

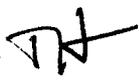
MEMORANDUM

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

DETERMINED TO BE AN
ADMINISTRATIVE MARKING
E.O. 12066, Section 6-102
By CP NARS, Date 3-15-82

November 13, 1970

MEMORANDUM FOR: THE PRESIDENT
FROM: Tom Charles Huston 
SUBJECT: 1970 Elections and Prospects for 1972

Perhaps the most significant result of the 1970 elections is that the rank-and-file Democrats came out of it convinced that they can win the Presidency in '72. It is only necessary to remember the difference in attitude among Republicans in the dark days following the Goldwater debacle and in the jubilant days following the 1966 elections to realize that the psychology of victory should not be underestimated as a political factor.

The fact that many folks now believe that a Democrat can win in '72 could, however, work to our advantage. Our best hope is that the ambition of the Democrat contenders will re-open the ideological wounds self-inflicted upon the party in 1968. Of particular interest is the possibility that the Kennedy people may decide that 1972 is the year for a Democrat, and if Teddy doesn't move, he will be out for eight years and that is too long to wait. Initially I would think this impulse to move would be stronger among the Kennedy camp-followers than with the Senator himself, but he

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

MEMORANDUM

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

DETERMINED TO BE AN
ADMINISTRATIVE MARKING
E.O. 12066, Section 6-102
By CP NARS, Date 3-15-82

November 13, 1970

MEMORANDUM FOR: THE PRESIDENT
FROM: Tom Charles Huston *TH*
SUBJECT: 1970 Elections and Prospects for 1972

Perhaps the most significant result of the 1970 elections is that the rank-and-file Democrats came out of it convinced that they can win the Presidency in '72. It is only necessary to remember the difference in attitude among Republicans in the dark days following the Goldwater debacle and in the jubilant days following the 1966 elections to realize that the psychology of victory should not be underestimated as a political factor.

The fact that many folks now believe that a Democrat can win in '72 could, however, work to our advantage. Our best hope is that the ambition of the Democrat contenders will re-open the ideological wounds self-inflicted upon the party in 1968. Of particular interest is the possibility that the Kennedy people may decide that 1972 is the year for a Democrat, and if Teddy doesn't move, he will be out for eight years and that is too long to wait. Initially I would think this impulse to move would be stronger among the Kennedy camp-followers than with the Senator himself, but he

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

2

might very well be convinced that all is forgiven and he should go for the big one. Should this happen, I would look for the Kennedy allies in the media to pull a "Romney" on Muskie and knock him out of consideration as a serious contender. Broder is already warning Muskie to be on the alert for such a move.

POSTURE THE PRESIDENT SHOULD MAINTAIN IN 1971

The President's posture in 1971 should not be much different than it was in 1967 -- he should maintain a relatively low profile and leave the arena to the hustling contenders. A Democrat aspirant will be pressing hard to make out an independent record in the Senate that qualifies him as the preferable nominee, which means he will have to promote himself at his colleagues expense. This may work in several ways. For example, I would not be surprised to see Senator McGovern open up on Muskie on the grounds that he compromised on the law and order issue at the expense of principle. The left-wing of the Democratic Party is not at all happy with the shift many of their candidates made on the law and order issue; after all they have a considerable investment in the repression issue. If we played our hand properly, we could see a fine row going among the Democrats over who has yielded to political expediency at the expense of the young, the black, and the poor.

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

If we wish to pursue a policy of leaving the Democrats enough rope for a family lynching party, it follows that the President should strike a posture of studied statesmanship and bold leadership. The contrast should be between a working President coping with tough problems and bickering Democrats jockeying for partisan advantage.

↙ If I had to select a single word to characterize the posture the President should assume, it would be "candor." Candor requires that one take others into his confidence, that one convey a sense of partnership, of shared experience; it requires an openness of opinion as well as of deed, a willingness to admit mistakes as well as to claim success. The best illustration is the November ~~8~~ 1969, address on Vietnam. It was a masterpiece precisely because the viewer had the impression that he was being talked with, not to; that the President was taking him into his confidence, explaining the problem and discussing the solution, asking for understanding without demanding support.

In pursuing a policy of candor, it is not necessary to ignore political realities. The political battle is waged on two levels. Where the public interest is demonstrably at stake, the appearance and the reality must be one. What is done and how it is done are equally important and both must be clearly visible and credible. However, where the problem is strictly political (i. e., tactical) the appearance must often be at odds with the reality.

It was said of President Van Buren that he rowed toward every objective with muffled oars. This is a wise and necessary political tactic, one which we appear to have foresworn in the recent election, but it is a difficult and dangerous one, for the temptation is to confuse the tactic with the strategy. The distinction is between political objectives and national goals. Candor is a philosophy of government, "muffled oars" a practice of politics -- and practice should always be the servant of philosophy.

THE MEDIA

We take the media too seriously. It is hostile, it is irritating, it is even on occasion demaging, but there isn't much we can accomplish by worrying that David Brinkley is going to burp in our face. We have attempted to neutralize the media by employing tactics that presuppose that ideological hostility can be overcome by advertising techniques. We should deal with the media on our terms and in a manner that is conducive to presenting the image we want to get across, not the image that someone else (usually our enemies) expects of us.

There are several dangers from a concentrated effort to maximize media coverage. First, the risk of over-exposure. Studied aloofness is often the best politics (DeGaulle certainly understood this). The President

doesn't have to intrude on everyone's supper to earn their respect, confidence, and support. Second, there is the risk that an extensive media effort will look contrived. We are already seeing columns accusing us of attempting to substitute a media-created image for substantive programs and policies. We are rather overt in our media orientation and the public might conclude that we are trying to con them.

We should use the media to project the image we want on the terms we desire. In this respect, I believe we should concentrate on portraying RN as a working President, as an educator who uses the media as a means of reaching and educating the people and not as a means of exploiting or deceiving them. Obviously, what I am saying is that the media should be used to convey the candor of the President. Specifically, we should have more televised press conferences, more in-depth discussions with network commentators, and some televised "fireside chats." Moreover, we should not go to the people only when an issue is burning and we should not go simply to solicit overt support. We should try some new formats. In short, we should use the media as a precise and targeted weapon.

The burden of carrying the day-to-day message to the people on the programs and policies of the Administration should fall to the Veep, the Cabinet, the National Chairman, and the Congressional leadership. It is

not enough to say that they don't do the job -- we should see that they do it. The President should not be burdened with the inadequacies of daily television news coverage. Unless we are prepared to go all the way and buy a network, we ought to quit worrying about the problem. It is fruitless to attempt to meet Brinkley, et. al. on their own terms and all we can get in the process is ulcers. It's not worth it.

THE VICE PRESIDENT

The Vice President did his campaign assignment well, but he may have committed political suicide in the process. To an increasing portion of Middle America, he is coming across as radical as those whom he attacks. He needs to develop an image as a reasonable and credible man, a task which he can easily handle if encouraged to do so.

Many people believe the Vice President has told a lot of truth, albeit in language that they regard as excessive. However, people can tolerate only so much unpopular and disconcerting truth. They want to be reassured, not alarmed. More importantly, they want to believe in the man as much as the message. The Vice President should shift his emphasis without yielding an inch on the substantive issues he raised. He should de-escalate the rhetoric without de-escalating the substance of his message.

The Vice President should take four steps in the months ahead. First, he should address himself to proposed solutions to the problems he has outlined. He should indicate that having identified various problems, he is now ready to offer possible solutions. Second, he should make a conspicuous effort to resume the exercise of his official responsibilities, i. e., presiding over the Senate, presiding over the various councils he chairs, etc. He needs to reassert himself as a working as opposed to a campaigning Vice President. One area where he should concentrate his efforts is in the field of inter-governmental relations. He should be our principal spokesman for the New Federalism. Third, the President might consider giving the Vice President a more prominent role in the formulation and articulation of our domestic programs. And finally, the Vice President should arrange to appear on as many interview-type television shows as possible where he can develop his image as a rational, reasonable, and believable man.

The risk of such a course is that the Vice President will be ignored by the national media. However, I don't think that is too important. If he gets out in the country he will get local coverage by virtue of his office. Moreover, if he begins to play a prominent role in substantive policy and program areas, he will have to get national media attention by virtue of the newsworthiness of the subject matter.

Consistent with my view that the President ought to maintain a rather low and select profile, it might be advantageous to let the Vice President assume a more prominent substantive role. Not only would this enhance the prestige of the Vice President, but it would buffet the President and enable him to avoid exposure except on the big ones where we want to make a decisive point.

CONGRESS

We are going to have to get along with Congress if we want to get our legislative program through. In addition, we want to encourage the Senate Democrats to fight among themselves in anticipation of securing advantage in the race for the nomination. We should avoid institutional attacks of affronts; we should also avoid making a major fight out of minor issues. However, on carefully selected issues of major importance to the success of the Administration, we should not hesitate to fight like hell. Although beyond the scope of this memorandum, I might note in passing that I believe there is political profit to be gained from drawing the line with Congress on foreign and defense policy.

The key to our success on the Hill will be our ability to forge a fairly united Republican team in the Senate. We should make every effort to pacify the liberals consistent with the policy posture of the President.

However, I think we should not overlook the possibility of putting pressure on the deviants within the ranks of the party, making use of Dole, Tower, and other loyalists for this purpose. In addition, we should not let Hatfield, et. al. forget what happened to good old Charlie. We should also emphasize that we must all sink or swim together in '72 and it is certainly not in the interests of those seeking re-election to be publicly at odds with their President. If possible, we might consider our own "shadow" leader, a loyalist in the Senate who is unofficially recognized as the President's personal spokesman, a man who can count noses so that when it is obvious we have the votes we can leave the deviants alone and let them do their own thing. This would probably get Hugh Scott's nose out of joint, but since he is so expert at looking after his own skin, I don't see why we should be reluctant to do the same.

PRESIDENTIAL TRAVEL

Consistent with my suggestion of a low profile, I would recommend against extensive travel except where demonstratively purposeful. While the exposure when abroad is extensive, I am not convinced that it has any lasting impact unless associated with concrete accomplishments. I keep thinking of LBJ and the Spirit of Glassboro -- what a fleeting moment of glory that was!

THE CABINET

We need some changes in the Cabinet. While perhaps I am vindictive and narrow-minded, I have never forgiven Secretary Hickel for the letter he sent during the Cambodian operation which was a gratuitous embarrassment to the President. He should have been fired upon receipt of the letter and he has no claim to his seat by virtue of estoppel. He still should go.

If Secretary Romney persists in his plan to launch a massive federal integration drive in northern suburban housing developments, he should be sent back to Michigan to discuss the political wisdom of his plan with the voters of Warren, Michigan.

There are a couple of other potential nominees for retirement, but Hickel and Romney are initially adequate to get the message across that loyalty and good judgment are values highly regarded in this Administration.

At the sub-Cabinet level there should be a major purge. We are being screwed daily by people who have been held over or (I say this reluctantly) by people whom we appointed. HEW could afford a complete house-cleaning from Under-Secretary on down, and I suspect that I could put together a list of two dozen top-notch candidates for purging without even bothering to consult Senators Goldwater and Thurmond.

While I am on the purge kick, I would like to put in a word for a man who should be first on any list: Randy Thrower. The best argument against Thrower is that there is no one in the White House who dares call IRS for information without fear that word of the inquiry will be leaked. I am a strong admirer of Van Buren's "muffled oar" strategy, but it is only possible if you have control of your own Administration. I assume that we intend to play for keeps in '72 and that means we need to have the goods on the guys who are determined to do us in. We need control of IRS. It is less important that the Commissioner be a tax whiz than that he be willing to follow orders. Thrower can't. He is arrogant and insubordinate and should go immediately.

Finally, a word about method. The impression is abroad that we are afraid to purge disloyal or incompetent personnel. This is dangerous for it breeds contempt as well as insubordination. Certainly there will be screams of outrage if we have a massive purge, but the screams will last about 10 days and we will have a loyal team for the next two years. Surely we can afford to take the heat when the stakes are so high. Cabinet shake-ups are not unusual in American history. Jackson fired his entire cabinet save the Postmaster General. Truman fired Wallace when he was the

darling of the liberals, progressives, and communists. Roosevelt had no compunction about throwing overboard anyone whom he regarded as a political liability. We should draw up a list of those who are either disloyal or incompetent, find suitable replacements, and strike with a single sudden blow. While the screams in the liberal press would be awesome, the long-term benefits would be more than compensating. We have to get control of the government; there are too many Trojan horses within the walls as we prepare for what could be a close election in '72.

PARTY ORGANIZATION

I am beginning to sound like Stalin, but we also need a purge at the National Committee. Larry O'Brien stands head and shoulders above our man as a party chairman. He is a gut fighter and he is effective. During the past campaign, many of us were appalled at the inability of the National Committee to produce. And Jim Allison's appearance on television the morning after the election where he admitted to our major defeats and discounted the impact of the President and Vice President was hardly helpful. Moreover, there have been so many columns about how the White House refuses to listen to the sound advice of Morton and Allison

that one must surely conclude that they are inspired by National Committee personnel who are more concerned about their own interests than the President's. We need a national chairman who is a fighter, who is effective on the stump, who can use the media, who is loyal to the President but not too closely identified with him personally, who is a good administrator, and who will do as he is told. We also need a new management team at the committee which is efficient, loyal, and able to make use of the resources that are potentially available. We attempt to do too much here that should and could be done at the National Committee if they had the proper staffing and leadership.

STATE PARTY ORGANIZATION

We took it on the chin in some states with potential serious consequences in 1972. States like Ohio, Wisconsin, Indiana, Florida, and Texas are vitally important to us in 1972. We should take a direct interest in party rebuilding efforts in those states to ensure that we have a viable organization ready to field strong candidates in '72.

INTELLECTUALS AND ISSUES

The anti-war types have a song which begins, "Give Peace a Chance." We should consider giving selected conservative alternatives a chance.

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

14

Jim Buckley's campaign suggested that large numbers of traditionally Democratic voters are searching for alternatives and not merely on the law and order issue. In fact, the interesting thing about Buckley's campaign is that he, as a professed conservative running on a third party ticket, came across as a more reasonable and credible candidate on a variety of issues than many regular Republicans who thought they were waging a "conservative" campaign. These fellows were about as successful in their efforts as I would have been running as a New Leftist, for the voters can spot a phony. The heavy-handedness of their campaigns suggested that they thought the conservative alternative was what the New York Times said it was.

Since 1964 there has emerged a new generation of principled but practical conservatives of whom Buckley is but one. On many university faculties there are young intellectuals who are developing alternatives to current programs whose intellectual well spring is the New Deal. We ought to consider opening some lines to these people and soliciting their ideas and suggestions. There is doubtless going to be a big push for a program of national health insurance. I fear we may respond with a proposal that merely splits the difference with Meany, that accepts his major premises

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

and opens the door to socialized medicine. On such major issues where it is obvious we should do something, we ought to look beyond the bureaucracy of HEW and consider other alternatives. We ought not let Buckley and Reagan become the spokesmen for an emerging conservative program. We don't have to make any sharp swing to the right, but we ought to translate some of our conservative rhetoric into a few conservative programs. We might find as Reagan did that they don't hurt us politically. And if we choose those that are directed to ethnics, blue collar workers, and Catholics, we might find they help us considerably.

A FINAL SUGGESTION

It might be worth the trouble and expense to ask a group of talented political types on the outside to take on the assignment of keeping their ear to the ground and passing on their thoughts and recommendations for your study on a regular basis. I have in mind such people as Kevin Phillips, John Sears, a couple of young intellectuals with public opinion analysis backgrounds. These people might be able to give us an insight on a regular basis that would be helpful in gaining a fresh perspective on what is happening in the country. Perhaps this is unnecessary, but it might be of some help.

In conclusion, I would suggest we take the following steps over the near-term: (1) get control of the government; (2) emphasize substantive policy and minimize media exposure; (3) start organizing for '72 by establishing a working organization at the White House, putting in a new team at the National Committee, identifying key states that require special party-building attention, and considering the use of outside analysts; and (4) have the Vice President shift his emphasis to a positive tone in order to establish himself as a reasonable and believable man and a working member of the policy team.