

MEMORANDUM FOR: THE PRESIDENT

SUBJECT: Meeting with Peter Brennan
July 2, 1971
10:30 a.m. (20 minutes)

- I. PURPOSE: Off the record discussion of the attitudes of building trades leaders; and to help keep our relationship strong with Brennan.
- II. BACKGROUND: Peter Brennan, as you know, organized the hardhat parade in New York following Cambodia. He has been one of your stronger supporters on national security.

Brennan has 250,000 building tradesmen under him in New York. He exercises tight, tough control; he can swing a large block of them politically as demonstrated in 1970; he strongly backed Rockefeller and Buckley; even in a 3-way race Buckley got almost 50% of the blue collar vote in New York and heavily carried wards that Brennan "controls".

Six months ago Brennan told me that he would do for you in New York what he did for Rockefeller and Buckley. Since that time he has been put in a very difficult position by the Davis/Bacon action, the wage/price stabilization and the minority hiring pressures from Arthur Fletcher at the Labor Department. He is a candidate to succeed Neil Haggerty as President of the Building Trades. His closest associate told me recently that it would be "suicide" for Brennan to support you at the present time but he still hopes that the situation with the building trades and their attitudes towards us will change so that he will be able to.

He has asked to have this off the record private talk with you because he feels that you personally are a friend of the building trades; that the bureaucrats are sabotaging you; that hold over Democrats are doing things very contrary to your political interests and that you are not aware of what is really happening; thus, he wants this opportunity to talk with you privately.

It is our hope in scheduling this meeting that he will feel that he has been able to communicate to you directly and that this will enable us to begin to rebuild the political alliance with Brennan. Brennan's power with labor and the blue collar vote in New York can, in the opinion of a number of political experts, be decisive.

PARTICIPANTS: Brennan and Colson

PRESS PLAN: None. Ollie Atkins photo. The meeting is not being announced.

III. TALKING POINTS:

A. Brennan will tell you how intense the reaction was in the building trades to the Davis/Bacon, wage stabilization action you took.

RR: You know this. It had to be done for the good of the industry and of the working man. It is succeeding and what was recommended to you, i. e., a wage/price freeze would have been much worse. You overruled your advisors.

B. Brennan will complain that the New York Minority Hiring Plan has not been approved by the Labor Department. This was entered into by Lindsay, Rockefeller, the minorities and the building trades last December.

RR: You have ordered Colson to shepherd this through; that some progress is being made; that we hope it will be worked out; and that you are aware that some of the lower level bureaucrats in the Labor Department have been causing extreme difficulties.

C. Brennan will tell you that Arthur Fletcher's constant drumbeat that the hardhats are "racists" has alienated many of them and that it has been very unfair.

RR: You know of the difficulties. Fletcher has a terribly tough job (Ehrlichman and I are trying to work out a "transfer" of Fletcher -- you may want to hint at this but it is perhaps best not to commit until we have accomplished it.)

D. Brennan will tell you that the bureaucrats and hold over Democrats are undermining you politically -- case in point: a suit was brought against certain building trades in New York contrary to an understanding we had which had been communicated to Brennan.

RR: You might tell him of your instructions to the Cabinet this week and that we are seeking to get this problem under control.

E. Assure Brennan that you understand how difficult it has been for him over the past few months particularly because he has been known as such a strong Nixon supporter. You are convinced that as the economy picks up, as it is doing, and as the problems peculiar to the building trades are worked out that it will become easier for him -- maybe even popular.

You should not discuss 1972 politics. Leave that to us. Simply let him know that you appreciate the position he is in.

Charles W. Colson