

**The original documents are located in Box 2, folder “Presidential Campaign - 1976” of the Benton L. Becker Papers at the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.**

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M E M O R A N D U M

TO : R. H.  
FROM: B. L. B.  
DATE: JUNE 17, 1975  
RE : PRESIDENTIAL PRIMARIES

This is a follow-up memorandum of our conversation earlier last week relative to the possibility of President Ford having more token or no opposition during the Presidential Primaries of 1976.

I believe that the party would be best served and the President more highly calculated toward achieving re-election in 1976, by avoiding party divisiveness during the Presidential Primaries. The public will receive ample servings of internal party squabbles through the numerous Democratic hopefuls. A working, politically uninvolved President during this period would demonstrate party unity (contrasted with the apparent party disunity of the Democrats), and overall Republican support for the Ford Administration (contrasted with the myriad of political philosophies and spokesman for the Democratic nomination). It would add an element of sobriety and sanity to presidential campaigning in general.



In order to achieve the objective of token primary opposition, the apparent presidential candidacy of Ronald Reagan must terminate. An early ending of that candidacy would, on balance, prove to be helpful to the Nation at large, to the Republican party, to the Ford-Rockefeller team and to Governor Reagan himself. I foresee no present circumstances whereby Governor Reagan could wrestle the party nomination from President Ford. I believe, that when viewed objectively, Governor Reagan can be made to see his candidacy in the same light.

What the Governor's candidacy can do is to exacerbate friction within the party. It may also prove to be a personal embarrassment, although not fatal, to President Ford when, and if, a Reagan-Ford "head to head" primary is held in a southern state such as Florida, the second primary state. In such event President Ford may find himself unhappily in a position not unlike President Johnson following the New Hampshire Primary in 1968. Party wounds would occur, and counter-efforts would then be undertaken to prevent a Reagan steam roll effect. All of which could be successfully done and, in the final analysis, Gerald Ford would be the Republican Presidential nomination in August, 1976, but the cost would be high and the friction that occurred would have to be healed in September and October of 1976. I believe it to be prudent to avoid that contingency.



If the premises outlined in this memorandum are accepted as factual, then an effort should be undertaken to cause Governor Reagan to formally announce his support for President Ford's re-election and denounce any 1976 presidential aspirations for himself, leaving only the possibility of mere token (i.e., Ashbrook-McCloskey) opposition to President Ford in the 1976 primaries.

To achieve this result, I suggest that the following program be initiated.

1. Within 90 days following President Ford's formal announcement of candidacy, six (6) key Republicans would come forth and publicly announce their support for President Ford. These individuals are:

- a. Congressman John Rhodes
- b. Senator Barry Goldwater
- c. Former Secretary John Connally
- d. Senator Strom Thurmond
- e. Senator John Tower
- f. Senator James Buckley

The first three, I believe, are already supportive of President Ford and would be willing to make such public announcement, if asked. Senator Thurmond, in my judgment, is the most important individual on the list, but I believe, that he too would join in, if properly approached. Senators Tower and Buckley would perhaps be the most difficult to



persuade, but given the prior public announcement of the other four gentlemen, particularly Senator Thurmond, I believe, they would opt for party unity.

2. Following the public announcement of support to President Ford referred to above, then a overture should be made to Governor Reagan. The overture should not be from the President himself, nor, preferably from anyone presently within the Administration. The source should solicit Governor Reagan's public support for President Ford's candidacy and a renunciation of any individual candidacy for himself in 1976. The source should be prepared to offer two things in return. They are:

a. A meaningful and significant Cabinet post in 1976.

b. President Ford's promised neutrality in 1980. This would import President Ford's dual promise not to annoint a party standard bearer in 1980 and his promise to support the 1980 convention choice, whomever it may be.

This offer, when viewed objectively, should be palatable to the Governor for reasons. They are:

(1) After the leaders of the Republican conservative movement have announced their support for President Ford, Governor Reagan's probability of success is non-existent,



(2) It affords him a guaranteed public forum from 1976 to 1980 in a role of an important Cabinet official, and

(3) It offers him a realistic opportunity to achieve the Presidency in 1980, subject to his 1980 primary success. An opportunity that does not today exist.

These thoughts represent my and former Congressman H. Allan Smith's. H. Allan believes that given the conditions outlined within this memorandum, Governor Reagan will ultimately accept the proposal.

I urge that the thoughts contained herein be considered.



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TO : R. H.  
FROM: B. L. B.  
DATE: JUNE 17, 1975  
RE : SUNSHINE CAMPAIGN

Recently, I have had what I consider to be an interesting thought. I have chosen this devise to put on paper and place it within the Hartmann Legion of possible things to do in the near future.

The idea incorporates two useable virtues. They are, (1) favorable public relations for the candidacy of Gerald Ford, and (2) openness and candor in presidential politics.

That idea is simply this. Following his nomination at the 1976 Republican Convention and during the course of his acceptance speech at the convention, nominee Gerald Ford announces that his presidential campaign will be conducted differently than any other presidential campaign in our history. Using an idiom employed in Florida politics, for a different purpose, it might be called a Sunshine Campaign, indicating that all things done will be open to public viewing.



The President (or later his campaign manager) would announce that ten (10) members of the media, columnists, newspapers, television, radio, etc., will be selected to serve as media "insiders" to the Ford Presidential Campaign. These ten (10) individuals will have complete access, at all times, to all campaign materials, literature, speeches, contribution lists, solicitations, etc. They will be invited to attend strategy sessions. No element of the campaign will be denied them. They will be issued keys to the offices that house the campaign headquarters, retain access to all file cabinets, and be allowed to view any campaign material whatsoever.

Guidelines reflecting premature disclosure of strategy sessions would, of course, be required, but the media should be taken at its word to treat this unprecedented approach in a fair and unbiased manner. The new Federal Campaign Election Law requires full disclosure anyway, so this device would merely hasten contemporaneous disclosure of relevant information in the public interest.

I believe this approach is both healthy for the general political climate of the Nation and serves the best interest of President Ford. This approach coincides with President Ford's public and private personality of candor and becomes even more effective by the fact that it is implemented in the presidential campaign of an incumbent

President. Its contrast with 1972 is awesome, and likewise, a contrast will be deduced about the personalities and staff of the past and present Republican nominee.



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