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Handled by Dick Cheney per Kathie Berger.

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

Dick Cheney

Dave B. has
some excellent thoughts.
Make copies for Bob
H. + Bob D.
Get amnesty.

K-handle

FEB 23 1976

done

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February 13, 1976

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The President of the United States
The White House
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Dear Mr. President:

Enclosed is a copy of my February, 1976, strategy paper entitled, "Projecting Leadership and Statesmanship - Some Major Opportunities." I hope that after you have had an opportunity to review this paper, I will be able to meet with you in person to discuss some of these ideas with you.

Best regards.

Sincerely,



David W. Belin

DWB:cs

Encl.

c.c. Richard Cheney
c.c. Robert Hartmann
c.c. Ron Nessen

THE ELECTION OF PRESIDENT FORD

BASIC STRATEGY PAPER NO. 4 - FEBRUARY, 1976

David W. Belin

Projecting Leadership and Statesmanship -
Some Major Opportunities

I believe the time has come for the campaign of the President to go on the offensive. Reacting to the charges of the Democrats on the one hand and Governor Reagan on the other is not enough. Moreover, I believe that there are some major opportunities where the President can project dynamic leadership and statesmanship, which are vital ingredients for him to win the Republican nomination and the general election in November.

Before turning to some specific suggestions, it might be appropriate to list some of the major criticisms that have been leveled against President Ford in recent months. My purpose is not to determine whether or not the criticism is valid or not valid. Rather, my purpose is to pinpoint how President Ford is perceived by some people and then offer some constructive suggestions for not just meeting this criticism but rather going forward in a positive fashion which will make a major contribution toward winning both the Republican nomination and the general election in November.

There is a feeling on the part of many people that President Ford has not shown sufficient "leadership." Other people maintain that the President is not acting like a President should act (whatever that is) and instead is acting like a Congressman or like the Republican Minority Leader.

Other major criticisms have been made, including one which was discussed in the December paper: Perception of the Republican Party as the Party without compassion.

If President Ford is to win the nomination and the general election, then he must be cognizant of such criticisms and must consider possible courses of action to overcome these problems.

As a combination program to project imaginative and dynamic leadership and statesmanship and also at the same time meet some of the criticism that has been leveled against the President, I would like to suggest four specific programs which can be integrated with key anniversaries providing speaking opportunities that the President can use as a take-off point. These programs and speaking opportunities can be used as major keystones in the campaign for both the nomination and the general election. Furthermore, they can be all pulled together in the climax, which I call the "Bicentennial Speech"--the speech that the President

will give on July 4, 1976--an address that could be and should be one of the most important of this century.

There should be a theme which should tie these major speaking opportunities together and which should also be used to help project Presidential leadership and statesmanship. One theme that I would suggest for consideration is the need to rebuild confidence in ourselves, recognize the greatness of this country, recognize unsolved problems that we have, partial solutions that we have already attained, and opportunities for the future. There is nothing that is impossible--as long we have confidence in ourselves and our ability to recongize our problems and work together to solve them.

With the foregoing as a frame of reference, let us examine in summary form four specific proposals and key anniversaries for the presentation of these proposals:

1. The first speaking opportunity that I would like to pinpoint occurs on the 111th anniversary of the assassination of Abraham Lincoln on April 14, 1976. "With malice toward none, and charity toward all." This nation is still divided against itself. The aftermath of Vietnam, the aftermath of racial clashes, the aftermath of Watergate have left the national purpose of this country unsettled.

This has been compounded by the investigations of the CIA. To say the least, divisiveness is the order of the day.

Not only is this bad from the viewpoint of moving forward toward our national goals and aspirations, but it is also bad from the viewpoint of a strong national defense. When one reads basic communist political doctrine, he finds that there are often references to the fall of capitalism as a result of disarray and crumbling from within the capitalistic system as opposed to exterior force from outside the country.

Therefore, I believe that a major national goal from the viewpoint of both domestic progress as well as strong national defense must be getting people pulling together again. Within this context, I think we can turn to the leadership of Abraham Lincoln who was faced with the problem of uniting a very disunited country after the Civil War.

But the words of Lincoln, alone, are not enough. There must be specific action to demonstrate Presidential leadership and compassion. A wide number of possibilities should be considered--even though at first blush some of these may not appear appropriate at this stage of the campaign. For instance, one possibility which I believe should be considered (but which I am not yet ready to recommend) concerns Presidential amnesty or

pardon for people who fled the United States during the Vietnamese war. It is not a particularly major issue now, but could it offer a major opportunity for President Ford on the anniversary of Abraham Lincoln? As a frame of reference, I am going to point to the pardon of President Nixon by President Ford. I did not agree with this at the time it was done. Yet, many people feel in retrospect that this was a sound decision because it avoided a continuation of national disarray as an outgrowth of Watergate.

Another aspect of national disarray concerns the issue of amnesty for those who fled this country instead of being drafted to fight in Vietnam. Heretofore, I have wholeheartedly supported the concept of requiring some sort of obligatory service as a substitute for the Armed Forces service that was avoided by those people who fled the United States during the Vietnamese War. Yet, as I gain perspective, I wonder whether or not we can get this whole issue behind us by having President Ford not only use the words of Lincoln but also undertake a specific action of having a blanket amnesty or Presidential pardon for all Americans to return to the country, with no conditions attached. The more I think about it, the more I believe that in the long range, this could be in the best interests of our country.

In addition, this could act as an insulating factor against what will have a major political impact this summer and fall: The release of the movie about Watergate starring Robert Redford and Dustin Hoffman and featuring the re-creation of President Nixon, Mitchell, Haldeman, etc. Previews of coming attractions are already featuring scenes from this movie, and Watergate will be very much in the mass media this summer and fall. Necessarily, this will bring back into the public eye the pardon of President Nixon. A Presidential pardon or amnesty of Vietnam draft evaders might materially offset the adverse effect that this movie is bound to have.

Furthermore, in the campaign for the Republican nomination, there could be some very tangible political benefits, particularly if Governor Reagan should win some early victories in the Presidential primaries. (I will discuss in the March paper some specific course of action which I believe must be taken in the event Reagan does very well in New Hampshire and Illinois.)

There is another tangible political benefit and that is the possibility that Governor Reagan will disagree with this decision. This is the kind of an issue that after the first few days has to work to the benefit of the President. In the

first place, most of the press will be in favor of the decision. Moreover, the American public by and large is a public that is willing to forgive, and if the public has to vote on the side of compassion or non-compassion, the public generally is going to favor compassion.

Finally, I believe such a stand would help meet the problem that was discussed in the December paper: Perception of the Republican Party as the Party without compassion.

On the other hand, there are obvious disadvantages for the President to offer blanket amnesty or Presidential pardon. But regardless of whether or not amnesty is the right decision to make at this time, the fact remains that the nation is still not together again, and the anniversary of the assassination of President Lincoln affords a great opportunity for President Ford to make a major national address steeped in the vision and idealism of Abraham Lincoln. The country is moving again. You can feel it as you crisscross the country. We must look toward the future as we recognize the crises we have recently gone through.

I would like to borrow another page from Lincoln and make a specific suggestion for an April 14, 1976, speech (and this same suggestion applies to the other specific speeches I am recommending): President Ford should strive to make his public speeches shorter: A target of ten to twelve minutes with a maximum of fifteen. The Lincoln Gettysburg Address was less than five minutes. A masterpiece does not have to be long. There are very few people who do not appreciate a short speech.

2. The next major address I suggest is on May 8, 1976, coinciding with the 31st anniversary of V-E Day in Europe. I believe that there has been great Presidential leadership in the search for world peace, and I think President Ford should come forward and "tell it like it is." We do not have any American troops engaged in war operations abroad. We opened the doors to China. We are seeking to make agreements with Russia which will cut down on the horrible waste of human effort toward building instruments of destruction.

The specific content of this speech should emphasize the stupidity of the nations of the world in spending so much money for instruments of destruction when so much needs to be done and so much can be done. At the same time, the speech can discuss the need for national defense as long as there are totalitarian

nations in this world that do not recognize the rights and freedoms that American citizens enjoy.

I think there is a fantastic opportunity for President Ford to go through the budgets that various foreign nations spend for their armed forces and for instruments of war and compare these with the expenditures that are made to help relieve poverty throughout the world. The President can express great concern for the huge defense budgets that this country has, while explaining to America that we cannot afford to be second-best. I would also suggest that the President with particular reference to the campaign for the nomination can point out how ill-advised it can be to grandstand and "talk tough." Here, I believe there is a page of Republican history that can be borrowed--the 1948 campaign for the nomination between Dewey and Stassen, where Stassen was on the verge of victory until he met Dewey in Oregon and took the "hard line" position against communism.

Ronald Reagan has an Achilles heel when it comes to foreign policy. The President can exploit this while at the same time coming forward as a statesman and as a leader who is leading the way in the search for world peace.

There are other possibilities which I would like to discuss in detail in the near future. The key is that President Ford has a story to tell. I want him to tell the story as a statesman, as a leader, and as a man with a passionate concern for the need to preserve our freedoms on one hand and compassionate understanding of the havoc that has been caused by both war and the expenditure of huge sums throughout the world for weapons and armies.

3. The Flag Day-Commencement speech.

Book
The month of June offers a double opportunity of Flag Day (June 14) and a major address at a college or university. This talk can be the prelude to the Bicentennial speech on the Fourth of July.

As I envision this address, it would be appropriate at a college or university to scan the past 200 years of American history to show what we have accomplished from the idealistic point of view as well as from the practical point of view. At the same time, since the talk would be before younger people, we can look with a vision toward the future to see what can be accomplished in the years ahead. We can review perspectives of how far we have gone in relations between races and how far we can still go. We can take a look at perspectives of the freedoms

we have and compare this with the freedoms that most of the rest of the world does not have.

There are some great quotations going back to the Founding Fathers and including quotations from great leaders of Western Europe which could be sprinkled in this kind of a talk.

The talk in part can also be adapted to the course of the primary challenge by Governor Reagan. I will have some specific comments on this in the April or May strategy paper.

4. July 4, 1976, is literally a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. The Bicentennial speech in many respects may be the most important address that President Ford will ever make. It can make a major contribution toward winning the nomination. It can make a major contribution toward winning the election. And it can make a major contribution in the course of this country's progress for the rest of this century, and beyond.

Perhaps in this talk more than any other place, President Ford will have an opportunity to demonstrate that he is a "big" President--a President that deserves to go down in history as one of the best--a President who has the vision and the leadership to guide this country as it enters its third century.

I have some specific thoughts and suggestions on this address. In part, these relate to what I have previously discussed in this strategy paper. In part, they do not.

Either the April or the May strategy paper will be primarily devoted to this tremendously important event. However, before I prepare that strategy paper, I would like to have the benefit of meeting directly with President Ford and listening to his thoughts in this area, his disagreements or criticism with the overall strategy that I have proposed in these strategy papers to date, and sharing with him some specific suggestions and observations.

In closing, let me reiterate a comment made in the November strategy paper: The most important advantage that President Ford has is that he is the President. Over the past few months, he has concentrated on performing his job in Washington and not going out on the campaign trails. I believe this is very sound strategy. But I also believe that it is now time to take the next step and go forward with a positive, affirmative, imaginative program which will emphasize his leadership and statesmanship as the President of this country.

There is a story to be told. A story of world peace. A story of return to domestic prosperity. A story of how much better off we are than we were a year and a half ago. A story that it is not fair for the Republican Party to turn its back on a President who has literally led this country from the brink of internal disaster, both economically and politically.

There are other aspects of this story such as the fact that the economy has turned around in barely more than a year-- as compared with an economy that after the 1929 Depression did not turn around until the advent of a World War.

But the most important aspect is the frame of reference-- a frame of reference that includes vision, idealism, compassion, and recognition of what we have accomplished, what remains to be accomplished, and what can be accomplished if we have confidence in ourselves and work together, looking toward the future.

I have made some specific proposals. There may be disagreement with some or all of these proposals. But if there is disagreement, then I would respectfully suggest that there should be alternative specific positive programs for projecting

imaginative leadership and statesmanship--qualities that the President does have--qualities that are essential in winning the nomination and the general election in November.

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