

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

January 20, 1971

MEMORANDUM FOR H. R. HALDEMAN

FROM THE PRESIDENT

I have just read the long memorandum which Buchanan wrote to me with regard to the conservatives and it leaves me somewhat mystified because apparently some of the instructions I have given to you and Ehrlichman and others on this very subject have not been carried out.

The basic problem with any splinter group and any radical group who have no place to go but with us is not to take them for granted -- to pay some attention to them. I knew that when Martin Anderson left that it was necessary to fill that void with somebody who was known to be a conservative. And, as you may recall, I have explored with you the possibility of bringing Robert Nesbett in to take the Moynihan spot or somebody with credentials like that. If Vermont Royster would come on full time, that would answer the problem to an extent but not completely because he is not far enough on the right to satisfy those who have strong conservative feelings.

What I am now directing is that at the staff level we can mute much of the conservative criticism by simply having someone at a high rank, who is known to be sympathetic to their views and who also is known to have the respect of the President -- Robert Nesbett is one good possibility although I would check this with Buchanan to see whether or not he would meet the test. Another would be Vermont Royster. Perhaps on that list of intellectuals you sent to me a few days ago you can find someone else but I want immediate action taken to fill this need. Also, I feel the staff will be better balanced to have someone of this type on the staff. After all, Finch, Rumsfeld and Shultz all pull in varying degrees to the left of center. We need somebody who will balance them on the right of center. Ehrlichman, of course, should stay right in the center where he is.

Now to reply directly to the Buchanan memorandum, I think you should write him a memorandum incorporating the following points in a hard-hitting direct way and ask him to carry the line. As a matter

of fact, the best thing to do is to get in his group of White House conservatives and give them all the word -- probably orally rather than in memorandum form, or in memorandum form if you think it is secure. In that connection, I again urge that a meeting be held with Buchanan, Nofsiger, Timmons, Dent et al, so that the conservative group on the White House staff doesn't feel that they are out in rightfield - or clear over the fence. I think we have all been so busy that you have been unable to carry out that directive which, as you may recall, I have been urging for some time.

In your memorandum - or discussion - with this group, these points should be made: (Incidentally, it might be well to include the Vice President in the group when it meets since he is still considered to be one of them. Also it is time to knock down the absolutely silly idea that we are trying to mute the Vice President or downgrade him. As a matter of fact, against great pressures, and this is one of the points you should make to this group, RN has in every press conference refused to join in the chorus of criticism of the Vice President, he has defended him at every turn, he has given him assignments far beyond what any Vice President has ever received before, and has given him assignments in the domestic field because he feels the Vice President really needs this in order to broaden his base for support in 1972).

If the conservatives want to know some actions we have taken that lean in their direction, why not emphasize these points:

1. My opposition to forced integration of housing.
2. My insistence that our health program have a requirement for everybody who can afford to to pay something rather than to make it an entirely free paid program which, of course, is what the socialized medicine advocates want.
3. My veto of the 1970 ^{WPA} ~~TRIA~~ Bill" even though it had the Administration's manpower proposal attached to it. This was probably one of my most difficult vetoes due to the fact that it came when unemployment was high and would have allowed mayors and other local officials to put 300,000 or so people on leaf raking jobs in cities and counties.
4. My veto of other big spending bills - vetoes which will continue whenever they exceed the full capacity budget requests that I will be sending to the Congress.

5. My court appointments and my standing by them -- not only at the Federal level but at the circuit court and district court levels. We have gotten very little credit for the latter and they have changed the courts as much as anything else. My fight for Haynsworth, for Carswell - the fact that the court actually has begun to turn right and that fact that I have reiterated my intention to appoint a Southern, strict constructionist to the court when the next vacancy occurs -- the conservatives seem to have forgotten this.
6. My standing by Dole as Chairman of the National Committee despite the strong efforts of the Eastern group to put in somebody more acceptable to them. No one certainly can question Dole's conservative credentials. The best way to sell this to the conservatives is that he was fought right to the last minute by Scott.
7. My support of Agnew - previously mentioned.
8. My refusal in my letter to Scranton, despite the fact that it was couched as it should have been in conciliatory terms, to endorse his commission's idea that the cause of student unrest was solely or even primarily the war, etc. The conservatives concern about my having mentioned Kent State and Jackson is pure rubbish. Where any American President cannot be concerned about the deaths of people (in the case of Jackson, completely innocent people) then that man just isn't fit to be President. Of course, the difficulty with the conservatives is that they have a totally hard-hearted attitude where human problems and any compassion is concerned. Just as their counterparts on the liberal left have a similar totally hard-hearted attitude insofar as people as individuals are concerned despite their protestations that they like people in the mass.

In the field of foreign policy, it is absolutely ridiculous for Buchanan's group to raise any questions whatever. After all, this is the President who went into Cambodia; this is the President that conceived and ordered the Santoy raid; this is the President that fought the ABM through and spent more hours of his time talking to individual Senators to get that one vote majority than any President in history; this is the President that fought the cuts in the Defense budget and got through the supplemental for Cambodia, Laos, and South Vietnam; this is the President that went to the

hustings all over the country against those who had taken the left liberal line and for those who opposed them; this is the President who has refused to go to the Summit or to make any other concession to the Russians unless there is a quid-pro-quo; this is the President who by firm, strong diplomacy averted a war in the Mid-East by facing up to the Russians with our movements of the Sixth Fleet; this is the President who by similar quiet and effective diplomacy prevailed upon the Russians to desist in their program for building a nuclear submarine base in Cuba. (Why aren't some of the conservatives who were squealing about this base when they didn't have the intelligence information as to what was really there now praising the Administration for standing firm when everybody knows that the submarine has gone back to Russia)?

All in all, I see in the Buchanan memorandum the same defensive, unimaginative attitude which seems to have prevailed in the early months of our Congressional relations activities and too often even among some of our activities with the press over the entire two years. We hold the hands of our critics and tut-tut about those "other people" on the White House staff who are giving the President bad advice. The net impression of this is to show the President up as a weak man who is buffeted and pulled and turned and hauled by whoever happens to get his ear at a certain time.

What has to happen here is that all the members of our staff have simply got to get off their cans and be more aggressive in talking up for the President, both on his policies and on what kind of a man he is. I thought that the two year summaries in LIFE and NEWSWEEK pointed up our grave problem in this respect. I know that members of the White House staff spent hours with Griffith of ~~LIFE~~ and with Elson and Hubbard who collaborated in doing the piece for NEWSWEEK. Yet nothing got through except a little prattling about minor successes in foreign policy and the fact that the President "loves the trappings of the job" which is apparently what they seem to have gotten from their conversations with Herb Klein when he said "RN loves to be President," but is "uncomfortable" in his handling of the job, in his dealings with the Congress, with the press, with the people, etc. I would have come on hard and tough with these people on the fundamental point that I have been trying to make all along and that none of you really have ever gotten across, -- That we came into the White House with almost unanimous opposition from the working press, that we have continued to have that kind of opposition; that the President has taken it without flinching, with great poise, has handled his press conferences with the greatest skill of any President in memory and that despite the chorus of disapproval of virtually everything he has done by the Press corps he has maintained majority support of the people by going over their heads directly to the people.

The Buchanan memo coupled with the pieces in LIFE and NEWSWEEK point up it seems to me, the very serious weakness of the entire White House and Cabinet operation on the PR side. It has been defensive and many times self-serving and in sum, almost totally inadequate and unless we reverse it quite dramatically we are doing to be in very deep trouble over the next two years when the going is going to get rougher and when the President going on television isn't going to be enough.

A good example of the weakness that I have been trying to point up for the past several weeks is a memorandum which Alex sent over to me last night prior to the meeting this morning in which Klein and Ziegler were asked to recount what I had said at the Cabinet meeting. Klein's memo read as if he hadn't been there at all. It gave his ideas as to what he would advise me to say if I were to speak before such a group. Ziegler's, on the other hand, was a perfectly adequate - although mediocre job - of reporting some of the things that I said. Neither, of course, got anywhere near the spirit of the meeting and missed the most colorful quotes which they could have reminded me of. In that entire room then I guess we have to assume we didn't have one man who had the capacity for remembering what was said and could give both the words and the color to me if I wanted to refer to it at a later point -- and, just as important, have the words and the color for our White House records. If you ask Rumsfeld or Finch, for example, they can tell you that "gee, it was great," but neither of them, of course, should be expected to remember what was said because that was not their job. The need for one man on this staff who has the capacity in this respect and who will cover every event in a very low key way is now quite apparent. What a Walters couldn't have done, for example, with that meeting and with perhaps a dozen other meetings of that type that we have had over the past two years and which have gone almost totally unnoticed due to the fact that we had no one there who was able to go out and enthusiastically report the proceedings. I have decided that the idea of having a different man cover different meetings simply won't work because a man is either a good reporter or he isn't a good reporter and Finch, Rumsfeld, Klein, etc., do not have that capacity and should not be expected to - except possibly for Klein who can never develop it at this time.

Moore probably could have done the job earlier but I don't think he has the memory capability at this time to do it and he would feel uncomfortable and make me uncomfortable if he were scribbling notes furiously throughout every meeting that I had.

I don't know the answer but I know that we certainly don't have anyone presently in sight who can do the job.

Having dictated all of this just before 12 o'clock on January 20, I again reiterate what I said at the staff meeting -- this is the best White House staff in history in terms of IQ and BQ. It still has a great deal to go in terms of developing some EQ. We shouldn't hold people responsible for not having EQ if they are not that kind of person but perhaps in that whole PR complex we could find just one who could convey the spirit and the enthusiasm of a meeting after it takes place to others in a way that they then will report it.