

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

May 18, 1971

MEMORANDUM FOR BOB HALDEMAN

FROM THE PRESIDENT

(RM)

On further reflection with regard to the Jeff Bell article I think this is a good case in point to shake up our staff approach so that we are more effective in dealing with critics of both the right and the left.

We must begin by acknowledging that as far as the far right is concerned they are never going to be pleased with family assistance and an unbalanced budget. On the other hand, as I have indicated in memoranda too numerous to mention, the least we should get from the conservatives is credit for a very strong, courageous and bold foreign policy. The Bell analysis of RN's Vietnam position is simply juvenile nonsense and should have been nailed before his piece came in to me. Or at least an indication should have been attached to it pointing out that steps were being taken to set him straight. If there is one issue where I have drawn the line it is on Vietnam where I have insisted that our goal must be a South Vietnam capable of defending itself. This has been repeated over and over again in every major speech and in every news conference where the subject has been raised. The best indication that it must have gotten through to most people is the violent reaction of our editorial critics on the left and also some very responsible columns by the reasonable right -- Buckley, Kilpatrick et al.

What really concerns me is that probably our own staff among the research types may not understand the issue because of their bias in one direction or another. I hate to use Henry on those who should be enthusiastically for us, but if our staff members are unable to comprehend the issue and go out and fight for us perhaps it would be well for him to get in some of these people of the Bell group and lay it on the line with no quarter given as to why they should be strongly defending the President on foreign policy instead of nit picking here, there and everywhere.

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Will you follow up on this to see what the problem is as far as our staff operation is concerned and give me a report as to how we can correct the situation.