

NOTE: Two copies. One for the President's file and one for Bob Haldeman - not for distribution otherwise. That is always the case where I dictate a political memorandum unless I indicate that the political memorandum is to go to others. (RN)

CAMP DAVID  
Sunday - July 30, 1972

MEMORANDUM FOR BOB HALDEMAN

FROM THE PRESIDENT



In reading Lou Cannon's piece in the Sunday Washington Post I think we can get some guidance as to the handling of the press on campaign matters which should be followed strictly.

I do not want people who talk about the campaign to make the mistake of cutting off representatives of periodicals, TV and newspapers simply because they are generally against us. Consequently, I do not object to an article, appearing from time to time, in unfriendly publications which is based on conversations with our campaign people. Having said this, however, we need some completely ironclad rules with regard to who talks to media representatives that we know are antagonistic to us.

First of all, it is vitally important that only the most intelligent and sophisticated person on our campaign staff dare to go in the ring with one of these people. Second, we should not waste time with one of them at the expense of turning down interviews with media representatives who are our friends. Third, even when our most intelligent people are meeting with people like Cannon they must constantly keep in mind that they are confronting a political enemy and that everything they say will, therefore, be used against us. I have to emphasize this over and over again because we never seem to get it across to our people no matter how many times they get burned.

The Cannon piece is the best example we can have of why these rules should be rigidly adhered to. In the first place, while we know the Washington Post is totally gainst us it is just as well to have a piece that has some favorable points in it as well as completely negative ones. Therefore, I have no objections to the fact that Cannon was given interviews by the Campaign Committee. On the other hand, it waa a stupid mistake -which must never be repeated - to allow Cannon to have the run of the White House staff, the campaign staff and the National Committee staff in getting his story together. The PR types representative of each of

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these groups must have a rule that when media representatives, who are antagonistic, come in for interviews they are treated courteously but that only the top political man with great sophistication will be allowed to talk to him. In addition, whenever that man talks to the interviewer the press man should sit in on the interview so as to keep it honest.

In that connection, incidentally, I was rather surprised to find that we did not have a recording of Clark MacGregor's remarks at the Press Club. It will be a very modest expense - but it is absolutely essential that a man with a small recording device go with him everywhere he goes so that we have a record of what he says which he can put out in the event that we want to correct a misquotation or get out a story that was not covered adequately. The same, I think, should be true of Dole. As you know we have always followed this custom with regard to my own appearances.

Now, looking at the Cannon story from both the plus and the minus standpoints, we find a good headline - "Nixon Running Scared," and a good thrust insofar as there being no complacency.

From a minus standpoint, it is obvious that Cannon had the run of the shop and in addition to talking to Haldeman in the White House and MacGregor at the Committee to Re-Elect, Dole at the Republican National Committee, he talked to people up and down the line and got a number of quotes that are both inaccurate and not helpful. I am not, of course, referring to quotes that he has from Republican Senators and Congressmen. We have no control whatsoever over this. What I am referring to are quotes that he obviously had to get - since he has it in quotation marks - from people on the campaign staff.

For example, as I have often emphasized, it is a mistake constantly to run down my previous campaigns. We should not contribute to the myth that I did not work hard enough in 1960 and 1968. The quotation to the effect that before the election in November I had gotten so confident that I was working on my acceptance speech, taking rests, etc., is totally inaccurate, as you know, and very harmful.

With regard to MacGregor's own interview, I would like for you to get together with him and Dole on one point and to have a rule enforced throughout the balance of the campaign. He was putting out polls from California and Texas as well as Ohio and Illinois. There was no reason why he should not have done this since we have not indicated in the past what our policy was in this respect. However, under

absolutely no circumstances are any polls whatever to be put out showing us ahead or behind in any of the major states without my specific approval. This is an area where well-intentioned people will put out a poll for what they think is a good reason - in this case to knock down complacency -- but where later on they are going to be asked for polls in these states when they might not want to put them out. Also, I don't want the impression to get across the country that we are conducting our campaign on the basis of polls rather than on the basis of principles. I want you specifically to see that this is brought up at the next meeting where Mitchell, Dole, MacGregor, et al, are present. Mitchell, of course, would not have made this mistake. MacGregor made it only because of lack of experience.

Along the same line, I noted where the statement was made that abortion was a minus issue for the President because polls showed that a majority of women favored it. This obviously comes from the Harper group in the Domestic Council Staff. I want you to get hold of Ehrlichman and tell him that he is to see that absolutely no one in the Domestic Council talks to anyone in the press without his specific approval and then a press man from Ron's office is to be present. Ehrlichman, of course, would not make such a stupid mistake and the only way he can control others is to put a tight reign on them.

For example, Syndlinger ran into outraged reaction the evening that the National Committee put out findings from their Platform Committee poll to the effect that a majority of the members of the Platform Committee found out that bussing was not a significant issue. I want some discipline enforced in this respect for reasons which should be obvious even to the most stupid of our people.

Another line which we should knock down is that there is no grass roots support for the President and that we have to get "volunteers one at a time." This probably comes from Sears or somebody in that group. The question here is not whether this may be true - and I doubt if it is in terms of getting volunteers one at a time - but it plays right into the hands of our political enemies. I could give other examples but I close the memorandum with this admonition: Let's quit tackling our own ball carrier."