

TO: RN  
FROM: LG

DATE: June 14, 1968

file #10  
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NOTES ON STRATEGY

Various plans of action for the pre-convention and post-convention periods were discussed this past week (Participants: Haldeman, Ellsworth, Sears, Shakespeare, Treleaven, Buchanan, Price, Safire, Klein).

1. Two basic assumptions were agreed upon for short-term planning purposes:

A. The Rockefeller campaign is not a threat to the nomination, but in the interests of safety should not be completely discounted on this score at this time;

B. The Rockefeller campaign does threaten an adverse impact on the national campaign, if we are completely passive.

On these assumptions, it was agreed that an interim strategy should be devised and steps taken to put it into effect as soon as possible. (This would be a contingency plan to be used only if it appears in the next week or so that Rockefeller is actually hurting us).

2. The key idea, which emerged from these discussions (with general support), is to peg our pre-convention strategy to the needs of the national campaign. In that way we counter the Rockefeller effort and build strength for the national campaign concurrently. This means planning immediately for a media campaign (predominantly TV) in the swing states (Ohio, California, Illinois, etc.), supplementing them with a few selected RN appearances in those states (e.g. taping TV interviews [Hillsboro type] and originating

newsmaking radio speeches from Columbus, Ohio, L. A., etc.). The advantages are numerous: It is logically and organically related to the national campaign. It is not a defensive reaction to the Rockefeller effort. It postures RN as the party-builder oriented to helping both the national ticket and important local candidates (senators, governors, etc.). It maximizes the use of available resources by concentrating them in battleground areas. It can be better adapted to local needs and issue interests. It is an interesting story (the "new" campaign). While primarily related to the national effort it also provides needed exposure of RN on TV (and in other media), thereby furnishing some support for our position in the national polls. (We must not forget that only a small fraction of the electorate has been exposed to RN's TV campaign capabilities; where this has occurred--e.g. New Hampshire, Oregon--the results have been dramatic).

3. The media campaign to be relevant should reflect political trends, important issues, vulnerabilities of independents and dissident Democrats in the selected areas. Limitations of time or money may require tailoring of the plan to less than all of the swing states. The important factor, however, is the existence of an apparent strategic framework within which the operations of the pre-convention campaign take place.

4. In those states where media is intensively employed, "before and after" polls should be taken. Having them available to demonstrate the change of voter attitude which takes place when RN campaigns actively would be an effective tool for delegate operations.

5. Related to this strategy: Frank Shakespeare has suggested a calm, candid, non-vituperative kick-off statement from the Nixon organization which nevertheless makes clear (a) that RN and other candidates went to the people via the primary route, whereas NR is going to them via Madison Avenue; (b) that the primaries of 1968--a National Primary in microcosm--involved true ballot box decisions by millions of voters, whereas the polls are an uncertain index of election day decisions and subject to numerous variables (i.e. we expect and discount in advance the ups and downs of the national polls); (c) that RN is not going to call upon his supporters, who gave generously to finance the primaries effort, to finance a major post-primaries effort against a candidate with unlimited resources. RN is not going to impair his ability to mount a maximum effort against the Democrats by spending millions in June and July against a man who chose to ignore the primary system. (And if one man can overrule the ballot box decisions of millions of voters in the primaries by a massive "special interests" assault on the 1500 persons sampled by national polls, wouldn't the viability of the American primary system be seriously drawn into question?)

(This is suggestive of some of the points that could, and, I think, should be made through carefully drawn statements, issued by John Mitchell and/or others. The argument for such a basic statement is that it would be a direct, high-impact response to the many questions about the unprecedented Rockefeller campaign; and much is gained in force of argument by gathering the various points in one place. Ray Price and Bill Safire have been asked to work up some draft material.)

6. For obvious reasons--media purchases, creative work, fund-raising, scheduling, etc.--some basic decisions must be made promptly. Whatever is done short range should be sufficiently flexible to permit stepping up, stepping down or redirection in the light of more concrete evidence as to the effect of the Rockefeller campaign.

7. Although the Rockefeller campaign interferes with the hope of maintaining a low-profile effort during June and July, there is a potential major plus in the bleeding of the larger national organization, including testing advertising themes and techniques in the battleground states.

8. I have not touched on the various supporting efforts--delegate monitoring, endorsements, etc.--that would of course roll right along.

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