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The President's First Year

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

September 17, 1975

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

VIA: JOHN O. MARSH

FROM: WILLIAM J. BAROODY, JR.

SUBJECT: Articulating and Projecting the Ford Vision of the Good Society

The recent anniversary of your first year in office produced a spate of analyses of your Presidency, most of which were complimentary or generally favorable. The less favorable critical pieces, however, are instructive because they strike a common chord. David Broder (see Tab A) criticized you by saying, "Mr. Ford has not yet attempted to give the nation a picture of where he is leading it. Nowhere, in the rush of his first year, has he paused to define his own larger objectives. And without that vision being made apparent, his daily moves lack a sense of purpose and direction." James Reston's critique was similar: "It is hard to discern any guiding purpose in his thought, any visible center in his philosophy for the future" (see Tab B). Marquis Childs, in his column of September 13, 1975, says in recalling the time of Theodore Roosevelt: "There are parallels with that time today. The rise of socialism and anarchy in Europe is matched by a deep discontent with the status quo in America. Because he sensed this, TR took a more radical course than he might otherwise have done. The need was for an outlet for protest and disaffection. President Ford seems wholly unaware of the discontents in our time or, in any event, he prefers to ignore them ..." (see Tab C).

Although I believe these criticisms are hasty and simplistic, I also believe they point to the need for an articulation of your basic philosophy and your definition of the Administration's larger objectives. I think it will be increasingly important to formulate broad themes that up to now have tended to remain implicit in speeches and actions, but which have not been explicitly stated and emphasized.



For example, it is important to dedicate this Administration to restoring citizen faith in government, as you have done, through honesty, openness, cooperation, compromise, conciliation and communication. But it is at least equally important to discuss the larger question: having restored confidence in government, to what end and purpose shall you strive? What is the Ford vision of the Good Society? I believe the response must be given in a clear, unmistakable broad statement of fundamental purpose.

I believe this is the time to make explicit what has been implicit in virtually all of your programs and speeches. I strongly suggest that now is the appropriate time frame for laying out boldly your conception of how we can rebuild the free society this nation was intended to be. And rebuilding that free society, of course, is and should be our ultimate political goal.

I am told that Jerry Brown, whose approval rating in California the polls show at approximately ninety percent, kept hammering on the theme of "giving government back to the people" and struck a responsive chord which I think is not restricted to the people of California.

For several decades now, public policy has either bypassed or militated against the natural institutions of American society: family, church, neighborhood, community in the broadest sense, and voluntary association. To the extent that politicians have expressed support for these institutions in recent years, such expressions have remained mere rhetoric and have not been reflected in public policy formulations. I am convinced that now you have the opportunity to make the vital link between these institutions and public policy by charging the Cabinet and Domestic Council to structure public programs with the specific goal of strengthening these private institutions.

Specifically, you can outline your goals in a major speech -- a prelude to the State of the Union -- noting that you have charged the Cabinet and White House staff with examining public policy in order to (1) prevent any further weakening or encroaching upon the institutions which serve to give meaning to peoples' lives and (2) to propose new public policy initiatives that would utilize private sector institutions



as agents of public policy, especially in areas of health, welfare and education. It might be very useful, for example, in such a pre-State of the Union speech to indicate that you have directed the Vice President to include in his Domestic Council hearings representative witnesses from family, church, neighborhood, voluntary and ethnic associations to explore how these basic institutions of our society can contribute directly and indirectly to the solution of our social and economic problems.

Concrete examples of programs that could be explored might be some of the following; in education, the use of tax funds, within legal possibilities, for religious or private schools (one example of this would be the New Hampshire Educational Voucher plan which would be a very notable and important test of educational freedom and diversity). Also in education, support of ethnically oriented institutions which would emphasize bilingualism in education and public administration and studies in ethnic heritages. Other educational issues which are clearly important to many parents would include problems of racial busing, offensive textbooks and bureaucracy, to name a few.

In the field of welfare, the Domestic Council hearings, in addition to exploring a restructuring of Federal programs, could attempt to examine ways in which private agencies could supplement public agency programs wherever feasible. In addition, the hearings and examinations of the welfare programs should also attempt to see how these programs impact on family structures and other voluntary associations. You could also announce, on another topic, that you would be opposed to policies that subvert cultural and social identity of neighborhoods (this includes the problems of busing for racial equality and also housing and zoning policies).

In the field of health, you could announce that in addition to exploring comprehensive health insurance programs, you favor localism in health care, and health maintenance organizations. We could also examine programs that utilize basic private institutions such as those enabling families to deal with handicapped or disturbed children at home rather than in institutions.

Your entire policy of regulatory reform which is designed to prevent government from restricting productivity in private industry can also be linked to your broad theme of strengthening the private sector by intelligent use of the public sector. Another issue is that of government-imposed quotas in every sector of society which have offended many and have threatened private labor structures. As some analysts point out, this subject is potentially very explosive since it combines a variety of wider social issues, including racial prejudice, anger at judicial and bureaucratic highhandedness, and gut fears about a shrinking job market.

In short, I believe, on the merits, that we should explore this broad theme of "rebuilding a free society" and many public policy alternatives that could help make it a reality. There are also major political considerations which I believe lead to the same conclusion.

Forgotten Americans and the "Social Issue"

During the past year the Office of Public Liaison has dramatically increased its contact with and services to various constituency groups. Our communication with business, women, blacks, veterans, hispanics, and youth have greatly increased and grown in sophistication, while we have also maintained good ties to labor, consumer groups, ethnics, and others. Through our special programs we have also cultivated representatives of agriculture, ecologists, the press, academia and many other specialized groups. I believe that these efforts have greatly fostered understanding of your Administration's program, which has helped build support for you with all of these groups and organizations.

Unfortunately, however, based on my experience with constituencies during the past year and on my reading of various data, I believe there is a substantial segment of the American people that we have been unintentionally missing. I am referring to what has been called "the New Majority," or "the silent majority," much of which has become George Wallace's constituency of "average Americans." This constituency is amorphous, almost shapeless and highly unorganized. It is not sophisticated; it doesn't understand Washington and it has no representatives or lobbyists here. This group is not after Federal jobs and

doesn't have quotas for itself. It does not understand the fine points of Federal grants and only keeps up with government programs in a very general way. It does not constantly look for meetings with you or other Administration officials because its basic values and most pressing concerns cannot be dealt with as simply or directly by the Federal Government as can the problems of many organized interest groups.

The values and problems of this group are much deeper and are much less susceptible to government "fixing." It is concerned with the family, the church, the neighborhood or community, and what it perceives as assaults on the independent and private institutions that it cherishes.

This group has begun to see itself and its institutions as under attack by government. Its members feel they have become victims of government rather than beneficiaries and their primary goal is simply to get the government off their backs. To this constituency HEW appears as merely a huge, faceless bureaucracy which threatens neighborhood, community and family by enforcing busing, putting strange or offensive textbooks into their schools, and promulgating sex education and liberal chic, womens lib content into their traditional educational programs. This group fears pornography, massage parlors and X-rated movies as threats to their values and neighborhoods. They dislike permissiveness and on foreign policy are very nervous about detente and have a gut reaction against foreign aid programs.

Part of this group was called the "peripheral urban ethnic" in the last election and it contains many blue collar, ethnic and Roman Catholic working class elements.

Since this constituency is not primarily interested in Federal grants, jobs, rewards, it is different from other groups. This constituency is looking for themes, for symbols and for what has been called "symbolic politics." And it is to this group that George Wallace appeals (and from which Richard Viguerie is so successfully fundraising for Reagan-Wallace, and from which Howard Phillips,

Meldrim Thompson and Jesse Helms are recruiting for their conservative third force "freedom of choice" movement).

Let me emphatically make the point that this constituency is not the same as the traditional conservatives, most of whom will support you over Reagan or Wallace. The traditionalist conservatives are business, GOP-oriented types who are concerned with balanced budgets, fiscal conservatism, strong national defense and patriotism. It is true that there is an area of great overlap on these and many other issues, but there are important social, economic and class differences between the two constituencies.

Now it is possible to attempt tactical appeals to this broader, more populist-oriented group by offering some specific programs, and by making job appointments to some of its representatives. I believe that such a mousey, nibbling approach would be useless, or marginally helpful at best.

I believe you should try to preempt or win over this group by casting the widest possible net, and that means using the broadest possible theme that would appeal to the gut values of most of both groups.

I believe that the concerns and values of this constituency, in fact, of the constituencies that comprise the center, center-right, right, and even moderate left of the political spectrum are those of (at the risk of being repetitious): (1) family, (2) church, (3) neighborhood, (4) ethnic community and (5) voluntary associations. These concerns are not only legitimate but provide the underpinning for our entire social, political and economic institutions.

None of this is new, of course. I believe, however, that there is now a great opportunity not only to reaffirm belief in and support of these institutions, but to strengthen them by reexamining public policy in the manner I discussed earlier. I believe that such a program and theme could provide you with the widest possible political support.

A final political word. Richard Nixon defeated George McGovern by best reflecting majority values on most of these social issues. You have at least as much credibility on the programmatic aspects of the

social issue as did Nixon in 1972, and possess one major plus in addition. At the risk of being sycophantic, I have discovered in my speeches to constituency groups that I strike a very responsive chord in listeners by relating these values to you personally. I always describe you in terms of family and blood ties, of community and neighborliness, and of spiritual values. There is great political benefit in analyzing your character and directly relating it in terms of broad themes. The sooner and oftener we do this the more credible and politically potent our efforts will become.

Conclusion

Government and the political system are increasingly remote from the lives of real people, whereas these institutions I have discussed reach directly into lives and provide meaning and sustain values. Dr. Peter Berger of Rutgers University, who has explored the theory of these "mediating structures," believes that public policy must now be tailored to strengthen these institutions so that their "value-generating and value-sustaining potency" can be used to solve social problems that otherwise would result in creation of yet more massive, bureaucratic Federal programs.

Berger, together with Richard Neuhaus, a liberal Democrat who is Editor of World View Magazine, is doing a project for AEI on the question of how to better utilize family, church, neighborhood, voluntary association and ethnic community in solving some of our HEW problems. I met with Berger several weeks ago to discuss the relation of their findings with what we are engaged in in the Public Liaison process. Following those discussions, I spoke to the Commonwealth Club of San Francisco and laid out a theme that relates the Public Liaison process to your larger goals and to the Berger-Neuhaus preliminary conclusions.

A copy of that speech is at Tab D. I include it because I believe it will give you a preliminary idea of how these admittedly abstract theories can be discussed in a politically appealing way that goes to the heart of America's crisis of confidence in itself.

I believe you have an opportunity to use your moral authority and teaching function to explore these possibilities still further. By committing your Administration to such a basic program, you would provide the themes, issues and moral leadership that Middle America craves, that transcends partisan politics. Reaffirmation of faith in these symbols and institutions -- in a dramatic way particularly in this Bicentennial period -- can provide the vital base of your entire Administration philosophy. It can lead the way to the rebuilding of the free society toward which the overwhelming majority of Americans aspire.

8/6/75

David S. Broder

Mr. Ford's First Year

A year after he succeeded Richard Nixon, Gerald Ford still has a curiously tentative hold on his office and on the respect of the American people. He is in many ways still a provisional President.

It is understandable, of course, because he became chief executive without ever winning a single vote outside his old Grand Rapids congressional district. But it is still curious, because Mr. Ford gives visitors the strong impression that he certainly feels at home in the Oval Office.

There is no sign of any psychological insecurity that would give the public a feeling of tentativeness in his grip on his leadership role. On the contrary, Mr. Ford has fully adapted to the demands of the presidency without distorting his own personality in the process.

In his first year, he has taken all the presidential tasks in stride. He has carried off a number of diplomatic missions without a serious gaff. He has shown himself a cool and decisive commander-in-chief, both in victory and in defeat. He has handled the ceremonial and substantive duties of the chief of state with a good-natured dignity that has been enhanced by the spunk and spirit of his wife and family.

He has intervened frequently and often skilfully in the legislative process, both as initiator and as critic. He has restored the badly damaged channels of communication between the White House and the country. And he has been effective enough as a politician so that his party, which was about to expire from acute embarrassment a year ago, can face the 1976 election with a certain degree of confidence.

The quality of his Cabinet and agency appointments has been exceptionally high. While unemployment and prices and deficits are all worse than they were a year ago and the state of America's alliances a bit weaker, few of his partisan rivals would identify Mr. Ford as the sole source of these problems.

On the contrary, both his rivals at home and his opponents abroad tend to respect him as a man who defends

his principles but is anything but heavy-handed in insisting on his prerogatives. He has done much to relieve the tensions in this capital and the world by making the generous personal gestures that indicate understanding of the other person's situation.

To a nation cynical beyond belief about politics and politicians, Mr. Ford has applied the healing balm of his own calm and candor. What individual example can do to restore a sense of trust, he has done.

Yet, there is only a tentative acceptance of his presidency, and for a very good reason. Mr. Ford has not yet attempted to give the nation a picture of where he is leading it. Nowhere, in the rush of his first year, has he paused to define his own larger objectives. And without that vision being made apparent, his daily moves lack a sense of purpose and direction.

That failure shows most clearly in the crucial areas where America is struggling to find a national policy that fits the altered realities of the world. The energy problem is simply the forerunner of a new era of worldwide commodity shortages, which must alter our way of life and the relationship of our economy to others.

But Mr. Ford has not addressed the issue in those terms, at all, or even raised the question of how the inevitable sacrifices can be fairly distributed in the new age of scarcity we are entering.

Similarly, in the area of foreign policy, there is evident need for a full-scale national debate on the fundamental principles that should guide us in a post-Cold War world. Mr. Ford has espoused detente without defining what it means to him.

As a result, we are recurrently embarrassed by the moral compromises that are implicit in the arrangements to reduce the danger of nuclear war, and recurrently divided by disputes over the validity of our Cold War alliances with countries like South Korea and Turkey.

These are all matters that cry out for national debate. But that debate can be led by a President only if he has thought through his own ultimate goals and has a vision he is ready to share with the people. Perhaps that is asking too much of an accidental President who has spent his previous political life mastering the techniques that are useful to a congressional opposition party.

The coming campaign year offers Mr. Ford his opportunity and challenge to develop that uniquely presidential perspective. It may be that he can win election without it, if the voters are satisfied to accept a thoroughly non-threatening and non-demanding leader, such as Mr. Ford has shown himself to be this past year.

But Americans have wanted more from their leaders in the past — and that may be why Mr. Ford still appears to be a provisional President on this anniversary.

9/13/75

Marquis Childs

TR: A Model for the GOP?

Celebrating the past, present and hopefully, the future, the Republicans shy away from a towering figure in their party. At the start of this century Theodore Roosevelt was one of the most creative and innovative of America's Presidents.

Invoking the name of Abraham Lincoln is perfectly safe for Republican orators. But TR gets into dangerous, tricky waters, and not only because he bolted the party and thereby brought about the election of Woodrow Wilson in 1912. Confronting the massive accumulation of capitol that had brought powerful industrial combines into being, the first Roosevelt challenged them with the power of government through the anti-trust laws.

He was bent on breaking up the combines that set prices in steel and other basic commodities. In the conflict that resulted, he earned the enmity of Wall Street and big business. He was denounced with something like the wrath poured out on the second Roosevelt and his New Deal.

There are parallels with that time today. The rise of socialism and anarchy in Europe is matched by a deep discontent with the status quo in America. Because he sensed this, TR took a more radical course than he might otherwise have done. The need was for an outlet for protest and disaffection.

President Ford seems wholly unaware of the discontent in our time or, in any event, he prefers to ignore

them. Nor does he show any awareness of the price-fixing conflict and its aftermath in the era of TR. This astonishing paragraph is from a speech in Sacramento:

"In many industries, transportation, energy, communication, federal regulatory commissions have virtually ruled out competition. What was begun as a protection for consumers now guarantees that in many cases they will pay higher prices than a free market would call for."

First of all, despite the trust-busting drive of TR, the free market is a myth in most major commodities. What, are politely called "administered prices" prevail across a broad spectrum from steel to gasoline. Compliance with TR's reforms was in many instances a legalistic shift that scarcely altered the basic power structure. Thus the Standard Oil giant was broken up into regional companies that continued to dominate the market.

The regulatory agencies President Ford spoke of so disparagingly grew out of TR's attempt to insure a free market and protect the consumer. If they have become encrusted with the barnacles of bureaucracy, one reason is the transformation they have undergone as, in effect, the regulated become the regulators.

Increasingly appointments to the regulatory agencies have gone to individuals in the industry that is theoretically being regulated. That trend was accentuated under President Nix-

on who rewarded industry friends and loyal Republicans with places on the Federal Power Commission, the Federal Communications Commission and other similar bodies. This may not be equivalent to putting the fox into the chicken coup, but the consumer, as chicken, could hardly expect protection from those who had been part of the pricing structure to be watched over by a federal agency.

Another factor was the growth of platoons of lawyers specializing in regulatory law. They tended to move from work with a regulatory agency to representing clients whom they had been monitoring when wearing a federal hat. All this is to say that ruling out competition is far from the simple matter that Ford made it sound in Sacramento.

TR's enemies, fighting his drive to bust the trusts, called him a demagogue pandering to the lowest passions of the crowd. Certainly he was a phrase-maker, a flamboyant campaigner who led America into an imperial role in the Pacific.

When those 14 moderate Republican senators called on President Ford to ask him to consider the moderate as against the conservative wing of his party in his election appeals, they could have had TR in mind. While "moderate" may not fit TR in light of present trends in the Republican Party, he gave dynamic leadership when it was badly needed.

8/6/75

By James Reston

WASHINGTON, Aug. 5—At the end of his first year in the White House, and the beginning of his campaign for four more years beyond 1976, President Ford must know that, even among the vast majority of his fellow-countrymen who wish him well, there is a strain of doubt.

The doubt is not primarily about this past year, though you can get an argument about his policies in both parties. His personal conduct has been almost faultless. He has been open, available, candid, and truthful, even at times when it exposed his own misjudgments and contradictions.

After Nixon, for the transition, this was probably more important than anything else. He removed the atmosphere of conspiracy. He saw his political opponents, argued out the issues with Mike Mansfield and his former colleagues in the House of Representatives, and vetoed their bills when he thought they were wrong.

Even now, his old buddies on the Hill are furious about what they regard as his "government by veto," but when they are angry, he invites them down to the White House to talk it over, and when they think he is wrong, they at least believe he is honest. This is a big change in the last year, and a triumph of Ford's character and personality.

All this has come out in the newspaper and television reviews of his first year in the White House. The reporters and commentators who watch the calendar and have to write about these political anniversaries have all concentrated on the point that Ford is "a decent human being."

This tells us something about the sad state of our politics—decency, fairness, and openness are now news, not things to be taken for granted, but maybe enough to elect a man in his sixties for another four years.

This is the big change in the President in the last year. He had a clear picture of himself not so long ago as an appointed Vice President and an accidental and astonished President. He saw himself then as a temporary and interim President in his sixties who would go home to Grand Rapids after an unexpected triumph and look after his ailing wife.

But in this last year, surrounded by the majesty of the White House, and reassured by the press and his ceremonial duties at home and abroad, he has decided to go for another term. This is where the element of doubt comes in.

It is easy to be grateful for his modesty and grace in the transition from Nixon. He has been an almost per-

fect interim President, but when he takes popular acclaim for the transition as support for another four years into the radical problems of the 1980's, he raises a different question.

He is a deeply conservative and national man in an increasingly radical and interdependent world. The nation and the world are suffering from disruption and shock. He is a happy and appreciative man with a kind of thumby practical-wisdom, but he does not really grapple with the perplexing problems or the insurgent hum of the age.

In this sense, he is very honest about his past, as leader of an opposition minority for many years. He senses the stress and anxiety of the young, and occasionally resents the smarties and pushers and extravagantly greedy lobbyists on the Hill, but in the crunch he comes down on the side of things as they were, and worries more about the threat of Rea-

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gan than the threat of the coming revolution of the hungry two-thirds.

There is something very amiable, and even good about all this, if you look merely at the past year, when the nation needed a respite from the tensions of Vietnam and Watergate, but in looking at the President at the end of his first year, it is important to distinguish between the past and the future.

He has glimpses of the elusive future, but he has an officious conscience about the Republican past and the threat of conservative opposition at the Republican nominating convention next year. He can go to Helsinki and give amnesty to the Russians for their aggressions in Eastern Europe, but not to his own fellow countrymen who opposed Vietnam. It is hard to discern any guiding purpose in this thought, any visible center in his philosophy for the future, or any directing brain.

In short, he has knifed the poison in our political system in the last year, which is quite an achievement, but in being grateful for that, we should not forget the proposal he has now put to the people, namely that we should reward him by electing him to lead us through the radical problems into the eighties.

For the past year of Gerald Ford, we should be grateful, but for the four years after 1976, since an election is not a judgment on the past but a bet on the future, maybe we should be careful. It is easy to celebrate his happy first birthday in the White House, but not necessarily to wish him many happy returns.