

Richard Nixon Presidential Library
Contested Materials Collection
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1	3	1/14/1971	<input type="checkbox"/>	Personal	Memo	From Buchanan to Haldeman RE: personal views on p.r. "successes and failures." 1pg.
1	3	1/14/1971	<input type="checkbox"/>	Personal	Memo	From Buchanan to Haldeman titled "Neither Fish nor Fowl" RE: p.r. successes & failures. 12 pgs.

January 14, 1971

MEMORANDUM FOR:

H. R. HALDEMAN

FROM:

PATRICK J. BUCHANAN

The attached memo is done in response to yours of the 28th of December -- asking for my views on p. r. "successes and failures." One of my views is that it has been a p. r. failure that we have become too p. r. -oriented and identified in the media -- and it is fueling some of the anti-Nixon propaganda. But, instead of doing a "we won this one; we lost that one," memo -- I thought that a more thorough analysis of the sources of one of our major on-going problems would be more useful; and have more bearing on what the future contains.

January 14, 1971

MEMORANDUM FOR:

H. R. HALDEMAN

FROM:

PATRICK J. BUCHANAN

NEITHER FISH NOR FOWL

We suffer from the widely held belief that the President has no Grand Vision that inspires him, no deeply held political philosophy that girds, guides and explains his words, decisions and deeds. The President is viewed as the quintessential political pragmatist, standing before an ideological buffet, picking some from this tray and some from that. On both sides he is seen as the text book political transient, here today, gone tomorrow, shuttling back and forth, as weather permits, between liberal programs and conservative rhetoric. As someone put it, "the bubble in the carpenter's level."

Nixon, the Plastic President, is a severe, even brutal, judgment, but one held to our disadvantage by increasing numbers of liberals and conservatives.

This impression is reinforced daily by the national media which invariably discusses in depth the "political motives" behind each of the President's actions -- whether it be a visit to a college

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campus, the appointment of a Democratic Cabinet official, or a meeting with a black leader. Few Presidents have had their "motives" inspected to the degree that Richard Nixon has. (Further, we do not help the President by this very visible campaign to present the media yet another "New Nixon," a campaign whose existence is apparent from reading all the columns and reports of the "changes" in emphasis and goal and purpose of 1971, from 1970.)

Left and right, both now argue aloud that the President, and his Administration, do not take decisions on the basis of political principle -- but on the basis of expediency; that ours is "ad hoc government," which responds only as pressures mount from left or right. Neither liberal nor conservative, neither fish nor fowl, the Nixon Administration, they argue, is a hybrid, whose zigging and zagging has succeeded in winning the enthusiasm and loyalty of neither left nor right, but the suspicion and distrust of both.

This reality, as others see it, lies beneath many of the "p. r. failures of 1970."

More important, this "reality" explains many of the Administration's existing political and "p. r." difficulties, and

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probably has greater bearing on the President's future -- and his place in history -- than any successful or unsuccessful "game plan" from Calendar 1970 I can recall.

Thus, I am using the occasion of this memorandum, written "in strict confidence," to focus upon this matter of ideological direction.

SINCE NOVEMBER

The impression among sophisticated conservatives -- now being conveyed to the rank-and-file -- is that the President, subsequent to the harsh (and unjust) criticism of his 1970 campaign, has moved leftward in force to cover his exposed flank.

The "full employment budget," the open embrace of an "expansionary deficit;" the public confession that "Kent State and Jackson State" and the defeat of FAP, were his greatest "disappointments;" the admission "I am a Keynesian now;" the enthusiasm for both FAP and for the forthcoming FHIP -- these are part of a pattern left and right have both recognized.

The "clincher" for both sides came in the President's conversation with the anchormen. While the booboisie in the hinterlands saw only the President's mastery and skill (74 percent), the sophisticates, on both sides, picked up unmistakable signals.

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It was not the Nixon deftness in handling questions that made Kay Graham, Sander Vanocur and Joe Kraft, watching together, credit the President with his most brilliant performance -- or that had astonished conservatives on the phone to each other after midnight.

BALANCE SHEET

A close examination of the early returns, and the projected returns, from the President's recent moves seems imperative before the President sets his compass on the course indicated in that conversation. The State of the Union and the Budget mark the point of no return.

THE DOWN SIDE

In the short run, through 1972, the decision may very well be the necessary and correct one. An electoral cost accountant could argue cogently that Nixon must move leftward to win moderates and liberals from Muskie, and anyway, the conservatives have nowhere else to go. Just as the Gene McCarthy Left eventually came home to Humphrey in November of 1968, so also, the Goldwater-Reagan Right must come home to Nixon in November of 1972.

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There are problems with this scenario, however. First, it does not allow for the presence of Wallace as an alternative for some on the Right. Second, it does not take into consideration that the Republican Right is not simply a powerful struggling minority in the GOP -- as the McCarthy Left is in the Democratic Party -- it is the dominant majority, with the power to nominate and veto presidential candidates.

Even more serious in my view than the long-shot possibility of a Reagan-or-Conservative run for the Republican nomination is the certain erosion of the President's historic base -- when the accumulated news of the last few weeks filters down to precinct level.

Over the course of two years, but especially in the last month, the President has conspicuously abandoned many of the sustaining traditions of the Republican Party, traditions Richard Nixon rode to triumphant success in 1968 over the defeated "programmatic liberalism" of the New Deal.

Two brief examples. In both "reducing the size of the Federal Government," and "balancing the Federal Budget," the President has swept these traditions aside with an ease and facility that must have astonished millions of Republicans who have held them as articles of faith for forty years.

On his statements and positions of recent weeks, the President is no longer a credible custodian of the conservative political tradition of the GOP. Can one seriously imagine in 1972 those little old ladies in tennis shoes ringing doorbells in Muncie for "FAP," "FHIP" and the "full employment budget."

In the profit-and-loss statement drawn up from the President's move left, we must not overlook the inevitable and considerable loss in morale to the tens of thousands of party workers, the backbone of the GOP, one of the hinges on which the 1972 election will surely swing. The President once rightly identified the Left as the home of the True Believer in the Democratic Party and the Right as the home of the True Believer in the GOP. With Richard Nixon on the ticket, the troops of the Democratic Party will be out in force; where will the troops of the GOP be?

The President's recent moves -- if publicized widely nationally -- leave the Republican True Believers without a vocal champion. One has to guess that this political vacuum will not go unfilled, that the old political faith will not go unchampioned for long.

Though a minority nationally, many millions of Americans hold fiscal and political conservatism as gospel -- and the President's rapid moves have taken him further to the left in a month than the average Republican travels in a lifetime.

Further, in shedding some of the sustaining traditions of the GOP, we have donned the garments of the same "programmatic liberalism" the President scorned as outdated in 1968. Regardless of our rhetoric about "cleaning out the Federal Government" and "returning power to the States, cities and the people," the Federal Government under the Nixon Administration has grown to a size to dwarf the Great Society. What Great Society program -- with the insignificant exception of the Job Corps camps -- have been abandoned?

Rather than draw up our own yardstick of success and failure, we have willingly invited judgment by the old measures of the old order. Thus, we proudly point up that we are spending more for "human resources" than for "defense resources." (Most Republicans would argue that Federal spending for "human resources" has proven a failure, and there should be less, not more.) We publicize statistics on how much "integration" has taken place under President Nixon; we argue that our welfare program provides a guaranteed income for families and is bigger and better than anything they have offered; we underscore how much more rapidly we are bringing Americans home from Vietnam and the rest of the world; we congratulate ourselves on each new cut in the defense budget. In short, we ask our adversaries in the media and the academy to judge

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us on how well we are doing in reaching objectives which liberals -- not conservatives -- have designated as the national goals.

When the suggestion even surfaces that the President may be disenchanted with OEO, and perhaps ready to scuttle it, Rumsfeld and Carlucci rush to Capitol Hill to swear our eternal fealty to the organization.

Truly, the liberals went swimming and President Nixon stole their clothes -- but in the process we left our old conservative suit lying by the swimming hole for someone else to pick up.

There is another theme abandoned with the new maneuver, the "it's time for a change" theme, on which we had the patent in 1968, and could have maintained through protracted conflict with an "Establishment" during the Nixon Presidency. Roosevelt maintained it through his first two terms in power -- running against the "conservative establishment." But, in openly appealing to moderates and liberals, in adopting programs and policies warmly endorsed by American liberalism, we are becoming the Administration of more of the same. On the Democratic side, there is always the alternative available of more and faster -- and now, on our right, there is available a clear alternative of a "different road for America." Either Mr. Wallace or Mr. Reagan can apply for the vacancy.

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As my own concern with whether the President wins in 1972 is of a piece with my concern for the President's place in history, I have to view the sharp leftward move in disappointing terms.

The President is now abandoning an historic opportunity, the opportunity to become the political pivot on which America turned away from liberalism, away from the welfare state -- the founder of a new "Establishment." While the course of a "conservative President" would be more difficult by far, and politically more risky, it would seem a preferable course historically if only because the President would be assured an unoccupied niche in America's history books and a following of millions of men and women to honor his memory.

After observing what liberal journalists, liberal academicians and liberal historians are doing to the most liberal New Dealer of them all, Lyndon Johnson, I cannot think that they will be paying much grudging tribute to the accomplishments of liberal-comelately Richard Nixon. One wonders who will be writing our epitaph.

THE UP SIDE

Clearly, among the primary considerations in the President's "opening to the left" was the pressure of advisers that this was the

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only way to end the daily savaging of the President at the hands of the liberal media.

The national media -- television and the national press -- dominate the impressions of the Administration conveyed to the nation. From watching the media in the month following the campaign, it was clear they were bent on the destruction of this Administration.

In recent weeks, the assault has abated. The strategy is clearly working; we seem to be succeeding. Having failed to halt the liberal media's attacks by ignoring them until November of 1969, we took to the offensive that month and through the elections of 1970. Originally successful, that policy seems subsequently to have failed and now we have clearly sought an armistice -- with major political concessions forth-coming.

A strong case can be made that this new posture is the only way the President can get tolerable coverage; and thus, perhaps the only way he can survive the 1972 elections.

Over against this, one has to ask, not what the media will say in 1971 -- about "new initiatives" -- but where will it be when push comes to shove, in 1972. Where will the liberals, columnists and commentators and reporters, go in a Nixon-Kennedy, Nixon-Muskie, or Nixon-Humphrey race? Those who think that

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Richard M. Nixon, the man who nailed Hiss, can ever win over the loyalty and support of a single liberal reporter, belongs, in my view, in that asylum built for those ever-trusting Americans who yet believe that one more gesture to the Soviets will woo them away from the ends and means they have followed unswervingly for a lifetime.

Truly, from watching the three network shows on 1970, they have 'had it up to here' with the President.

First, the Nixon Presidency does not even remotely resemble their ideal -- a Kennedy-style Presidency, grounded in intellectual and young-poor-black support, a presidency that wages uninterrupted war on Congressional and Southern reactionaries, not consorts with them, an Administration with a heart that bleeds a little publicly, an Administration that will abandon interventionist nonsense from the days of the Cold War, an Administration that will truly re-order priorities. We are not that Administration now. The closer we approximate ourselves to it -- the better treatment we shall receive.

Secondly, and as important, the dominant media views the world differently than we do. They look, and everywhere they see crisis -- regardless of the merits of the case. Neither statements nor statistics can convince them that poverty is being diminished annually, that the lot of our black citizens is improving monthly,

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that hunger is being defeated, that war against pollution has begun with a good chance of success.

There are none so blind as those who will not see -- and the left intellectual does not want to see the far-reaching successes of the United States at home and abroad anymore. He wants to believe that stupidity and reaction and insensitivity are bringing us to ruin -- and so that is what he sees. What confirms this apocalyptic vision is emphasized -- what contradicts it is ignored.

So to have ourselves portrayed in a favorable light by the media, and hence to the nation; to win the votes of that "critical margin" of moderates and liberals, we have determined to compromise with established liberalism, no longer to confront it -- to go along in order to get along. Perhaps that is politically the best course of action -- historically, I cannot think so -- for us or the country.

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