

The original documents are located in Box 63, folder “12/5/75 - To Bo Callaway - Recommendations on Theme (issue/program) for Administration and Campaign” of the Robert Teeter Papers at the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.

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MEMORANDUM

To: Bo Callaway

From: Robert Teeter

Date: December 5, 1975

It is becoming apparent to me that while the idea of the President's 28 billion dollar tax and budget cut is popular and will help him politically, it will not win the election. The major reason for this is, it like several of the President's recent programs don't do anything for anybody even though there is majority agreement with them. They all cut back and take something away from people rather than given them anything or do anything positively for them. As Lloyd Free pointed out Monday, there is a lot of evidence that many successful politicians get that way by talking conservatively and acting liberally.

I think the President needs to have a series of proposals and programs that do something for individual citizens to help them make their lives better. I recognize the economic realities of not being able to add major programs to the budget next year, but I am sure that we can find a series of things that the administration can do or propose to Congress that will help people that don't have large price tags attached.

It would be helpful if we could come up with a number of programs that would together form a theme for the administration for next year and for the campaign. One possibility might be to come up with proposals in the area of de-regulation, privacy, anti-trust and others that would increase competition, limit large institutions of all kinds and thereby help individuals. As I have pointed out previously, the levels of alienation and cynicism are at an all-time high and are directed at most major institutions. Moreover, when questioned closely, most people feel the problem with these institutions is that they have become too big. I think this anti-bigness, anti-concentration of power theme might be a good one for the administration for several reasons. Most importantly, it fits the tenor of the times, is consistent with Republican principles and would not cause us any problems in the primaries. It is a theme into which we could fit the President's budget cutting proposals and it is one which can have balance. That is, if the general theme is to attack the concentrations of power, we can build in programs to limit big government, big unions, big businesses and other large institutions and not appear to be one-sided. Also, we can find an example of how all of these proposals ultimately serve to help individual citizens and consumers.

Whatever theme we decide on, I think there are several elements we could keep in mind in presenting it.



First, it ought to have the element of hope. Hope has been the basis for successful politics for a long time and while people want less government they also want change. While this is no time to overpromise or raise expectations above reality, we ought to try to give people some hope that things can and will change for the better with Gerald Ford as President.

Second, whatever proposals we make, we ought to remember that two good general rules of politics are that it is impossible to over-simplify proposals or to repeat them too often. Also, we need to find examples of how individuals have been hurt by specific situations and how our proposed changes will help individuals. For example, should we decide to do something with the privacy issue, I am sure we can find a number of examples where individuals, not just public figures, have been wronged by the bureaucracy or some computer system and that the President's program will correct.

Another area that needs attention is that we are not getting enough political mileage out of the proposals and actions that the Administration is already taking. The President has made a series of comprehensive proposals in the crime area, which is an issue of great concern to voters, including a proposal for mandatory sentencing. Yet there is no evidence that the President has gotten any support for this or that he is identified with it. The proposals were sent to Congress, he made one speech in Sacramento, which got lost in the Fromme incident, and we haven't done anything with it since then. In the last few weeks, the FTC has floated the idea of an anti-trust action against General Motors and taken action against the American Pharmaceutical Association which if successful would lower the price of prescription drugs and yet the President has in no way been identified with either of these. All of these proposals could be interpreted to help individuals. Also remember, there is no evidence anywhere that to be anti-big business is to be anti-Republican.

Another example is that if he decides to sign the energy bill, we ought to get some credit for being against the big oil companies. There is absolutely no support for the oil companies and there is wide-spread public belief that they were and are part of the cause of the energy crisis and increased gasoline prices.

