

Richard Nixon Presidential Library  
Contested Materials Collection  
Folder List

<u>Box Number</u>	<u>Folder Number</u>	<u>Document Date</u>	<u>No Date</u>	<u>Subject</u>	<u>Document Type</u>	<u>Document Description</u>
8	1	7/21/1972	<input type="checkbox"/>	Campaign	Memo	From Whitaker to Haldeman and Ehrlichman presenting a general campaign strategy. Handwritten notes added by unknown. 8 pgs.
8	1	7/22/1972	<input type="checkbox"/>	Campaign	Memo	From Clawson, through Higby, to Haldeman RE: campaign strategy. Handwritten notes added by unknown. 2 pgs.

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

July 21, 1972

ADMINISTRATIVELY CONFIDENTIAL

MEMORANDUM FOR: H. R. HALDEMAN

JOHN D. EHRLICHMAN

FROM:

John C. Whitaker



SUBJECT:

Campaign Strategy

This is in response to Ken Cole's request for ideas on what the President might do from now through November, and Larry Higby's memorandum of July 19 (Tab A) requesting an update of my earlier thoughts on campaign strategy.

First, there are a number of things that the President can do that McGovern can't, capitalizing on the fact of being President. He can sign a bill, with a hoopla signing ceremony (or veto one frowning into the free TV cameras); he can have substantive meetings with international leaders, or their emissaries; he can have substantive meetings with Governors or Mayors (McGovern can meet with the latter group, but only in the stance of being briefed or looking strictly political.)

The idea of speeches only from the Oval Office gives me some problems. Beyond the obvious Presidential ones like veto messages or reports on the status of peace talks on Vietnam, it seems to me that other substantive dissertations, on either domestic or foreign topics such as drugs, busing, crime or international detente, whether on TV or radio, would, I assume, have to be paid for. This is out of my field, but I think that, particularly in the middle of a campaign, even truly national addresses will have to be accompanied by equal time for Democratic rejoinder under the Fairness Doctrine. Thus I am not

ADMINISTRATIVELY CONFIDENTIAL

sure how many of our eggs we want to put in the speech-from-the-White House basket. As a partial alternative, it seems to me that the plethora of fairly major Administration announcements which we traditionally handle by a 2,000-word handout from Ziegler accompanied by a Cabinet Officer press briefing might better be handled from now to November by the President himself making a 100-word statement to the TV cameras in Ziegler's shop. This will net us purely news TV coverage -- no opportunity for free reply -- and 30 to 90 seconds on the national evening news which is as much as we could expect from a more exhausting event like an all-day trip to St. Louis.

At the Convention

I feel strongly that we should get the President in and out of Miami Beach as quickly as possible because of the danger of confrontation with demonstrators (assuming that our best intelligence is the same as what I pick up from the papers). The relatively dull predictable show on the inside is bound to drive the TV networks outside the Convention Hall looking for street drama. Even a minor fracas there, dull though it may be, would probably be more photogenic than the business of the convention. Any interplay between the President and the demonstrators is going to be compared by the media and the viewers with the scene of the McGovern confrontation with the hippies in the Doral lobby which got pretty good notices. I think an overnight at Key Biscayne would be running a real risk because, even though you can seal off the causeway, there would probably be a confrontation there or outside the President's compound. Any defensive maneuver like that would just be played as the President ducking these strident types whom McGovern at least had the guts to talk to.

Thus my suggestion for the President's personal involvement with Miami Beach would be for him to leave about eight o'clock on Wednesday night (possibly with live TV from the South Lawn of

ADMINISTRATIVELY CONFIDENTIAL

his departure, either consulting with HAK or JDE on pressing State business, or even pouring over papers in his residence). I would fly directly into Homestead Air Force Base (TV but closed arrival and no comment to press), and chopper to the convention site timed for the President to make his acceptance speech about 10:15. (By 9:00 p.m. EDT people are not off the Los Angeles freeways and in front of their TV sets.) Immediately after his acceptance speech, I would have him make an unexpected visit to a separate location where a large, screened youth group would be having a meeting, unwarned that the President would join them. The point would be to have all under 25, and even some screened long-hairs, to drive home the point that everybody under 25 with long hair isn't for McGovern. After about a 30-minute hard-hitting speech to this group (maybe even some Q&A's, if we trust our screening enough), I would have the President get back in his helicopter and get back to Washington so that on Thursday he could be back at his usual stand being President. On Thursday, I would try to get lots of film in the White House (bill signing, National Security Council or Cabinet Meeting) -- in other words, strictly "playing President."

If our media types have hard data showing that the Wednesday TV audience will be a bust if we have a dull Tuesday night show, I would like to see a scenario such as I have just outlined moved up to Tuesday night if we can possibly get away with it without ruining the convention to the extent that Wednesday is purely anti-climax. Even a precedent-shattering move like having a two-day convention would be better in my mind than having the President spend two days in Miami Beach. One final thought -- if the problem is to build some drama into Wednesday night to assure a good TV audience, might it be possible to delay announcement of the President's choice of a running mate until then? -- That's "bassackwards" to tradition, but why not - provided the President doesn't plan to announce the V.P. pre-convention.

Particularly if we restrict the President's time in town, the risks of confrontation with hippies apply nearly as strongly to Mrs. Nixon and the rest of the First Family and to the Vice President. I agree that we should do everything we can to avoid their

ADMINISTRATIVELY CONFIDENTIAL

being in direct proximity to the demonstrators, but this kind of defensive strategy argues even more strongly for having the President do a youth-oriented event while in town such as the youth forum described above.

General Campaign Strategy

We have become the heir of the old FDR coalition -- almost -- and the South for sure - ethnic groups in the North (Jewish and Catholic in particular) and, to a lesser extent, Labor. We should push Jewish and Catholic events for the President and embrace the tax credit for private schools more visibly -- beyond just endorsing the Mills bill. -- I know some Christian Scientists who don't buy this.

Assuming that the President's lead in the popularity polls is now about 16%, I think that we should run a low-risk campaign unless that gap gets down to 8%, or is dropping toward 8% precipitously. The question, as I see it, is how to run such a low-risk campaign without appearing to be doing so. Here is my list of don'ts:

- Don't do any large political rallies - not one.
- Don't engage in any debates.
- Don't hold any press conferences for only the national press that are advertised in advance. -- East Room format.

The press is vital. The President has won when the press was with him (1968) and lost when the press was not (1960 and 1962).

(1) I think he has to give them some deep-think liberal red meat to pontificate about and give at least the appearance of accessibility. The thought pieces, I think, can be delivered as radio addresses. The theme would be of a thoughtful, forward-looking President winning the peace abroad and of solving our domestic problems, but with the job only half done. Interviews with pundits would be good.

ADMINISTRATIVELY CONFIDENTIAL

(2) As for press conferences, on the national level maybe 2 or 3 from now to the election. I would have the President do quickie press conferences in the Oval Office so that the national scribes don't come in loaded for bear.

(3) In addition, I would concentrate on the regional media in places like, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Dallas, St. Louis, Detroit and New York by calling press conferences without warning. While the national press would have to be included in these, and would be primed with their questions in advance, the softer questions from the more numerous regional reps should predominate. In addition, properly chosen regional sessions like these can ensure that the President's message gets to the voters in areas which he needs to win, but can't afford the time to pick his way through personally. For example, we could cover the southern media effectively from Atlanta and New Orleans, and New England by visiting Boston (a town which is tough to get in and out of because of the huge numbers of students, but where the New England impact should be worth the aggravation). -- Denver for the Rocky Mountains and Portland for the Pacific Northwest. We may want to consider paying for campaign air time to televise these in the particular region. The first few we might get away with scheduling without any advance notice on staff time in areas where the local media speaks to a particular constituency without having to pull the reporters out of the boondocks (such as Chicago for the farm belt). The strategy of suddenly-called press conferences in cities could change to announcing press conferences in advance -- buying regional TV time and sucking in reporters from the boondocks if his point spread with McGovern narrows, and he wants to increase the risks.

I recognize that the appearance of large crowds applauding the President is desirable on the nightly TV news. While I think the risk of rallies (hippies and a bore to the press) to produce them is too great to run, I think we can accomplish the same result in the eyes of the TV cameras by doing motorcades on the way to substantive events. The motorcade can stop occasionally and, if the crowd is friendly, the President could step up on his car

ADMINISTRATIVELY CONFIDENTIAL

and deliver a short general purpose speech. (By this time we must have something better than the old LBJ bullhorn.) This will require us to develop a pithy five-minute speech, or a series of them -- but not the 25-30 minute "the speech" for rallies that he has used in past campaigns.

One thing that we often talk about but seldom get done is a local color event. This is another easy way to free TV time and can help portray the President as a human being as opposed to the Machiavellian politician that McGovern will seek to make of him. I remember the success of the President's early morning visit to the peace demonstrators at the Lincoln Memorial, and hope that we can be imaginative enough to work in some similar "unplanned" scenes like dropping by a local diner at 7:00 a.m. and sharing a cup of coffee with a couple of truck drivers.

I have a general aversion to telethons, but if we are looking for a television extravaganza, I like the format of the international town meeting. By satellite, we could have the network representatives in a number of international capitols relaying live questions answered by the President here in Washington. This would play to his strength -- international affairs, and even hostile questions, unlike those that come from domestic hecklers, tend to unite our citizens as "us" against "them." A "foreign heckler" will unite the country just like the Jews and Arabs would love each other if attacked by moon men. I like that format so much that I think we should consider paying for it. If we can get it free (and equal time for McGovern), then let him sympathize with the foreign heckler -- a good trap.

Pace of Campaign

Before the convention I think the President should schedule one major domestic event out of town. He should also continue to be visible going about the serious business of Government. Right after the convention, on Friday, August 25 (the day after his return from Miami), I think he should do a substantive domestic

ADMINISTRATIVELY CONFIDENTIAL

event in either Philadelphia or Chicago. (I would prefer Chicago because I think we ought to save Philadelphia for Labor Day, although I don't have any specific event in mind for that important date -- I'm just tempted by the Rizzo angle.) The Chicago event could be a meeting with midwestern farm media together with Butz and Peterson highlighting the Russian grain deal. Although I don't know how, it would be nice to get Daley involved. A noon-time motorcade sounds like a natural, but that brings echoes of '68 which is a definite negative. On August 29, I think he should go off to Texas to do screwworms with Escheverria and John Connally (don't laugh, it's really a good regional story), but because that would be a joke as a national newslead, we need another event besides screwworms with a Mexican-American flavor done the same day.

As the campaign progresses, I would attempt to schedule no more than one trip a week -- and always substantive. The only out-of-country trip I can foresee might be one to Mexico, depending on how we read the effect on and need for the Chicano vote. The rest of the newsleads would come from Washington and, with the exception of paid radio talks and paid TV, would be natural outgrowths of being President.

The First Family

I think we should bend every effort to get them out of Washington and keep them on the road. Human interest shots in the Washington papers aren't going to be of any help. The only specific thought I have is that Mrs. Nixon's Legacy of Parks national tour was so successful that we may want to replay it -- if there is one thing that we can find in all of the key states, it's parks.

Theme of Campaign

From the disarray of the Democratic years, the President has made an important start at restructuring international and domestic affairs to bring us peace, stability and progress. But his reforms

ADMINISTRATIVELY CONFIDENTIAL

are still in the process of becoming -- his Presidency is only halfway home. We need to put that theme into a catchy phrase to compete with McGovern's (Fauntroy's?) "Come home, America." The major danger, as I see it strategically, is that McGovern will succeed in identifying himself as a general spokesman for discontent and the need for change -- a mood that the polls show is shared by a majority of the people. We have got to avoid being cast as defenders of the status quo. We should try to show, rather, that the President's first term has been one of change -- in restructuring international relationships, in proposing basic governmental reform, in salving the American spirit from the divisiveness of 1968 -- but that his type of change builds on the past that has made our country great and does not repudiate it.

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

July 22, 1972

EYES ONLY/ADMINISTRATIVELY CONFIDENTIAL

MEMORANDUM FOR: H. R. HALDEMAN  
THRU: L. HIGBY  
FROM: KEN W. CLAWSON *KC*  
SUBJECT: CAMPAIGN STRATEGY

(1) The President has maintained a high-level, busy executive posture between the conventions with the single exception of greeting Frank Fitzsimmons and members of the Teamsters Union Executive Board at San Clemente. I think this exception to the generally high-level tone the President has set was a justifiable one and really quite valuable.

(2) I am still convinced that in general terms the high level Presidential posture is still the most valid, but it is only meaningful if all 100 plus surrogates and, for that matter, the whole government apparatus is campaigning like hell from this moment until election day.

I feel strongly that to "free" the President to comfortably maintain his image as a Presidential candidate lies in how effectively the surrogates and the government apparatus really hurl themselves into the campaign. If we are less effective than we should be, I envision it becoming necessary for the President to come off his best posture and to, in effect, take over the campaign by interjecting himself fully into the fray. I find most Cabinet Officers and high-level surrogates with whom we deal are anxious to campaign extensively, but I think it is imperative that we monitor the surrogates program extremely closely to make sure we are getting every ounce of energy into the campaign.

As far as travel is concerned, I still believe that it should be Presidential-related travel, keyed to our target states and specific voting blocs.

(3) I think we should take great pains to paint McGovern as a "minority leader of a minority constituency." I think we should give every indication that any "regular, normal" American, whether he be Republican, Democrat or Independent, can find leadership and solice under the Nixon umbrella. I think that we should use words like "elite, fringe, extremist" and even in some cases "radical" to portray the constituency of Senator McGovern. Every effort should be made to isolate McGovern's more vocal backers from the mainstream of the Democratic Party and the nation as a whole.

Whether McGovern is before his time or after his time in philosophy and in substance, he and his followers should be portrayed as a small, closely-knit cadre of over-educated, lazy, fat-of-the-land type minority. In foreign policy, where we are, in my opinion, miles ahead, McGovern should be portrayed as inexperienced, rural, yokel, naive and isolationist. Personally, he should be portrayed as an individual who is not the kind of man that world leaders could respect. Indirectly, he should be portrayed as womanish, weak and a waffler. In short, a man without backbone, a candidate whose positions are never firm, who lacks courage to make the hard decisions and to stick to them in the face of adversity. For example, in Florida when he indicated he would keep a residual force in Southeast Asia on one day and then completely back away from it in the face of opposition from some of his more radical supporters in the Doral Hotel Lobby.

(4) As we were able to do in 1968, the McGovern people will have the advantage of being able to attack every little or big mistake from one end of the Executive Branch to the other and pin all of the failures and errors and foibles on the President. I personally think that Ted Kennedy will still be McGovern's most effective campaigner and that he will trumpet the health issue all over the country if we don't preempt him to the best of our ability starting now.

Kennedy, who seems bent on the '76 nomination for himself, will probably be given press coverage equal to McGovern's wherever he speaks, and I think we can count on his stumping for McGovern extensively so that he may report after McGovern loses in November that he did everything in his power to elect the Democratic ticket. We probably ought to have a team whose speciality is to monitor Kennedy and respond to him.