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THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

February 7, 1972

MEMORANDUM FOR: H. R. HALDEMAN
FROM: JOHN DEAN 
SUBJECT: Potential Disruptions at the
Republican National Convention

In response to my memorandum of January 31, 1972 summarizing present intelligence regarding the potential for disruptions at the GOP Convention in San Diego, you have requested information regarding the "positive things that are planned."

At the outset, I might say that I find that the present intelligence information does have some positive elements. First, it indicates that the "anti" groups are disorganized, that there is more talk than action, and that there is friction between the national organizations and the local San Diego organizations. Rest assured that nothing is being done to change this situation and, in fact, everything possible is being done to preserve it as long as possible. Second, I find virtually no serious discussion among the "anti" groups regarding use of confrontation techniques (a la May Day variety) at the San Diego Convention. Their goal is numbers -- large numbers. In fact, such old warriors as Hayden, Rubin, Hoffman and Dellinger have privately confided that they feel that they will only succeed if they have a mass demonstration, without incident!

By way of planning, there is little that can be done to affect the "anti" groups until they get down to serious planning themselves. At this time, we are doing what is possible to keep their plans from developing in a manner that will cause difficulty in holding the convention.

I also find a very positive situation in the preparedness planning by the city and state officials for any type of demonstration. From the Governor's office to the Mayor's office to the Sheriff's and Police Chief's offices, detailed plans are being made. When I first began focusing on the San Diego demonstration potential I was alarmed at the lack of understanding and appreciation of the demonstration potential by the responsible officials. In the ensuing months, however, I have found them taking every step necessary to deal with and control any demonstration. The city has some 20 different task forces working on this one problem. The task forces are composed -- depending on the focus of study -- of city, state and federal officials. While many of the task forces are primarily studying the law enforcement and related problems, others are reviewing such matters as rock festivals, surfing contests, etc.

Your memorandum to me (via Strachan) specifically raises the matter of "football games, surfing contests, and rock concerts...." as things we should be planning for. While I agree that some such activity is appropriate, I also feel that such planning is not an answer to the potential problems. Activities of this nature might serve two purposes: divert the kids from the convention and/or keep them busy while there. I seriously question the diversionary tactic. It has been tried on several occasions and has failed. As an observer of every major demonstration in the United States in the last three years, I know of it only partially succeeding once, i. e., Portland, Oregon, American Legion Convention. If such activities are employed as a means of giving the kids something to do to keep them out of trouble, I agree it has some potential; but we should keep in mind the fact that such activities can also attract, as well as divert and I don't think we should do anything to attract more kids to California during August of 1972.

Mayor Wilson has promised to send me copies of the reports of all the task forces, which should give us the details of all the planning activities.

In brief, the picture is not that horrible. Yes, there may be a large number of long haired freaks roaming around San Diego during our convention, but the plans have been made to control them -- should that be necessary. I have no hesitation in offering this prediction:

-- there will be somewhere between 250,000 -
450,000 (maximum) demonstrators --

-- the great majority will be orderly -- and --

-- there will be ample law enforcement people
trained and able to deal with any situation
which may arise.

There is also this very positive thought -- the demonstrations
could very well completely fizzle. As you know, the leaders are
calling for no less than a million kids. However, if the national
climate is calm, they might have trouble getting 100,000 interested
in San Diego. How's that for a pollyanna?

I will keep you posted on the positive as well as negative sides of
this situation as they develop.