It seems both logical and essential to review the status and forward planning of the '68 Campaign in light of the Kennedy assassination.

Is it really essential to the American political process to press on with campaigning as usual -- while pretending to ignore some of the cold realities of the day?

There has long been a plaintive cry from many quarters that the ballyhoo and whoopla of an American campaign -- extended over months -- confuses rather than clarifies the choice in the mind of the voter. Thus, even without today's new dangers, a strong argument might be made for a radically revised approach to the process of presenting the case to the people.

While the latest assassination does not in any way prove that America is a sick society -- it does re-affirm the fact that passions run high and in some instances restraint and responsibility are lacking. There is a clear and present personal physical danger to any man campaigning for the office of the Presidency whenever he presents himself to an unrestricted large crowd -- at a rally, in a motorcade, moving through public areas on an announced route. This danger will increase as the intensity
of the campaign increases.

There is good basis for the argument that it is irresponsible for the President or the candidates for President to expose themselves in these ways. If this case were presented to the people in proper fashion, it is quite likely they would understand and agree.

The people must be deeply concerned by the problem of violence and could be expected to respond with relief and willing acceptance to a plan designed to avoid any further calamities -- or at least to lessen the risk.

The plan would be for the President and/or the Secret Service to request formally that all candidates for Presidential nominations -- and, after the conventions, all candidates for the Presidency -- agree to conform to a number of specific guidelines regarding method of campaigning. It would be made clear that no restriction or compromise would be placed on content -- only on form.

Candidates would not present themselves to large masses of people in person. They would, instead, utilize the mass communications media to carry their messages to the voters. Many techniques could be used for this -- including direct speeches, telethons, televised press conferences, televised coffee hours with small groups of representative voters, televised interviews of all kinds, documentary-type presentations, use of third-person advoc
and undoubtedly many more approaches which would come to mind.

Eliminated would be all rallies, large public functions, press-the-flesh campaign techniques, plunging through crowds, whistle-and-prop-stops.

This would not eliminate the possibility of assassination or violence -- but it would be greatly reduced because, in effect, the campaign would be conducted in individual living rooms instead of at public gatherings.

For the candidates, the campaign would become more demanding mentally and much less demanding physically. This should have the effect of raising the quality of the political dialogue.

Many potential problems arise, of course. The main one would be the question of allocation or purchase of TV and radio time. Even this could be fairly easily resolved if it were not for the Wallace problem.

It will be argued that this puts all the emphasis on a candidate's ability to perform on TV -- and eliminates the opportunity to judge him through personal in-the-flesh exposure. This is not a valid objection because it assumes that the voter now does, in fact, judge the candidate on the basis of personal exposure. Clearly, this is not the case. It is obviously impossible for any
meaningful proportion of the voters to come into personal contact with a national candidate during the course of a campaign. It's also obvious that a very large majority of those who do have personal exposure -- at rallies, etc. -- are already committed and thus are not judging the candidate.

Other than tradition, there is no sound reason for putting a man considered to be of presidential timber through the physical strain and personal danger of the old-time format. It should be recognized that times have changed -- and that the presentation of presidential candidates must change, too.

This is the ideal time to make some major changes that are badly needed even without the consideration of danger of violence. The people must be fed up with politics as usual accompanied by terror. They would welcome some leadership in this area -- as well as in all the others that are the issue focal points of this election.

H.R. Haldeman
June 9, 1968