

OFFICE OF THE VICE PRESIDENT
WASHINGTON

February 1, 1979

MEMORANDUM FOR THE VICE PRESIDENT

FROM: BILL SMITH

RE: YOUR ROLE AND ACTIVITIES IN 1979 AND 1980

I believe your role and activities this and next year should be directed toward overcoming three related perceptions about this Administration. All three must be largely overcome if there is to be a second term.

First, no one knows what this Administration stands for, believes in, or what its vision of the future is.

Second, the President will not be renominated unless the traditional Democratic constituencies at least respect him, understand where he is leading the country and perceive that his goals are in their best interests even if their special interests are not always served.

Third, there must be an end to the controllable political mistakes and insensitivities and the resulting image of ineptness and incompetence that have characterized this Administration since its inception.

Historians may write that this Administration had an ability to make wise decisions in the nation's best interests, but that it lasted only one term because it never got its political act together. Too often the processes of decision making and implementation of decisions are so fraught with lack of foresight and unwise political judgments as to warrant the conclusion that we are not only incompetent but politically self-destructive. We do a lot of right things, almost always in the wrong way.

This may be belaboring the obvious but it has been true for the last two years, albeit temporarily tempered by a brief honeymoon period and the Camp David Summit success, and it was true in the 1978 campaign which was won by default and the Vice Presidential nominee.

It is still true that not a day goes by without someone exclaiming "Can't we do anything right?" Without some changes in the way things happen in the White House, there is no reason to believe this state of affairs will not characterize the next two years and the 1980 campaign as well.

I think your activities both in and outside Washington should be designed to overcome these problems.

1. In the White House

There are two kinds of issues that need political input: those now on the agenda and those which are unanticipated.

With respect to the latter, some mechanism should be developed to enable you to be forewarned and move in before a course of action is agreed upon. If the President is to be presented with a recommendation (e.g., to fire Abzug) that will have obvious political repercussions, ideally, no political decision should go to the President without going through a political clearing house operation of some sort and on many such issues you should act as the final filter in a more formalized decision process. Absent such a formal role, your staff should flag such issues before they go to the President and you should have an opportunity to "move in."

The President has already asked you to be more involved in the implementation of agenda issues. I think you should review the agenda and flag three categories of issues: those (like SALT) we cannot afford to lose, those (like Hospital Cost Containment) that will get votes in 1980, and those (like reorganization) which are likely to further alienate Democratic constituencies. You should pick one or two issues in each category, designate a member of your staff to be involved in agenda implementation on a day-to-day basis and provide you with periodic progress reports. I think you should devote more personal time to these issues, meeting with the task forces and discussing strategy and overseeing the process with those White House staff persons involved.

If the apparent preoccupation with foreign policy continues, it is even more important that you assume more responsibility for domestic issues, the most sensitive of which is not on the agenda, the prospect of a constitutional convention.

2. On the Hill

Your lobbying efforts often, of necessity, are a last minute effort to round up votes by phone or in person off the Senate floor. I think you should supplement this with more one-on-one breakfasts and other informal meetings. You should meet first with each Senate and a number of key House Democrats up in 1980, discuss their and the President's prospects, their concerns, the President's agenda, and how it can be helpful to them, the Administration's problems on the Hill, etc. Second, you should meet personally and informally with individuals and small groups on specific issues, for example, with Cranston, Culver, et al, on SALT. Third, I suggest following up your breakfasts with Tip and Alan Cranston with other breakfasts with Democratic leaders -- Rostenkowski, Brademas, Inouye, Byrd and selected committee chairman. Finally, you should get up to the Senate more often to relax in Kimmitt's office and in the steam room.

3. Outside Washington and 1980

You have been trying, thus far unsuccessfully, to get the President to articulate the themes and philosophies of his presidency. I think you should go ahead and develop this yourself, of course with the President's knowledge. You might have Marty Kaplan and a couple of other smart people write THE SPEECH that should have been written -- THE SPEECH to articulate what this Administration stands for, its goals, etc. -- THE SPEECH to kick off the 1980 campaign. Even if all this Administration stands for is the guts to tackle tough problems and make unpopular choices for the future, it still needs to be articulated and sold.

Once it is written, the President should use it once at an appropriate forum to kick off the 1980 campaign. It should also be the basis of your own speeches in what will surely be your task -- to sell the Administration's record and future plans for a second term to the alienated Democratic constituencies.

The President will presumably have to refrain from taking on Brown and Kennedy, at least until the primary season begins. That leaves you as the point man to the extent that it is wise to take them on. I don't think it is too early to take on Brown at any time. I also think you should look for carefully selected opportunities to defend the Administration's policies against Kennedy's attacks or alternatives, of course, without attacking him directly.

If, for example, the President's is the more responsible position on national health insurance, we should sell it on that basis and paint Kennedy's as fiscally irresponsible.

OFFICE OF THE VICE PRESIDENT
WASHINGTON

February 6, 1979

MEMORANDUM FOR DICK MOE
MIKE BERMAN
JIM JOHNSON
DENIS CLIFT
GAIL HARRISON
BILL SMITHFROM: AL EISELE *AE*
SUBJECT: THOUGHTS ON 1979 STAFF MEMOS

After reading all the staff memos on 1979, I am struck by the fact that the only common denominator that emerges is the feeling that neither the Vice President nor any of us is very happy with the role he is now playing in this administration.

The sources of our dissatisfaction run the gamut: Dick is concerned that WFM is not sufficiently committed to carving out a place as "the progressive conscience of this administration"; Mike feels he is not well prepared on some issues, that he is not being exposed to new ideas and that he is spending too much time on foreign policy; Jim sees evidence of a divergence of basic political assumptions between WFM and the Carter White House; Gail believes WFM isn't weighing in soon enough or with enough authority to affect future policy; Bill wants WFM to help define Carter's political philosophy and overcome image of ineptness and incompetence; I feel the "most active and influential Vice President" story is getting old, that WFM's progressive image is being eroded and that he needs a more aggressive press strategy to avoid being eclipsed on the national--and Minnesota--scene. (I did not see a memo from Denis.)

The lesson I draw from all of this is that the Vice Presidency is indeed, to use Dick's theological term, "a real purgatory" that is inherently frustrating because of its very nature, and I think we should begin by confronting that cold, hard fact.

On the other hand, I also believe that Nelson Rockefeller was right when he said in his last political statement that there are "really unlimited possibilities" for a man of ability and stature in that office.

(more)

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All of us have different ideas and proposals about how to correct the problems we perceive. My own feeling is that the best service we can perform for the Vice President is to give him a list of a half-dozen or so issues or areas of involvement that he can use to more clearly define himself and his political philosophy in the public mind.

My own candidates are, in no special order, as follows:

- SALT II and the arms race.
- Opposition to the balanced budget con-con.
- Youth employment initiative.
- Senior citizens/Social Security tax cut.
- Intelligence reform.
- Public financing.

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OFFICE OF THE VICE PRESIDENT
WASHINGTON

June 7, 1979

MEMORANDUM FOR MIKE BERMAN

FROM: BILL SMITH

RE: THE VICE PRESIDENT'S ACTIVITIES ON THE HILL THE REST
OF THIS CONGRESSIONAL SESSION

The Vice President for reasons previously discussed expects to spend more time on the Hill and on Congressional relations activities both in the White House and out of town. Below is an outline of the subjects, estimated time required and, where known, more detailed plans for the remainder of this Congressional session.

I. Regularly Scheduled Meetings

- A. Leadership Breakfasts: These will continue to be scheduled every other Tuesday except when the President is out of the country. However, more frequent leadership breakfasts may be scheduled in the future with Republican leaders. If these are held on a regular basis it is likely to require the Vice President's presence three out of every four Tuesday breakfasts.
- B. Daily Frank Moore-CL Meetings with the President: The VP is now meeting everyday with the President, Frank Moore, et al, on Congressional relations matters. While these meetings usually last 15 minutes, we should anticipate varying amounts of the Vice President's time responding to Presidential requests and instructions at these meetings. Often these instructions will require immediate action and alterations in the day's schedule. To allow for the former and for the fact that the duration of these daily meetings will vary from 15 minutes to perhaps 45, I recommend that nothing be on the Vice President's schedule for one hour following the beginning of each of these meetings.

- C. Informal Luncheons and Breakfasts with House Members: The Vice President has suggested periodic informal small group meetings with House members. These meetings would be without any set agenda. Participants, which should number 5 to 10, would be selected by members of the House leadership. I suggest these be scheduled every other week on Wednesday or Thursday, either breakfast or lunch, and that we start with Tom Foley asking him to select 5 to 10 persons he thinks would like to meet with the Vice President.
- D. Meetings with Senators Up in 1980: We had the first of two of these meetings a couple of months ago, never had the second. We should schedule the second in the next week or two and schedule follow-up discussions with the same or different groupings of these Senators about once a month. Luncheons are preferable.
- E. Hill Days: The VP has said he would like to schedule entire days on the Hill when he doesn't have to go to the White House. This will be difficult because there is not a lot he can be doing on the Hill between breakfast and lunch when most members are at committee meetings. However, among the activities which would be included on such days are the Bureau of Naval Affairs and Kimmitt's office. There is no way to anticipate the scheduling or frequency of such "full Hill days," but they are more likely to occur during the four to six weeks of the SALT debate after October 1.

II. SALT

Time on SALT will take place on the Hill, in the White House and traveling. Below is a summary of these activities together with estimates of the time involved between now and October 1.

- A. On the Hill: We are working our way, slowly, through an initial list of 19 Senators having had lunch with five so far. We need to step up the frequency of these meetings, scheduling three or four breakfasts or luncheons a week just to get through the initial list

and those that are certain to be added to it before the August recess. We should schedule 15 to 20 such meetings between now and June 26 when the Senate is likely to quit, early, for the July recess (13 weekdays) and between July 9, the end of the recess, and August 4 (15 week days allowing for one week traveling on SALT in July).

- B. White House Meetings: The Vice President will continue to appear, I assume, at the rate of one or two a week, at Landon Butler-Ann Wexler sponsored SALT meetings with community and opinion group leaders. He will be most effective, of course, with elected officials, Democratic politicians, church groups, labor groups and other liberal organization leaders. These meetings need not be luncheons and need not take more than a half hour of his time, opening them and then turning them over to Brzezinski, et al.

C. Travel:

1. The July Road Show: This will take the better part of a week and must be scheduled in coordination with a similar trip which may be scheduled for the President. I will develop more specific, detailed suggestions for such a trip after consultation with Landon Butler, Bob Beckel, Ann Wexler and others, but Oregon, Pennsylvania, New York and Alabama appear at this time to be among the priority states where the Vice President could be helpful in mobilizing public opinion, putting pressure on those states' Senators. Minnesota is also high on this list and I think we ought to seriously consider Kentucky, Ohio, Florida, Nebraska and Oklahoma. If we need to cover this many states between now and the time of the floor debate it may be advisable to schedule a second trip right after Labor Day. In any event, we should look for opportunities to go to these states on SALT missions in conjunction with other scheduled travel.

III. Other Legislative Issues

As indicated above, the Vice President's attendance at at the daily Frank Moore meetings with the President will inevitably increase his involvement in a variety of Congressional liaison activities on such issues as Panama (next week), foreign assistance, Alaska lands, hospital cost containment, windfall profits tax and decontrol, and other Presidential priorities. The implications of this for the Vice President's time and relationships with others in the White House need to be discussed.

IV. Social Functions

We have scheduled but may have to change the dates of House and Senate "friends" dinners. The Vice President has suggested another dinner in honor of the Speaker and another younger members of Congress dinner. In addition, he has suggested morning tennis with friends in the Senate.



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