



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

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Thursday, March 4.

Press Conference day. The President spent the whole day over at the EOB working on his briefing book, did call several times on the phone, but I didn't see him at all during the day. He decided, as usual, not to use makeup and then backed down under Carruthers' urging, and agreed to go ahead and do it after all.

We had some little items. He was very disturbed because Hodgson had gotten a good agreement with the building trades unions, and we didn't get any coverage on it. It was an excellent follow-up on Davis-Bacon, and we missed it. He had gotten into reading the text of the last in office press conference and came up with the conclusion that the stories from that press conference were very accurate and proper as far as the press is concerned, but they focused on the figures and statistics and left out the positive points that the President made, because they were not new and, therefore, not news. But he feels that on the TV thing at night tonight, he can get those points over, and he could do that even if we were just filming in the office, which would force them to cover. He's concerned, in the in-office news conferences, that we don't have a way, unless we film them, to force the press to cover our points instead of just the hot news. So his feeling is that we should do nothing unless it's on television that we should push for this kind of coverage on everything we do. He realizes that people can't play back the answers that he gives on TV, but it still has an effect on their attitudes, because they actually see the President explaining the situation to them. I think he's right, and this is a recognition we need to have and carry out.

He fully recognizes the importance of covering Laos adequately tonight and talked about it considerably during the day with an understanding that he's got to get the point across of why we're there and what we're trying to do. As it turned out, he did this beautifully in the press conference, especially with one spectacular answer regarding the press' predictions during Cambodia, which of course, didn't come true and now there are similar kinds of predictions on Laos, which also won't come true. He really zapped the TV. The text of this press conference is a



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good one to pick up on. There's a lot in it, because he not only hit the television that way, but also hit the press indirectly on the point that he had answered a number of these questions in his in-office news conference, but they were not adequately reported which is why the press has to ask them again.

We got the results of our poll, which I gave him, showing his popularity down to 48. This bothered him a little bit, but he felt it was good for us to get this, because if not we wouldn't have learned how useless our domestic programs are. He feels we need a much more skeptical attitude regarding the importance of domestic programs, and that we must have the President seen on TV more often in the things the people are interested in, and then use radio for the other kinds of things, the domestic stuff. Also, to get the personal side over, we should use the soft stuff, the social events and all that kind of thing, rather than the domestic program details, unless they're on a hot issue like crimes or bombing, and so on. He feels that we also have to consider whether there's a possibility that maybe the people just don't like our domestic programs and look at the way Reagan romped on welfare as being maybe a better way of going at this than we have.

He also is concerned about tempering down the NSC staff, who are going to push for accomplishing more and more in Vietnam, and feels we've got to calm them down. He agreed to the cancellation of Rochester tomorrow, after we got weather reports indicating blizzard conditions and a very difficult situation trying to get in there. That's a real break for us, because there were threats of some major demonstrations by both hardhats and students, and this was a good way to get out of it. We hung it on the weather, got Rockefeller and the Mayor to agree with us, and it worked out beautifully.

End of March 4.