents have overreacted, and he won't. But still is a problem. Wants me to get this point over to the staff. Actually we've done quite well - but this is really a bad one. Although in long haul, it does a pretty good job for us of getting a longer ride out of the budget story - but creates monumental problems with the rest of the press, and even more so with Congress. All in all, though, we moved on a major crisis - made some big decisions and handled it pretty well.