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PERSONAL AND CONFIDENTIAL

5703 Warwick Place
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TO: Clifford Miller

DATE: April 3, 1972

FROM: Lloyd Free

You have asked for my views about the President's prospects; I shall give them to you with complete frankness. Despite the current Harris poll which shows Nixon comfortably ahead of Muskie, I would still estimate the President's chances of reelection in November as being no better than 50-50, as things now look. And Arch Crossley (of Crossley Ratings and Crossley Poll fame) who, although a loyal Republican, is one of the shrewdest, most objective political observers I have ever come across, thinks the odds are even more adverse than that.

As in the case of almost everyone but a fanatic who evaluates any President, there are a number of things the President has said and done that I, personally, do not like. But, on balance, I firmly believe that his substantive record is extraordinarily good; or perhaps I should say that it will be if only Congress can be forced or cajoled into passing some of the really fundamental legislation he has proposed (e.g., the family assistance, or minimum income plan, which is truly revolutionary in getting at some of the basics of the poverty problem; his revenue sharing proposal which digs down to the very roots of a cluster of current misalignments; his programs in the field of education; etc.) And, on the international front, he has, indeed, been a blazer in marking out the trail the United States must follow in the changed world it now must operate in.

Why, then, isn't the President an overwhelming favorite at the present time, enjoying as he does the advantages of incumbency (which can also be an enormous disadvantage if the incumbent has done unpopular things, which isn't the case with

Nixon), and having made repeated, dramatic moves in recent months which would have driven the popularity ratings of almost any other President in history up sky-high (e.g., even Truman's approval figure rose from a low of 35% in January of 1947 to 60% in March, following his announcement of the program of aid to Greece and Turkey).

In part, the reasons, I believe, lie in certain personality characteristics and behavioral patterns of the President, which I shall discuss later on; but also, in certain of the psychological symptoms prevalent in the times we live in.

Ideological Conservatism vs. Operational Liberalism

As a first step toward getting at this psychological dimension, I must refer, somewhat egotistically, to a book of mine called "The Political Beliefs of Americans." [Incidentally, whether rightly or not, Evans and Novak in one of their columns published in February of 1968, on the eve of the President's victorious campaign, reported that "considerable attention at Nixon headquarters has been devoted to (this) obscure new book."]

The central thesis of this book is an idea which had never really been systematically developed before. It is that, when you question Americans about their abstract notions regarding the proper role and sphere of government, and especially about the nature and functioning of our economic system -- when you question them, that is, at the ideological level, the majority prove to be ideological conservatives, opposed in theory to the utilization of governmental power and resources for accomplishing social ends. But, at the same time, when you question these same people at the operational level of government programs (e.g., of the New Deal to Great Society types), it turns out that a large majority are operational liberals, who strongly support, in practice, appropriate governmental actions to promote social objectives.

Thus what every American politician has to cope with is a bunch of mixed-up schizoids who are -- or think they are -- ideologically conservative, but who,

practically speaking, are operationally liberal. It is for this reason that my advice to any candidate or President is this: talk like an ideological conservative; but act like an operational liberal.

In a very real sense, this is exactly what the President has been doing for the most part (e.g., stressing the work incentive angle in connection with his truly liberal family assistance plan.) But there has not been quite enough consistency or persistent follow through on either of these scores to give an impression of deeply held sincerity. (This aspect of the matter will be discussed more in detail below.)

The Deeper Psychological Dimension

At this stage, I feel I must become quite philosophical because I believe an approach at the most basic level is necessary for any real understanding of the psychological predicament, that we, as a people, a society, a nation, find ourselves in at the present time. Please bear with me for a page or two of what may at first seem vaporings; I promise that some practical suggestions will emerge at the end.

Putting our present situation into historical perspective, it has been my belief for a long time that, ever since the end of World War I, this country (and, indeed, much of the rest of the developed world) has been in a period of gradual breakdown of cultural mores in the broadest sense of the term. (Why major wars so often serve as catalysts along these lines, I do not pretend to understand; but the fact of the matter is that they usually do. And we have obviously had a succession of such catalysts: World War I, World War II, the Korean War, and now Vietnam, all in my lifetime.)

By "cultural mores" I am not alluding alone to matters of morals or ethics, although these too are clearly included; but to the whole system of fixed, morally

binding customs and folkways of central importance which are accepted without question in any given society.

I believe and hope that we are in the final stages of this breakdown, which reflects itself as well in a loss of confidence in all, or almost all, of the major institutions of our culture: government, business, labor, the church, even in a very real sense the family as we have known it (hence these experiments with such things as communal living).

Americans as a whole, in short, are frustrated to the very teeth with things as they are -- with the status quo, in other words. And unfortunately the President of the United States, whoever he may be from time to time, almost inevitably becomes the chief symbol of the politico-economic-social status quo, which is one of Mr. Nixon's main problems at this moment. (Parenthetically, a stance of operational liberalism can help in this connection because it clearly implies that the President is not resting on the status quo, but is trying to change things.)

Populism

Americans generally are so frustrated, in fact, that I feel relatively confident that they will soon prove receptive to some new kind of individual and social philosophy of life, not yet visible on the horizon. Whether this new philosophy will take on a predominately religious cast (e.g., as with Christianity), or a predominately politico-socio-economic cast (as with communism and fascism), I cannot foretell. But what I have been saying for some years is that, either way, I feel reasonably sure that the new philosophy that finally takes hold will involve large elements of populism (a term which, suddenly, is being increasingly bandied about in recent weeks). The fundamentals of this populist movement will almost surely include a lashing out at big government, big business, big unions, big what-have-you -- anything and everything big -- in favor of smallness on al-

most every front, so as to permit at least the illusion of more meaningful involvement and participation by individuals in the workings of the society in which they live and have their beings.

While populism, as a philosophy, has not yet been given a coherent, convincing formulation in our times (as it received in the days of William Jennings Bryan), the latent feelings which will eventually reinforce a populist movement in this country are already with us in the way of growing distrust and disillusionment with bigness. And it is of vital importance, even at this stage that the President and the members of his Administration not touch the public's sensitive nerve ends which a little later are going to generate and reinforce a real populist movement because, whenever they do, they will get incipient, if not pronounced, knee-jerk reactions.

The record of the Administration on the "big government" side is excellent, taking into account its proposals for governmental decentralization, revenue sharing, "returning power to the people", etc. And, when it comes to "big labor", things couldn't possibly be better, thanks in large part to George Meany.

The "Tilt" toward Big Business

But (and forgive me for putting it so bluntly), the record in terms of complacency, if not permissiveness toward the wealthy and coziness with "big business" could hardly be worse: tax breaks for business, viewed as being at the expense of individual taxpayers; tax loopholes which allow men with enormous incomes to get off scot-free of taxes; a wage-price control system which large numbers of people are beginning to say controls the wages of the little man, all right, but not the prices charged by business; regulatory agencies that are suspected of acting not to control business but to give business what it wants; the Smith-Alessio San Diego mess (whatever the facts); and, finally, the really crowning blow, the ITT affair,

involving more especially Kleindienst (who, at best, is undoubtedly looked upon by now, in general, as being too business-oriented to act even-handedly as Attorney General) and Peter Flanigan (who has become far too conspicuous as a symbol of the "wheeling and dealing" that must inevitably go on between government and big business, but which should never be allowed to show on the surface).

The impact of such things is heightened because the Republican Party, in the public's view, has traditionally been looked upon as more business-oriented than people-oriented. Thus many are ready to believe almost any charges having to do with collaboration, collusion, conspiracy, and/or corruption as between Republican officials and businessmen. Against this background, I suspect that by now the Nixon Administration is considered by many to be the most business-oriented since literally the days of Warren G. Harding (of Teapot Dome fame), Cal Coolidge, and Herbert Hoover -- a posture which is basically inconsistent, of course, with the platform of operational liberalism (cloaked in conservative terminology) which I personally feel it is necessary for Mr. Nixon to stand on if he is to be reelected.

Correcting the "Tilt"

In my view, the situation has become so serious in this respect that it may demand that the Administration take some or all of the following drastic actions in the very near future:

- (1) Advocate a new tax bill eliminating some of the tax breaks presently afforded business (meaning, in practice, big business);
- (2) Tighten up on tax loopholes for the wealthy so apparently drastically that it will seem that a "soak the rich" measure is being proposed;

- (3) Institute, immediately and vigorously, several anti-trust actions against some of the huge conglomerates (perhaps ITT included);
- (4) Clamp down - really clamp down - on price increases;
- (5) Straighten up some of the regulatory agencies in their currently obvious "tilt" toward big business.

Such steps as these would, of course, reinforce the image of the President as an operational liberal. And, oddly enough, they would also be entirely consistent with the better elements of American conservative credos and the finest traditions of the Republican Party, both of which historically (before they become somewhat more sophisticated and thus contaminated) put great stress upon individualism, anti-bigness, and anti-trust-ism. (After all, Teddy Roosevelt was a good Republican, too, in one of the most glorious hours of the Party).

Talking Unlike an Ideological Conservative

Earlier in this memorandum I expressed the opinion that the President, in playing the role of an ideological conservative, had not been entirely consistent. Let me illustrate by citing the way he has handled, verbally, certain aspects of the Federal Government's financial plight. Obviously, under present circumstances, he has had no choice but to follow essentially Keynesian policies. But why did he fall into the trap of talking like a Keynesian, defending his deficit spending on such grounds as a "full employment budget?"

Instead, for example, he might have likened the present situation the nation finds itself in to that of the average family. When times get a little bad, and there isn't enough readily available cash to pay the bills, what do they do to maintain a decent standard of living? Why borrow, of course, from a bank or credit company; and then pay back the money when times get better. This is the kind of simple, indeed simplistic metaphor that people, the common people, understand and appreciate, not a bunch of Keynesian-type gibberish which may, it is true, appeal to John Kenneth Galbraith and his ilk; but they're bound to vote against Mr. Nixon anyway.

Sustaining the Role of an Operational Liberal

The President has also, in my opinion, not been sufficiently consistent or convincing in playing the role of an operational liberal, despite the many excellent proposals along these lines he has made to Congress. In almost every case, he has introduced his ideas with great fanfare (indeed, sometimes fanfare too full-blown) and then given the impression of forgetting all about them, leaving them to languish largely undisturbed in the bowels of a Congress too somnolent to pass the President's programs, and too constipated to produce its own.

Instead, as he did recently in his most welcome message to Congress about welfare, etc., he ought to be pushing these things almost daily between now and the election, wheedling, cajoling, threatening, exhorting.

Along these lines, he has a built-in issue of the sort that won Truman the election in 1948, if he will only start playing his cards, not only skillfully, but quickly. It is that, when it comes to acting on the President's programs, this has been a "do-nothing" Congress; and when it comes to what our Democratic legislators have attempted on their own, it has been an irresponsible Congress, talking, talking, talking, about spending, spending, spending billions and billions and billions of the taxpayers' hard-earned dollars. This is a made-to-order issue for the obvious reason that, assuming as I do that neither Lindsay nor Wallace has a chance, every single likely Democratic opponent of the President's is a member of this "do-nothing", irresponsible Congress, and hence vulnerable to this particular charge.

Domestic vs. International Concerns

The President's failure in the past to push hard and consistently for his domestic proposals, while at the same time repeatedly exhibiting his obviously greater interest in, and preoccupation with international affairs, has no doubt

lead to the unfortunate impression in much of the country that he is not really concerned about the domestic front. Yet this front is where the chief worries and fears of the people are clustered. (Public opinion studies conducted originally by my Institute and repeated not long ago by Potomac Associates show, for example, that the proportion of Americans agreeing with the statement that "we shouldn't think so much in international terms but concentrate more on our own national problems here at home" rose from 55% in 1964; to 60% in 1968; to 77% in the spring of 1971; and this figure would, in my opinion, be even higher if the question were posed again today.)

"Nixon Dosen't Care!"

Against this background, it is obvious that the President has opened himself up to the charge carried on placards in the recent protest march, here in Washington, against the Administration's welfare plan: "Nixon dosen't care!" (The misspelling itself made the slogan all the more poignant in my view.)

Along these lines, the most damaging side effects that can flow from a business-oriented move is illustrated by the appointment of Earl Butz as Secretary of Agriculture -- Butz the very personification of big agri-business. And now, of course, just because of that background, he is predictably trying to maintain his unsteady, defensive stance vis-a-vis the dirt farmers by supporting recent rises in food prices -- even going so far as to say that "the price of steak is just right." I can well imagine what the reaction to this has been on the part of housewives throughout the country, one of whose primary worries has been over the cost of living, and particularly the cost of food: i.e., the Nixon Administration just doesn't care.

Nixon's Weaknesses

There are such weaknesses as the types described above in the Nixon drive for reelection. And then there are certain vulnerabilities which derive from personal traits or tendencies on the part of the President himself, which by now are probably so ingrained as to be incurable. But, if we are going to have an objective picture of the difficulties as a whole, they had better be mentioned briefly (there is no use dwelling over them) because of the impact they have had on his public image, as I understand it.

He has given the impression through the years of being without constant principles or convictions; of having no basic philosophy to guide himself by; of being the opportunist compleat. (Please do not misunderstand me. I am only saying that this is how a large segment of the public views him. My own personal evaluation is that, par excellence, he is a "problem solver", which obviously requires a flexible, pragmatic, non-doctrinaire approach. On this score, I, myself, would give the President high marks, just as I do Nelson Rockefeller.)

To make matters worse, the President has reinforced this image of philosophical instability in recent months by dramatic, sudden, shocking turn-about in areas in regard to which the public thought they had a fix on his positions (e.g., wage and price controls, rapprochement with China, anti-busing). The merits or demerits of these latter-day stands (all of which I personally endorse in varying degrees) are not the issue here; it is rather that these turn-about have made him seem a turn-coat, from whom you don't know what to expect next, since there appear to be no constancies conditioning his behavior.

While I'm on this subject, I might as well add one more dimension. Taking the President's record as a whole, he has said and done things in one problem area which are philosophically inconsistent (or seem philosophically inconsistent) with things he has said and done in other problem areas. No consistent pattern

clearly and visibly permeates the plexus as a whole, and this has left the public doubtful, distressed, and distrustful. (One of the most naive beliefs of Americans is that political actions should somehow spring from a consistent system of sincere beliefs in enduring principles, permeated with some kind of humanitarian schmaltz.)

Then, to further confound this impression of insincerity, the President has repeatedly handled things in such a way as to give the false appearance of being a contriver and conniver, preoccupied largely with his own self-interests. (Why, a good many of the public are asking, did he wait until after the Wallace vote had been counted in Florida before announcing his anti-busing stand? Why did he seem to delay his visits to Peking and Moscow so that they would occur at the most opportunistic time: early in an election year? Etc., etc. The public's naive questions along these line seem to go on and on.)

My advice in this connection is, of course, obvious: for Mr. Nixon, if he can do so, to play things in a more sincere, consistent, sophisticated, and subtle fashion from now until the election, without any more dramatic spectacles, let alone turn-about. Let's let the impression seep in that this man is what no doubt he actually is: a solid, responsible, even staid citizen leader, who puts the good of the country ahead of his own self-interest any and every day of any and every week.

My Final Message

The fundamental message of this memorandum is that the way (in my view, the only way) that might remedy the present weaknesses the President must overcome if he is to be reelected is for him to get it all together for a change: to talk consistently like an ideological conservative; to act consistently and vigorously, with constant follow through, as an operational liberal.

By opting for operational liberalism (cloaked in conservative terminology) he may gain a distinct advantage over his Democratic opponent, unless that opponent be either Scoop Jackson or George Wallace on the Democratic ticket, both of which alternatives seem unlikely as of now.

The name of the game this time, as I see it, is for Mr. Nixon to force the Democrat as far over to the left as possible, aided and abetted, of course, by the non-too-subtle pressures of the left-wing of the Democratic Party: to push him so far over to the left, in fact, that the bulk of routine Democrats will not and cannot follow him.

This is one election which Richard Nixon, the man and the incumbent, cannot win, all on his own; he's got to see to it that the Democrat loses.

Keeping the Conservatives in Line

But how can the President keep both the right-wing of his own party and as many potential Wallace supporters as possible in line while he is operating liberally? Apart from a few nuts like Bill Buckley, who really stand for little in the overall national picture but their own brilliance, I believe this might be possible through the President taking the following steps:

- (1) By talking consistently and loudly like an ideological conservative, and rationalizing his liberal programs in these terms;
- (2) By continuing to stress such issues as anti-busing, anti-big-government-ism, decentralization, revenue sharing, and more local control and "power to the people";
- (3) Probably by keeping Agnew on the ticket (although before a final decision is made on this matter some serious, in-depth national polling should be conducted, if it has not been done already);
- (4) By allowing the running feud with most of the leaders of the big unions to continue unabated, stirring it up again if necessary;

- (5) And, finally, by adopting measures which will ostentatiously correct the present "tilt" toward big business, as suggested above.

This last point may seem an odd way to appeal to right-wingers, as we usually conceive of them; but I believe it is well taken. The true conservatives (the genuine philosophical conservatives, as distinguished from the opportunistic conservatives who run most big businesses) share one credo in common with the "populists" among Wallace's potential followers: opposition to big-ness, whether it be a matter of government, of labor unions, or of business. (For example, the surveys underlying my book, "The Political Beliefs of Americans", showed that conservatives were far more anti-big-business not only than middle-of-the-roaders but even than liberals! Unlike the liberals, solid majorities felt that large corporations should have less, not more influence on governmental and political matters).

These conservatives believe, thoroughly and fervently, in the private enterprise system, of course; but the image they hold of private enterprise is one of small businesses, not big business. Moves especially to crush the monopolies, to smash the cartels, to break up the conglomerates would, I feel sure, have particular appeal to most of them.

Nor do I think we need fear any great backlash from the business side, itself. After all, where is business going to turn? To Wallace, that thoroughgoing populist? To those antithetical, outspoken liberals (who don't talk conservative ideology) McGovern, Muskie, or even Humphrey? Perhaps to Scoop Jackson, but I would give him only about one chance in ten of winning the nomination at this point; and even his overall domestic record is dangerously liberal from the business point of view, or could be made to appear so.

So what have we got to fear but fear itself -- or such an ingrained, entrenched anti-social bias on the part of the President and his cohorts that the people will feel they cannot be trusted to govern this democracy?

If the President will only do what the situation requires, on the other hand, I feel sure he can move on to victory.