

**The original documents are located in Box 1, folder “First Debate: Suggestions, Style and Themes” of the White House Special Files Unit Files at the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.**

### **Copyright Notice**

The copyright law of the United States (Title 17, United States Code) governs the making of photocopies or other reproductions of copyrighted material. Gerald Ford donated to the United States of America his copyrights in all of his unpublished writings in National Archives collections. Works prepared by U.S. Government employees as part of their official duties are in the public domain. The copyrights to materials written by other individuals or organizations are presumed to remain with them. If you think any of the information displayed in the PDF is subject to a valid copyright claim, please contact the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.

THE PRESIDENT HAS SAID...

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

September 20, 1976

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

FROM: WILLIAM CARRUTHERS

With regard to your first debate with Mr. Carter I have some random thoughts that I would like you to digest. They are as follows:

1. Carter has a great proclivity for evading a question however leaving the impression that he has answered it. It will be important for you to note each of the questions asked of him so that given the opportunity you might decide to indicate what he, Carter, did not in fact answer the question providing you the edge with regard to your rebuttals.
2. In phrasing your answers to questions, you might consider creating a vacuum for Carter's rebuttal with statements such as, "I'm sure my opponent will say" or "I understand that Mr. Carter's position is" etc. If you are on target, Carter will either be forced to repeat what you have already said or scurry around for another answer.
3. When possible you should consider prefacing a question with, "I'm sure there are a lot of people concerned about that issue" or "I'm glad you asked that question"...This sort of response indicates your concern, knowledge, and eagerness to get into the question.
4. It is most important that your personality, as those of us who are close to you know it, come out during the debates. Your smile and sense of humor should be evident during the program. I'm sure Don has some thoughts on this.



5. Carter tends to use phrases like, "I have mixed emotions about that" or "In general" a great deal. If he uses these stock phrases during the debates, you should be able to take advantage of him for not being specific.
6. Whenever possible, you should relate your programs and philosophies so that the common man can understand them. Again, Don will be of help in this area.
7. I have noticed that your energy level begins to drop off considerably after about an hour. You must be aware of this and keep yourself up.
8. It is not important that you look at your camera unless you wish to make a point directly to the American people. Conservative use of the camera will make it more effective when it happens.



Debate

After reviewing all practice transcripts and tape, we think a few minor adjustments would be helpful, for maximum impact:

1. If possible, please call him "Mr. Carter" rather than "Governor Carter".
2. Please try to avoid talking about "Republican" and "Democrat". We should want this to be a debate between the two men.
3. If you can, whenever you express opposition to spending, add that the reason is that it either produces higher taxes or greater inflation.
4. Please be careful not to use too many examples of your recommendations which Congress hasn't acted on. After a while it can sound like you aren't effective.
5. In rebuttal to Carter, it isn't necessary to comment on each and every issue he raises. Sometimes it's better not to get into the issue itself, but rather to comment on the vagueness or contradictions of the answer, (e. g., right-to-work, where the point was not your position but his vagueness.) To help, here are three short comments, which when appropriate can be both strong and sufficient:



-- "As a candidate, maybe Mr. Carter can afford to be vague or uncertain. A President, however, must make tough yes or no decisions. There's no button in the Oval Office marked 'maybe'."

-- "I've noticed that Mr. Carter has a tendency to answer the same question a little differently to different audiences. A President doesn't have that luxury. A President's State of the Union Message must read the same way in Texas as it does in New York."

-- "A candidate for President can always choose to promise the sky one day and a balanced budget the next. I think Mr. Carter's campaign can be described that way. A President has to be a little more responsible than that. When he sends his budget to the Congress, it's all got to add up; he can't just leave the bottom line blank."

6. Finally, please try to see every question and rebuttal as an opportunity to communicate one of the six basic strategic points:
  - a. The extraordinary comeback of the last two years.
  - b. 4,000,000 new jobs in the last 17 months is more new jobs than any similar period in U.S. history.

- c. 56 vetoes have protected Americans from inflation -- and you're going to keep on vetoing.
- d. Quality of life agenda for the future.
- e. You are running on the record of the last two years -- even though Mr. Carter would obviously prefer to run against your predecessor.
- f. Carter the candidate for President vs. Ford the President.

Candidates can be vague; Presidents must make tough decisions.

(Once a point has been made, please try to make it again. If you concentrate on these points, you will control and dominate the debate.)

THE PRESIDENT HAS SEEN.....

November 2nd - Critical decision for all Americans

Trust is a major issue:

As your President -- I have never promised more than I could deliver/I have delivered everything that I promised

A President should not be all things to all people/ he should be the same thing to all people.

On November 2 you must choose between my record and my opponent's promises.

He has endorsed:

1. Democratic Party Platform --  
more spending  
bigger deficits  
more inflation, or  
more taxes
2. Record of Democratic Congress --  
more spending  
bigger deficits
3. In Acceptance MORE Programs now

On July 4th America celebrated a wonderful 200th Birthday.

But we must look to future not to the past.

Fortunately our forefathers gave us in our First Century the greatest form of Government in the history of all mankind.

In our Nation's Second Century our forefathers developed America into the most powerful industrial Nation in the history of the world.

In recent years, however, government has gotten too big, industry has gotten too large, labor organizations too big and impersonal. We have mass education.



Our nation's Third Century should be the century of the individual and the expansion of his rights and opportunities.

We should never forget a government big enough . . .  
etc.

In industry the worker must be more than a small cog in a big wheel.

In labor organizations the union member must have more individual rights.

In education the individual talents and abilities must be given greater freedom.

My parents worked hard to give me greater opportunities.  
Your parents did the same for you.

Betty and I have worked hard for our children.

You have worked long and hard for your children and grandchildren.

Working together we can expand and strengthen their rights and opportunities.

Together we can build a better America.



Let me first say how pleased I am that we are having these debates, and I hope my friends out across America have found this first one helpful. I look forward with you to the next two, feeling very strongly that every voter needs to know, and has a right to know, exactly where each one of us stands, without any doubletalk or clever use of words.

What I hope this discussion tonight has brought out is that issues of very great importance to all of us will be at stake when we go to the polls on November 2.

As I see it, the Number One question for everyone comes down to trust, and let's be clear as to what I mean by that. Is the President you select for these next four years the sort of fellow who will level with you, no matter how tough things get for him personally. or for our country? Will he honestly say, in good times or bad, openly and candidly, exactly what he means and prove by his actions that he can be trusted totally and completely? Without that trust you know and I know that the next four years will be years not of new and exciting progress for our country but instead will be four years of nightmare. I honestly believe my record both as your President these past two years and as a leader' in Congress for years before that testify to my openness and integrity, and I urge you to think about the importance of that to all that we hope for in the years ahead.

I hope too that our discussion has clearly brought out some of our personal and Party differences over what this government of ours is and ought to be, because that also is very important to





you and our country. Put as simply as I know how, one approach to government -- the approach that runs through my opponent's platform and statements -- is that your federal government should be like a loving, indulgent parent who, whatever the cost, tries to satisfy every need or wish of the family. That's the old discredited notion we've lived with for so long and that has brought us so much disappointment and grief. It's the approach that has given us government too big, government too meddlesome, taxes too high, wasteful and foolish spending of tax dollars, and the idea that federal employees in Washington can do better for you than you can do for yourself.

*that big enough.*

So think about what we've said tonight, compare what the two of us stand for, see what our two party platforms say -- and then you will know what to do come election day if you want your government to be your servant and not your master.

That brings me to a final comment that I hope you will think a great deal about after this debate this evening. I believe the heart and soul of this wonderful country of ours are concerned not with what government can do for you or me, but with the still exciting idea of human liberty. I believe that you and I have a great responsibility to do all that we can to pass on a land of liberty with justice to our children, and that, compared with that, everything else is as nothing. You should know that as your President that will always be my guiding star, whether we are dealing with the spending of your taxes, federal regulation, national government versus your state and local governments, or simple bureaucratic oversteering.

*Recent*

*Whatever I do in next 4 yrs*

With all my heart I believe that you there at home want most of all to run your own lives in your own way in a prospering and decent environment, and that in all of these things we have talked about tonight you want your President to keep this huge federal government in its proper place.

My promise to you is that, with President Ford, that's the way it is going to be.



September 20, 1976

MEMORANDUM FOR: THE PRESIDENT  
THROUGH: DICK CHENEY  
FROM: BILL CARRUTHERS

Additional points to be added to my earlier memo:

1. With regard to answering questions either at the beginning or conclusion of each answer, I think you should make an overall statement with regard to your position on the issue in question. In order to set up that type of response, I suggest you use prefacing phrases such as: "I think that the American people should know...", "what I want the American people to understand ...", "it is important that the American people understand ...", or "what I want Americans to remember...".
2. Do not set an attitude for yourself for the entire debate. You should adjust naturally as you proceed through the program.
3. With regard to your answer on the next four years, both Bryce Harlow and I feel that you should be considerably more fluid with your remarks. Point-by-point definitions of unemployment, crime, housing, etc. are fine to specify your programs on those issues, but when it comes to vision, you should think more in terms of moving and emotional remarks.
4. When it comes to responding to an answer on unemployment, there should certainly be an ingredient of personal compassion woven into your remarks. You had to work your way through college, you did not come from a wealthy family, you know what it means to be unemployed.



DEBATE MATERIALS

Philadelphia -- 9/24/76