

“The National Pride Thing”

Date: September 6, 1972

Participant: Richard M. Nixon

Participant: H. R. “Bob” Haldeman

Start Time: 16:42

Place: Oval Office

President Nixon and White House chief of staff H. R. “Bob” Haldeman reflected on the media’s treatment of the Munich Olympics. They expressed both appreciation and astonishment, in particular, for the ABC television network’s willingness to close its nightly broadcasts with the playing of the national anthem.

H. R. “Bob” Haldeman: There was enormous reaction to the national pride stuff that came through in the Olympics.

President Nixon: Oh, was there?

Haldeman: Before all this stuff. But—yeah. Because—and ABC [American Broadcasting Corporation], I don’t know why they did it, but they did a hell of a good job on the national pride thing. And

President Nixon: Good. Very good. I only saw it a couple nights.

Haldeman: Having the kids—they closed every night with the national anthem. They always closed with an American getting a gold medal, and they’re playing the “Star Spangled Banner.”

President Nixon: Yeah.

Haldeman: So that the close of the program was always the national anthem.

President Nixon: I didn’t—never saw the close.

Haldeman: And some of it was just that thing with that kid—what’s his name? [*Unclear*]—

President Nixon: [David J. “Dave”] Wottle.

Haldeman: Wottle, with the hat, was really something. Then they got him the next night in an interview, and he was absolutely mortified. He said, “I was so overcome that I forgot I had my hat on, and I forgot to take it off. And I would never stand for the national anthem with my hat on.” You know, and he just went on and on about how sorry he was he had done this and disgraced his country and everything, you know?

President Nixon: [*speaking under Haldeman*] Great. Great. Great.

Haldeman: But when he was standing there, he had tears just pouring down his face. I mean, the guy was just overcome [*President Nixon acknowledges*] when they played the national anthem.

President Nixon: Yeah.

Haldeman: I'm sure that people all over [*President Nixon acknowledges*] this country were standing there, sitting there, watching their TV with tears pouring down.

President Nixon: Marvelous. Marvelous.

Haldeman: People want to be proud. I don't know why ABC did it. I don't know. I was amazed.

President Nixon: Well, they're, of the three networks, the least unpatriotic, shall we say. [*Haldeman acknowledges.*] The least unpatriotic.

Haldeman: [*speaking under President Nixon*] Yeah, exactly. Well, it was . . . it was impressive.

End of excerpt.

“Richard M. Nixon and H. R. Haldeman on 6 September 1972,” Conversation 770-001, Draft Transcript, Presidential Recordings Program, Miller Center of Public Affairs, University of Virginia.