

The original documents are located in Box 16, folder “Campaign Strategy - Advice to the President” of the Richard B. Cheney Files at the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.

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Note to Researchers:

The Ford Library staff has been asked several times over the years if they know who wrote this strategy memo. We do not know the answer to this question.

From internal evidence, we can rule out all members of the Ford White House staff and most old friends of the President. Such individuals would have been much more involved in the 1976 primary campaign between President Ford and Ronald Reagan than the author of this memo was.

It was obviously written by somebody who was involved in the Nixon presidential campaigns of 1968 and 1972. The author did not take sides in the Ford-Reagan contest for the 1976 presidential nomination. He closes by saying "Good luck sir" – not the sort of line that most close friends of President Ford would use in addressing him. There are not enough personal comments to allow a guess as to the author's identity, but he might have been a former Nixon White House staff member who knew Dick Cheney well enough to pass on these suggestions.

WHM, 4/10/02

August 27, 1976

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

Herewith some thoughts regarding the campaign.

* * *

PRESIDENTIAL OR POLITICAL?

This is a campaign year; the President is the underdog; the opposition is strong, aggressive, united and hungry. This campaign will not be won by the timidity of staying in the Oval Office. Current circumstances do not permit that luxury.

The President ought, in my judgment, to be as spirited, as forceful, and as hard-hitting as he was in his very effective Acceptance Speech. (see the excellent Bill Buckley analysis attached)

I have read the reports indicating the President does better when not campaigning. But the post-Convention polls give the lie to that theory. The President surged upward in the Gallup because he was willing to be out front -- because his profile was high, not low. The Acceptance Speech showed a side that is welcome to the electorate -- especially in contrast to an opponent arrogant in his assuredness of victory.

The President's apparent weak campaigning in the primaries rested on one principal reason. Stumping against Reagan -- while the President was the favorite and held substantial leads -- tended to legitimize Governor Reagan's candidacy and unfavorably portray the President as running scared against an upstart challenge. Campaigning against Reagan elevated the Governor and correspondingly hurt the President. Moreover, Reagan is a superb stump campaigner; Carter is not.

But now, the President does not lead, but trails, his opponent. And we are in the political season where the public is obviously more tolerant of Presidential politicking. Public response to the Acceptance Speech shows that the voters will favorably receive a President who is willing to scrap for his principles, which, incidentally, is more in keeping with the President's character.



In watching, from a detached perspective, an entire season of campaigning, I was most convinced by the President's Michigan whistlestop. The fighting Jerry Ford on the train's platform -- with his pride at stake and his heart at work -- was more persuasive than the Presidential Gerald R. Ford on the defensive.

Finally, if the President enters the last three weeks of the campaign behind Carter, the temptation will be irresistible to "take off the gloves," to drop the so-called "Presidential" posture and slog it out on the trail. Coming late in the campaign, such high-pitched and frenetic campaigning would be labeled by the press and opposition alike as "desperation tactics."

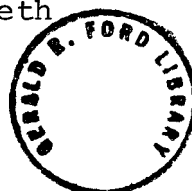
On the other hand, if the President hits the ground running, the campaign will be perceived as a fighting one from the start. And, importantly, starting out vigorously would permit the President, in the last week or so, to gear down, to revert to being Presidential, and to portray a calm, steady leadership -- something that will be welcome at the end of a heated campaign.

Thus, the President might open the campaign by saying:

"My friends, I have had a lot of advice to stay in the White House and take it easy in this campaign. I am not going to do that. We've still got some catching up to do, and catch up we will because we are going to run flat-out until November 2. A President unwilling to fight for what he believes is a President undeserving of your support. Starting today, I am taking my campaign throughout the country in a spirit of challenge and advocacy. I will talk about my record and my opponent's record, and when this campaign is over, the American people will know which choice to make because they will have had that choice clearly offered to them."

THE CARTER POSTURE

Carter has made it clear that from the first he will portray attacks on him as "personal" and "vicious" and "unfair." It will be his way to neutralize the effectiveness of the President's and Senator Dole's thrusts. To minimize this, I strongly recommend that some of the cuteness be dropped from Republican rhetoric. The jokes about Carter's teeth



and the peanuts; the charges of ruthlessness and political expediency. Those characterizations will be self-evident to the voters as the campaign wears on. It does little good for Republicans to make the vague charge that Carter is ruthless, while it opens the way for him to charge that the attacks on him are personal.

Needless to say, this should not detract from a very tough campaign. It is only the Democrats are masters at crying smear. They are especially eager to pin that tag on Bob Dole, and Herblock and Co. will help them in that process.

THE DEBATES

About these, only one observation. I would be extremely wary about reporters being involved in the debate process. They have little interest in the issues. They are much more interested in their "leads." Their questions, or at least some of them, will be directed at generating heat, not light. One need only recall the famous question for candidate Nixon about Ike's comment: "if you give me a week" I might think of an instance where Mr. Nixon contributed to a Presidential decision. Carter is depending, in my judgment, on the press doing the dirty work for him -- to ask about the pardon and Watergate. He wants to remain above it all -- the "Good Ole Boy" unwilling to raise such nasty questions.

On the other hand, if the debate topic can be kept to a strict single issue like national defense, as announced, those risks are minimized.

Of course, it is the obvious to state that no debate will be as important as the first. The first debate will be the single most decisive, and all efforts should be directed at its success. This was the clear pattern in the 1960 debates, where the audience was much larger for the first.

ISSUES

The Economy

As correct and as salutary as the President's policies have been, recent history has confirmed that the economy is not a good Republican issue. The Democrats have too much



to hammer on -- the high inflation rates of 1975; high unemployment, etc. It is never enough to say things are working out, especially for a public prone to say: "So what have you done for me, lately?" In 1970, we argued that employment was at an all-time high, that economic indicators showed great promise, that things were working out -- to no avail. The last set of unemployment statistics went up a bit, and it hurt Republicans in midterm elections.

The economy is a negative issue for Republicans. Period. The President's performance is eminently defensible, to be sure (see Herb Stein's brilliant analysis in the Wall Street Journal), but I urge that the temptation be passed in favor of plowing more fertile fields.

Foreign Policy

A brief word. Foreign policy is not politically "sexy" and ranks low as a vote-influencing issue, except in a negative way (e.g., Panama Canal). Peace in the Mid-East and SALT negotiations will not affirmatively generate votes. Absent the dramatic eye-catchers, like China, the Moscow Summit, or wartime moves like the mining of Haiphong Harbor, the public will not get excited by the "peace" issue. On the other hand, the President's steady hand in foreign policy is something which can be portrayed in films to create an image of steadiness and competence.

Right to Work

I think the President and his entire political staff would benefit by a close reading (or viewing) of Carter's "Meet the Press" performance just before the Democratic Convention. His answers on Right to Work were extraordinarily illuminating. One can see that he is totally uncomfortable with his non-position -- he's in favor of Right to Work (to protect the Southern flank) but he's prepared to sign legislation for its repeal (for organized labor). He seemed on Meet the Press to answer the question in restated form about three times. He was very, very uncomfortable. The way he responded revealed as much about Carter as it did about his position on Right to Work. It is on this type of thing that he can be successfully needed.

The Pardon

As unfair as I believe this entire matter is, it clearly rankles many voters, and Mondale (and Carter when he has the



chance) will raise it with alacrity. I believe that at the first opportunity, not by initiation, but in response, the President ought to try to get on the offensive on this matter.

By saying he would "do it again," the President sounds a bit too defiant, and probably grates on those who are still upset about it. Rather, I believe the President should acknowledge the great frustration and anger that he knows he unleashed; that he realized the political risks; but that, in the end, it had to be done. Because it is difficult to articulate this point, I have attached language to illustrate.

In short, the point here is to turn the "compassion" tables on Carter; to portray him and Mondale as cold and unfeeling and to criticize them for their vindictiveness and meanness. I believe that this can be turned against them.

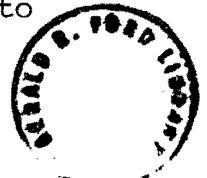
The Offensive

The key to defeating Carter, very frankly, lies not in trumpeting the achievements of the last two years, but rather in the unwanted havoc that an untested, unknown Carter Presidency would bring.

These are the so-called negative issues; his desire to cut back defense spending disastrously; his being in favor of \$20 billion more for aid to education; Humphrey-Hawkins; National Health Insurance, etc. The charge should be a flat one. If he's elected, you taxes go up _____ dollars. Don't label him a big spender (whatever that means). Attach figures to him -- and make them stick.

A group should be formed to coordinate this attack. Dave Gergen knows about the very effective group that met daily at 9:15 in 1972. To the extent possible, that effort ought to be duplicated -- marrying the best resources of the PFC, the White House and the RNC.

This group's specialty is the quick response and the offensive -- the daily arbiter of issues in the campaign. Moreover, and more importantly, it would achieve something that has been lacking up this moment: that is, the failure to capitalize on Carter gaffes. The black minister business should have been seized upon, and it might now be too late. A GAO audit should be called for; a private suit could have been brought by the RNC to recover the misappropriated funds; Republican Congressmen could have called for a Special Prosecutor and FEC action, etc. The drumbeat has to be kept up to make issues like this stick.



Someone needs to take on Bob Strauss when he starts talking about scandals -- reminding the public that Carter chose as his national chairman a man who took illegal campaign contributions and was saved from prosecution by a three-year statute of limitations. Someone needs to remind voters that Mondale introduced legislation to raise dairy price supports in 1971 and then sent his fundraiser to them only weeks later to ask for a \$25,000 contribution. Someone has to make the case against the obstructionist Congress and to tie in a dozen years of Democratic malfeasance, boondoggling and junketing. Carter has to be tied in with that immoral bunch and asked how he's going to clean up his party.

For this group, finally, I also suggest that first thing every morning a media political analysis be prepared -- no more than one single-spaced page of the controlling news of the day -- what the general public will be reading and seeing on the TODAY show that morning, and how that news is affecting the campaign. This is not a news summary so much as it is a narrow political weathervane for each campaign day.

Odds and Ends

-- Jimmy Carter is the only millionaire running for President this year.

-- On vetoes -- As I recall it was FDR who vetoed some 500 pieces of legislation during his presidency. Was FDR a "negative President?"

-- the Peanut Subsidy. Here is where as President Carter would have a definite conflict of interest. What does he intend to do about it. Moreover, the peanut subsidies amount a giant loophole for farmers like Carter to make profit from the taxpayer, an interesting contradiction for one who wants all tax loopholes done away with.

TACTICS

One tactical recommendation. Maximum advantage should be taken of the narrowing of the polls. There is going to be a great psychological effect -- negative to Carter, positive to the President -- in seeing Carter's lead melt away. I can only describe the feeling in 1968, as HHH crept up, as awful. The media played it up, and it caused us to panic a bit. For HHH it was an elixir -- an emotional tonic which lifted his candidacy.



As the margin narrows, a determined attempt must be made to develop a rhythm and momentum which quite simply unnerves the Carter crowd -- forcing mistakes and eliciting outrageous and strident charges. A major part of the President's campaign will be gaining momentum and keeping it. Playing on the underdog status, as against the cocksure Carter (as RR did in the North Carolina primary).

Good luck, sir!



August 26, 1976

THE PRESIDENT COMES ALIVE WITH THE CONSERVATIVE SPIRIT

BY WILLIAM F. BUCKLEY JR.

KANSAS CITY—Sen. Robert Dole had been nominated for the Vice Presidency, and suddenly nothing was happening. All the attention was being given to Ronald Reagan, who sat in his box with his wife, and one or two advisers, and emissaries from Gerald Ford. It soon was apparent what they were talking about. Should Reagan go—right now—to the platform, to say something pleasant and ecumenical?

Reagan was clearly arguing against it. For one thing, he had the sportsman's instinct. The winner's circle belongs to the winner, not to the loser. But there was a paradox. If he permitted himself to enter the winner's circle, even if only for the purpose of complimenting the winner, the crowd would give him such a welcome as to establish what almost everybody there knew—that Reagan was the dominating presence of the 1976 campaign, even though Ford was the formal victor. The fight between the two men had been, really, stylistic.

Ford appealed, finally, to that conservative streak in the nation that simply rejects the notion that you throw away an incumbent. Critics of Ford from the left quite correctly point out that on issue after issue, as raised by Reagan, Ford retreated.

The most conspicuous symbol of Reagan's ascendancy was the presence in the hall of Henry Kissinger, a magnetic field of supercharged potency who would steal the act from Saint Peter. Yet he sat alone with his wife, his name not once mentioned, because he is associated with that policy of detente condemned by Reagan, and in effect by the Republican platform.

The delegates sensed that the Republican Party is moribund, and comes to life only when, like Antaeus, it touches the ground of reality. That ground is that the government, the vessel of secular humanism, is too much with us, and that in getting and spending in political programs, we lay waste our powers.

So, adamantly, Reagan stayed put, and, facing the awful possibility that the convention would run right over the edge of prime time, the stage masters first put on Dole, a bright man and sharp polemicist who simply didn't have the time to come up with anything very bright or unusual in the hectic hours between his designation and his speech, and then Cary Grant, who said all those nice things about the girls, making up for the party's declining to endorse the Equal Rights Amendment. Then there was a vague sort of movie showing pictures of Ford excelling in college football. And then Ford himself.

You have to hand it to him. It was in itself an electrifying performance. And it was in the circumstances something very nearly miraculous—as if Joe Palooka had appeared in the Roman senate and outshone Cicero. There was determination, fluency, a sense of the spirit of the message.

It was hard to believe that this was the same man who delivered the speech early in 1975 beseeching aid to Vietnam from Congress, a speech in which, if memory serves, he drove off finally wondering about the imminent extinction of weeping willow trees.

This was tough stuff, and I do not doubt that it was perhaps the first moment during the convention when Jimmy Carter felt a little ache in the pit of his stomach wondering just exactly whether he could indeed count on suavely overpowering the man who had jestingly been referred to during the convention (using the language of Pound on Williams) as "the most bloody inarticulate animal that ever gargled."

Ford had come alive. Whether he will sustain it, one cannot know. One cannot doubt that the strength of his oratory issued from the words he spoke, which were an appeal to a reversed direction in a great American drift to serfdom.

Those who talk about the entropy of American Republicanism are something other than mere ideological purists. They are saying, in effect, that the accommodationist programs

of a generation of Republicans nursed by Wendell Willkie and Thomas Dewey can stand up against the drift of the socialist even when served, as by Carter, like cream wheat.

Some time in the future, the presidential candidate of the Republican Party will have to arrive as though to the Finland Station grim with historical purpose. The challenger for which providence provides few precedents, lies in his coming to town not for the purpose of taking power, but of redistributing it to the people. That challenger will arrive preaching the furtive excitements of a republic of law, and he will address a convention that declines to relegate its Jeffersons and Madisons and Hamiltons to the rear of the hall, yielding the floor to Cary Grant.

Until then, it's Gerald Ford, and, thanks to the spirit of Ronald Reagan, he is off to very good start.



The attached remarks are intended to be illustrative rather than definitive. I think they point the direction in which the President might go. Obviously, a response to the pardon question should not be initiated out of the blue -- but rather in answer to the charge if it gets constant national attention. I would not choose an outdoor political rally for such a speech, but rather something inside -- where an audience can be controlled and hustled for dramatic effect. Such remarks must be delivered more in sorrow than in anger, and, I believe, will have a telling effect.

REMARKS ON THE PARDON

I want to suspend partisanship for a moment and address all Americans -- Democrats, Republicans and Independents alike -- on an issue which my opponent has raised. It has been amusing to witness Mr. Carter's verbal gymnastics in discussing the pardon of former President Nixon in such a manner as not to appear to violate his pledge not to make it an issue.

I don't intend to evade this question even if Mr. Carter professes not to raise it. Two years have passed since I issued a pardon for the former President -- two years in which I hoped and, yes, prayed that passions might subside over the agony of those impeachment months.

Many people are angry at what I did. I understand that anger. Many Americans believe that I interrupted the flow of our system of justice, and that Mr. Nixon deserved to be punished and exposed to harsh penal sanctions. More pointedly: they say that he got off too easy.

These and other emotions are in the thoughts of many citizens, and to them I want to say: I sincerely understand your strong feelings.

Now -- I wonder if I could ask my fellow Americans to reciprocate that understanding as I examine the decision I made two years ago. I can never adequately describe the shock I felt when it became clear that I would soon assume the burdens of the Presidency. Even as I announced that our national



nightmare was over, I soon discovered that it was not.

Many people, not wholly satisfied with Mr. Nixon's resignation, urged that he be prosecuted for his actions in office. There is no need to review the entire matter again. Briefly, I checked with the Special Prosecutor, found that a jury in such a trial could not be seated in less than a year or nine months, and that a protracted trial would follow with lengthy appeals after that.

Far from ridding ourselves of the Watergate nightmare, proceeding against Mr. Nixon would pour salt on open wounds and literally ensure that Watergate would continue to dominate everything America did for possibly two more years, dividing us terribly.

Even as I knew that the protest would be mighty and that millions of my fellow citizens would not easily forgive my action, I saw no realistic alternative. It would be impossible for me to turn my attention to urgent national needs and engineer delicate international negotiations with the former President of the United States in the criminal dock.

Let me add a very personal note. I had known Dick Nixon since I came to Washington as a freshman Congressman in 1949. The friendship between us was personal as well as political. Witnessing his departure from office and seeing his gallant family crushed with him in this ultimate defeat, I could not,

as a fellow human being -- as a friend -- be mute to his agony.

One can not always express the jumble of emotions in one's mind. There are some decisions that cannot be reached through a cold and inhuman calculus. In all candor, I must say that I was not moved solely by practical considerations.

Even acknowledging the worst about the years preceding, I could not ignore the achievement: A bridge to the once forbidding and mysterious adversary, the People's Republic of China. Openings to the Soviet Union to work against nuclear holocaust. The return of our Prisoners of War from torture and ill-treatment. The peace in our city streets when the rioting, arson and mass deaths of the 1960s ended. The lifting from the shoulders of my son, Steve, the burdens of an inequitable draft and the knowledge that he would not have to go to war.

I reflected; and I prayed. To this day I hope I made the right decision -- even as I know and understand the anger of millions of Americans.

In October of 1974 I testified before the House Judiciary Committee for two hours on the subject of the pardon. I have answered, I believe, every conceivable question that could be asked and have given candid answers, including my categorical insistence that there were no deals of any sort.



In these past two years, we as a nation have made great progress. During our great Bicentennial just past, I gave silent thanks for our peaceful transfer of power and that we did not, on that solemn anniversary, have to be suffering through still another year of Watergate.

I guess my opponent believes he has a good issue. His running mate certainly is capable of his own brand of demagoguery on the subject. I wonder, my friends, if we can't pause in this campaign to show as much compassion with our hearts as we profess with our words. I truly believe that there are more important matters before us than the continued pursuit of a man who has paid penalties I pray that I shall never have to endure; who most assuredly suffered physically and emotionally when he left high office; and whose brave and determined wife at this moment recovers from a tragic illness.

I made my decision. I have to live with it. For those who feel that the ballot box is a place to punish this act of my conscience, then so be it. But such a decision should be made ^{not} on the basis of appeals to our lesser passions or on the basis of speeches grounded in political ambitions instead of human understanding. Calculated vindictiveness and a failure of charity should not dominate this campaign. I had hoped that we could all be bigger than that.

Whatever your decision is, I shall accept it. I only hope that tonight I have helped broaden each person's vision to see beyond what appears to be a vote-getting issue.

Thank you.

