

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

EYES ONLY

June 16, 1972

MEMORANDUM FOR: H. R. HALDEMAN
FROM: DONALD RUMSFELD *D. R. J.*
SUBJECT: Response to your Memo of June 12th
on the President and the Campaign.

1. The President's posture between the Conventions--

The President should:

- Be Presidential;
- Not engage in partisan activities;
- Use the platform and power of the office to show a President governing--let the distinction be drawn between a partisan Democratic office seeker versus an incumbent President governing;
- Travel only under the mantle of "official business";
- As suitable occasions are developed, be photographed with prominent non partisan citizens (Democrats, citizens, etc.)
- Keep his options open. It will be a tough election. Maintain a moderately active profile, unless spectacular opportunities for greater visibility occur.

2. The President's posture from the Republican Convention to the Election -

--This will depend somewhat on who the Democratic nominee is and who the Vice-Presidential nominees are, as well as the situation in Viet Nam.

--In general, and importantly, the President should remain Presidential. Richard Nixon, the President of the United States, is a winner. Richard Nixon, campaigning as another office seeker, would create unnecessary problems.

--To the extent possible, the President should be involved in campaign travel as part of some "official business". To the extent that a campaign event is secondary on a trip he could travel as early as six or eight weeks before the election.

--However, travel throughout the election should be moderate. Avoid the impression of a frantic, hectic three or four campaign-stop pace on a given day. The target states, and enough others to show breadth, need to be visited and appropriate events can be developed for such visits.

3. Strategy for the President's campaign -

The theme, "Re-Elect the President", is sound. If the campaign is consistent with that theme we should avoid conjuring up the image of Richard Nixon the office seeker. Activities where he is functioning as President should be highlighted. A great deal will turn on how accurately the President is portrayed as a competent, and bold, forward-looking and effective President. Enhance the President's advantage of incumbency by finding ways to contrast his Presidential actions with the opponents' rhetoric.

The opponent will be a member of the Party responsible for a number of the problems of this country, and his solutions will be fuzzy and unsound, but there are plenty of people available to make the attack besides the President.

Issues the President should emphasize:

- His Foreign policy leadership
- A strong America versus a weak America
- Performance versus promises (results versus "effort", "concern", "commitment", etc.)
- Avoiding crisis versus crisis management (Action versus reaction)
- The importance of the individual, individuality, diversity, and pluralism versus centralization and control.

4. The opposition's strategy -

- If the opponent is McGovern he will try to hold the left (his enthusiastic corps of workers and media support) by holding to his Viet Nam position and calling for an end to "senseless killing." He will move to the middle on other issues to gain labor support, a degree of legitimacy in the south and the support of the Democratic power men. He will be less idealistic and more practical. Hopefully, the Convention struggle will dramatize his problems in this respect.
- He will pound the so-called bread and butter economic issues of unemployment, hunger, poverty and inflation. (Larry O'Brien talks about almost nothing else.) I can hear him now:

"When Nixon came in, unemployment was under 4 percent--after 4 years of Nixon it is up to 6 percent."

"When Nixon came in, your dollar was worth a dollar--after 4 years of Nixon, it is worth 90 cents."

He will portray the President as the handmaiden of big business and special interests.

"Jack Kennedy did battle with big steel,
Nixon gives loans to Lockheed."

"The Democratic Party pushed for higher
Social Security benefits for the elderly
and higher minimum wages for workers, Nixon
makes deal with ITT in return for contribu-
tions."

"Democratic Presidents like Roosevelt,
Kennedy, and Johnson found jobs for millions
of unemployed Americans, Nixon freezes wages."

"Nixon means high unemployment and high
inflation -- your wages are controlled and
business profits soar and taxes, rents and
food prices climb."

How to meet the opponent's strategy:

--McGovern's weakness will be a lack of "competence".
If he is elected it will amount to "on-the-job
training" - that is risky for the country.

--We should seek some of the Wallace, McCarthy,
McGovern support that wants change, by driving
home the President's record on reform -- govern-
ment, draft, etc.

The way to do it is to take on Congress -- they
have failed the people. The laundry list of their
failures is persuasive. This will associate the
President with a desire for some change and his
hope to make things better.

--Administration spokesmen can associate McGovern
with his unpopular extreme supporters and positions,
but the President should not.

A FINAL THOUGHT -

--The President has hopes and ideals yet correctly
understands human characteristics. He knows that
to actually move the maximum distance toward those
ideals, those hopes of most human beings, you have
to be tough, pragmatic, courageous. That's what we
need as President, and we've got it. Thank God.

- But, as the President has said, not every voter fully understands that. People can be moved and persuaded by appeals to their hopes and aspirations even though the approach is fuzzy, impractical, even counterproductive or dangerous.
- The President effectively communicates his toughness, strength and pragmatism. More can be done to show that those qualities are necessary. More can be done to show why the President is this way--because that is how to move toward those idealistic goals of peace, etc. He knows there are damn few short cuts, that "caring", "wishing", or "hoping" is not enough.

Further, more can be done to show that he has those same hopes and ideals. We should seek some opportunities for him to dramatize his interest in individual human beings, his personal concern where personal concern is justified, his ideals, his hopes. A chunk of the American people must have the feeling that he personally cares about their problems, not in general but in the specific--about them, about the kinds of concerns they have for themselves and their families. Only then can many be sure he is leading where they want to go. There are such opportunities, but they must be seized.

The President knows that feeling moves some people. He is capable of doing it and does it well. But our Administration does it only reluctantly.

A danger for our Administration is in its competence we seem harsh, in our strength we seem tough, in our pragmatism we seem goalless and idealless.

McGovern is weak and would be a disastrous President. But his warmth, concern, decency are appealing because people dream, hope, aspire, and want to be better than themselves, want better for their children, and because they have fears.

The campaign must scrupulously avoid going "over the line." Our "reservoir", in this respect, is shallow. The more people "feel" and believe (as opposed to understand) that the President has ideals, hopes and concerns, the more they will accept his approach based on the vital qualities of strength, courage, brilliance and competence, because they will feel he is going-- and taking them--where they want to go, and doing it skillfully.

And when a human being walks into the voting booth pulls the curtain, shrugs his shoulders at the complexity of the mechanism and then votes, that's what he wants - to know and or feel, or at least hope that that man, Richard Nixon, is leading him where he wants to go.