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8	23	11/6/1971	<input type="checkbox"/>	Campaign	Memo	Copy of a memo from Ehrlichman to Haldeman laying out a detailed campaign strategy for the election of 1972. Handwritten notes on original added by unknown. 9 pgs.

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

November 6, 1971

MEMORANDUM FOR

BOB HALDEMAN

RE: REELECTION CAMPAIGN

The tone or theme:

In spite of all the talk about this being an age of one-term Presidents, I believe it is very hard for the American people to turn out a sitting President. Therefore, obviously, the tone or theme of the campaign must be keyed to the fact that the President is the President, that he has done a professional and competent job, that he has made significant accomplishments and that there is, therefore, no reason to change.

I think people tend to vote against a candidate perhaps more frequently than they vote for him; and certainly a Presidential race always weighs a candidate against his opponent. An incumbent President has an obvious advantage and President Nixon has a very clear advantage in view of his international initiatives on the question of "compared to what?".

At the same time, the President is the national father figure, the exemplar, the leader, and the nation's champion against other nations. This is what the American people believe a President is and they want him to act out these parts. They want him to evidence compassion for the poor, even though individually they may say and do things showing callous disregard for the poor. It is alright for Mr. Voter to be indifferent to the poor but it is not alright, in his eyes and mine, for his President to be indifferent to the poor. In fact, I suspect he gets a certain amount of psychic relief from the knowledge that his President is being concerned about the less fortunate even at the time that he himself is not.

I think it is indispensable for the President to act out these roles in the course of the next year, with feeling and sincerity, to fulfill these expectations. To the extent that he does not we will find vague discontents and negative reactions expressed as "the President has no compassion, he doesn't care, he is cold and indifferent, he has no thought for the little people, he only cares about big business, etc."

*father
leader
exemplar
man's
champion*

Since this is role-acting, let's approach it as such. The President has a natural antipathy for doing the phony, the unnatural and the not-felt. But we are now not talking about making him comfortable in what he is doing; we are talking about getting him reelected and, in looking at that project coldly, there are some things that are going to have to be done to do the job properly that he may not totally like. But I am sure he and we would like the alternative even less. Because I think the alternative is to give exposure to an Achilles heel to which the President may be attacked mercilessly and effectively with unknown results.

And like a tennis game, as long as you can return the ball without mistake every time it doesn't really matter how hard you hit it. You keep playing for the other fellow's mistake. We occupy the high ground now since the President is the incumbent and all he has to do is go on being the incumbent. The other fellow has to figure out how to take the high ground. Therefore, we should avoid giving him handholds, avoid making mistakes, avoid acting rashly or without calculation or contemplation (e.g., the re-run of the Phoenix speech) and close as many of the doors as possible through which the enemy might enter.

In short, I would like to see the President put in situations which would act out his compassion, his fairness, his true concern for his inferiors, his leadership, etc. It does almost no good at all for those of us who know him well to tell about these things. One acting-out session will be worth ten thousand interviews with White House staffers or members of the Cabinet.

But he doesn't get coverage or credit when he does do them unless they follow up - which they generally fail to do.

The President's part in the campaign

We had a good session with the Cabinet yesterday in the President's absence, and we told them all the things that they had to do in order to get the President reelected. But I suspect you know, and I strongly feel, that in the last analysis it isn't going to make much difference what the Cabinet says or does. The President himself is going to have to do much more than he is inclined to do, much more than he would want to do and probably much more than his responsibilities in fact permit him safely to do. But nevertheless I think he will have to do them.

Television and Radio

I know there is a concern that the President is over-exposing himself on television. And yet the singular criticism which I hear as I go around the country talking the issues to people is that the President is not talking to them about the issues. The Cabinet is talking to them, the staff is talking to them, Bob Dole is talking to them but they want the President to talk to them. They want fireside chats. Over and over again I receive the suggestion that the President sit down and talk to the country about the issues of the time on a periodic basis, so that they may count regularly on hearing from him not just at times of crisis but under circumstances that will permit them to pull their chairs up to the television and listen to him explain to them about the problems of our aged, health problems, the problems of our youth and our cities in terms which they can understand and react to.

That's what they may say - but who will listen?

They just don't care.

We have discussed the fireside chat format in the past and I gather that the ten o'clock meeting or the five o'clock meeting or the Saturday morning group or somebody doesn't think it's a very good idea. All I know is that there is considerable consumer demand out there in the field for this kind of thing. *Everyone thinks it's a good idea - except the P.*

As a variation on this, let me suggest that we think about this hunger? or market demand in terms of regions. As Ed Harper pointed out to us in his analysis, the issue of support to parochial schools is a hot issue in limited areas. The issue of the problems of the aged is almost completely confined to 8 or 9 states. The farm problem is obviously localized. Perhaps there is a regional approach to this fireside chat idea that would prevent the President from becoming over-exposed nationwide and would avoid whatever disadvantages are inherent in such over-exposure.

hard to get free regional phone - can't control it.

Problem is that things are not really that regionalized - and it's just as much work to do a regional chat as a national one

Something like this would have to be started before campaigning begins in earnest and I know the equal time problem exists, but I also know there is a very strong pull for this among people who are thinking about the Presidency and about the nation's problems.

Personal Appearances

Who constitute 1/10 of electorate

Aside from the fact that it prevents the press from writing that the President is ducking the people, I don't know that there's a great deal of advantage in personal appearances during the campaign.

We've always been very big for rallies, crowd shots, motorcades and balloons but I really seriously question whether they are in any way important for an incumbent President. It may be that we need some bandwagon psychology but I wouldn't think so. There are obvious tolerance maximums in terms of the use of television, but I think those limitations are perhaps limitations on campaigning generally then, since I think the idea of the President getting out and whistle stopping or stumping the nation is doubtful.

Agree

New Hampshire

I think I would stay completely away from New Hampshire under the circumstances. McCloskey may do better than anyone thinks at this time simply because he is effective up close and can be expected to make substantial inroads in the meager population of that state by an intensive hand-shaking and coffee hour campaign. I would think it's safer simply to take the position that New Hampshire has little or no significance in terms of the Republican nomination. It happens to be the first primary but somebody had to be first and it doesn't stand for anything. We might even play up McCloskey's obvious advantage in being able to devote unlimited time to hand-shaking in New Hampshire while the President is busy saving the world. McCloskey's absentee record might be emphasized and our chairman up there might make the point that it's more important for the President to be hard at work in the White House than up in New Hampshire trying to tilt for delegates with some unknown Congressman. If we write it off now, we don't have to apologize for any results later, assuming we can bring it off.

Don't give this memo to Tedder & don't copy verbatim.

Trips into the Country

I would subscribe to John Whitaker's proposal for more issue-oriented trips and fewer rallies. I don't think I would go quite as far as he in degree but I think he has the right idea. He forgot to make the point that most of these issues are regional in character and we can pretty well localize our attack on an issue with some intelligent analysis. But he is certainly right that trips should be taken to discuss problems.

bad idea - cause limits effort w/ limiting effort

Running as an out

I think John Connally is right that the President has to run as an out, against the status quo, rather than as a defender of the status quo. There are simply too many unfulfilled proposals, too many unsolved problems, too many unsatisfied needs and wants as demonstrated by the Harris poll. People don't like the way the country is going and the only way to respond to that discontent is to run against the conditions which they identify. You have to advocate change under such circumstances, rather than to run on a platform of accomplishment.

hard to do good

If it's skillfully done, the President can attack his Senator opponent on the ground that he, the member of Congress, is the defender of the status quo since the Congress wouldn't change things even though the President wanted them to. The Senator perpetuated pollution, he perpetuated poverty, he perpetuated the conditions in the cities which might have been solved by revenue sharing, etc.

→ The Catholic Vote

Need a response to this.

We are operating under a set of assumptions about the Catholic vote that I suspect are totally invalid. You have seen Roy Morey's preliminary analysis and Pat Buchanan's seat-of-the-pants emotional response. I took the position with Buchanan that Morey had made the prima facie case and it was up to Buchanan to sustain his burden of proof and I am afraid Pat has not done so. He has told us with great fervor what he, Buchanan, believes but he has no answers for the statistics and polls which indicate the contrary. Because a strongly pro-Catholic position on some issues costs us votes (as shown by the polls) in the border states and the South, and we are relying on those areas as part of our base of support, we had better be very sure of the validity of our assumptions on this subject before we go much farther. ?



The Environment

A somewhat kindred subject is that of the electoral effect of the environmental issue. There is an instinctive distrust of this issue by the President. Yet the polls tell us very clearly that it is a highly important issue and everything that we can develop on an objective basis tells us over and over again that it is motivating and significant. If I read the Harris poll correctly (and it would seem inescapable to me on the basis of this poll) people don't want "balance" between the environment and the economy. We know that balance is right, makes good sense from the standpoint of the future of the country, has to be an important consideration in the things we do around here, but it will turn off the environmentally oriented voter. And here we are talking about broadening our base. It's the young, the women, the middle bracket wage earner who is concerned about pollution in overwhelming numbers.

Answer this from poll data?

Now, whether we like it or not, and whether the President agrees emotionally with the evidence or not, I think we have to be realistic about this issue and begin to act more politically about it.

On both these points, what I wish to argue is that we are making emotional responses to these two issues. Rather, we have to be cold, calculating and thoroughly political in our analysis of the issues and how to treat them.

Labor

I'm of two minds on this issue and I don't quite know what to suggest. We need to know a lot more about the situation than we do. We would like to think that we can make inroads into the labor vote; we would like to think we can even pick up some labor leaders at the margin who will help us. But we are under heavy attack by our friends at the moment for being soft on labor, for having sold out to labor on Phase II, for having tolerated wage increases and strikes to the serious damage of business and the nation and, in effect, for being "dupes" who have been taken into camp by labor, largely on a bluff.

In a minute I am going to mention credibility. We are telling people not to worry about the China trip and the Russia trip because the President is tough, he's able to handle them, he won't be taken in by them and they can't bluff him. It is being argued that our labor record makes these assertions incredible.

The President or the politician?

To be reelected the President must attract the support of people who are not party Republicans. The campaign must be inclusive rather than exclusive. It must bring to him people who are attracted by that extra ingredient rather than by the former Senator from California. In other words, everyone knows that the President is a consummate politician and frequently does things for political reasons. They often assign political reasons to things done for non-political reasons. There's a sort of rebuttable presumption that everything the President does is done for political reasons.

My thesis is that he will attract additional support if his campaign is essentially Presidential and not political. The closer we get to election day the harder it will be not to be political; not to say and do the purely political thing, to drop the Presidential mantle and wade into the fray at the level of the lowest common denominator. Yet I think that the strategy can be that of the front runner which was so successfully employed in the weeks just before the 1968 convention.

Credibility

In thinking about vulnerability, this has to be an avenue that we should be concerned about. McCloskey is already playing this tune in New Hampshire, to what effect I don't know. I think many people want to believe that their government officials are trying to pull a fast one, trying to slide one by them, trying to get away with something, etc.

I think each time Chuck Colson is caught at one of his escapades or the Defense Department is nailed on a North Vietnamese pipeline exhibit or we attempt to excuse some indefensible mistake by a subordinate we lose some people that we otherwise could have won. There's no doubt that we're going to be attacked as dishonest and incredible and I think we have to lean over backward to avoid creating grounds or even the appearance of grounds for these attacks.

I think the Bureau of Labor Statistics effort, while right, is going to cost us in the long run on this score. We're going to have the same trouble in punishing or firing those guilty of leaking. Suppression of the truth comes under the general heading of incredibility. This is a problem we're going to have to deal with on an almost daily basis, making the best judgment calls we can but always keeping in mind the overall problem.

Perhaps under this general heading comes the Justice Department and some of its activities lately.

The Law and Order Issue

The nationwide crime statistics for the last three years have not been very good. On the other hand, Washington, D. C.'s record has been excellent, given all the problems of this place. In truth, the difference is that we have poured an unbelievable amount of money into law enforcement in the District and it is governed by a dictatorship rather than an elected Mayor and City Council. We've been able to do a lot of things in the management of the city government that the electorate would never have stood for if they had had any say in it. And it's gotten results.

I'm not sure how this issue can be handled in the coming campaign. I suppose one approach would be to point with pride at the city we have responsibility for and say that big city Democrat Mayors could do the same thing if they were as good as we are. And we can say that we've been trying to send more money to the cities in the form of revenue sharing but the Congress wouldn't let us. But all in all it is not a good national record and we're going to be on the defensive in this area and we'd better start laying some plans right now for meeting the political onslaught. There is no sign that the statistics are going to get any better in the coming year.

*Drugs - Key concern, key opportunity &
no headway.*

