

December 1, 1993

## MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

FROM: MARK GEARAN

SUBJECT: Interviews

Summary

The press has completed the run of *Congress and the Presidency* accomplishment stories; we are now entering a phase of coverage that will focus more exclusively on you, your Administration, and the first year in office. Attached is a list of your accomplishments arranged thematically which I think will be helpful for your interviews in December. You also asked for a better sense of what we hope to get out of the interviews. That follows -- along with a few other suggestions.

The essence, however, is this: **Your tone should be optimistic and presidential; you should stress big themes and the progress we have made on them.** The year should not be judged in a vacuum; it is the first year on a long road. Be optimistic; you should be satisfied with the progress we have made, but aware that millions are still hurting -- be determined to push ahead.

Discussion

We need an alternative interpretation to the direction the press is headed in their analysis of the first year.

**The press' storyline.** You can use these interviews to blunt the emerging conventional wisdom of the press, which is along these lines: This is a President who gets things done, but he too often stumbles across the finish line with his shirt ends hanging out. They have a dangerous propensity to do everything at the last minute -- and it is bound to catch up with them. The focus is about to move to health care, and it's not at all clear that the President will have the votes for his plan. The pace is driving people out. Sooner or later, the operational flaws of the White House are bound to produce some disastrous result, probably in foreign policy.

**Our storyline.** I came to this office with two great objectives: To change the system and to make it work for middle class families. To restore security -- and with it, opportunity, community, responsibility -- in a time of great change.

That was no small order; we live in a uniquely challenging period of time in our nation's history and the needs of working Americans had been neglected for a long time.

Progress is slow. Change is hard. And people need to stick with this program for the long-haul. But I am convinced that we have made a very good start this year, we are turning the country around: We are confronting issues that have not been addressed for a long time (from the deficit to family breakdown); Fighting for innovative solutions that defy conventional labels but which are going to work; Making real progress on issues that will produce tangible benefits for average Americans; Boosting people's faith and confidence in the system by getting it to respond to them; Engaging the world and exercising a new form of American leadership in the post-Cold War World; Achieving this progress because we are giving our people a foundation of security upon which they can embrace change and become its master.

We have organized the year's accomplishments in six categories along these lines. You should try to discuss them in this fashion; it will help to transform a list into a coherent strategy while at the same time recalling the themes of the campaign.

#### ACCOMPLISHMENTS BY THEME (see attached)

- \* Regaining Control of America's Economic Destiny
- \* Creating Jobs and Opportunity
- \* Rewarding Work and Families
- \* Investments in People and Lifetime Learning
- \* Restoring Public Trust in Government
- \* Engaging the World

**Superlatives.** You should expect to be asked to identify the year's biggest success and the year's biggest failure. Success -- changing the national agenda and restoring public trust. This is a good occasion to talk about the national demand for health care, about the volume of White House mail. Don't single anything out -- talk about the different character of national debate. Failure -- a process answer: We misjudged the difficulty in getting things done, but we learned quickly and continue to learn.

**Personal Moments.** The news magazines in particular love to write "exclusive" slice-of-life vignettes. They loved cherry pie in the solarium after the February 17 speech; they loved trumpets on the tie for the Arafat-Rabin signing. Think about things like a joke on the telephone with Yeltsin, a moment with Eli at the national service signing, a comment to the Vice President before the Perot debate, etc.

**Feelings about the press.** You may be asked directly about your comments to Rolling Stone, or you may get questions designed to goad you into a similar response. We know you will handle this well. The Information Age in all of its complexity makes it fundamentally more challenging to build a public consensus on issues. You have discovered the power of the bully pulpit, but

nobody has written the rule book on how to communicate with the electorate in an age of rolling deadlines, 24-hour television news, wars televised in live time, and unprecedented public power in expressing opinions in an electronic democracy. Building a consensus for change in this environment is hard.

Finally, you should be prepared for a question about Vince Foster. Your previous comments have been appropriate.

## **REGAINING CONTROL OF AMERICA'S ECONOMIC DESTINY**

*We have restored fiscal responsibility to the federal government, and begun to get our fiscal house in order. It has already had a direct impact on millions of Americans, reducing mortgage payments and credit card bills, making it easier for businesses to expand and children to go to college.*

**Historic Deficit Reduction.** More than \$500 Billion over five years locked away in a Deficit Reduction Trust Fund.

**Interest Rates at Record Lows.** It's now easier for millions of Americans to buy a home, buy a car, or send a child to college.

**Homeowners Save Billions.** 5.4 Million Americans have taken advantage of low interest rates to refinance their homes. Together with those who have adjustable rate loans, homeowners will save \$10 Billion this year.

**Home Sales and Housing Starts at Record Highs.**

**Established Bipartisan Commission on Entitlement Reform.** To review entitlements and recommend reforms.

## **CREATING JOBS AND OPPORTUNITY**

*Job creation is up; unemployment is down. Over 1.2 Million private sector jobs have been created this year -- 242,000 more than the entire previous Administration.*

**Small Business Expensing.** Increased by 75% the amount small businesses are allowed to deduct for expenses.

**Small Business Investment Tax Credit.** A targeted capital gains tax cut for long-term investments in small businesses.

**Credit Crunch.** Aggressive steps taken by the Comptroller of the Currency to ensure that businesses, and small businesses in particular, have access to the capital they need to expand.

**TRP.** Implemented the Technology Reinvestment Project, to assist American companies and workers in making the transition from a defense based economy.

**Empowerment Zones.** To provide America's most distressed communities with the flexibility and incentives they need to create jobs and lead themselves to economic renewal.

### **REWARDING WORK AND FAMILIES**

*People that work hard and play by the rules deserve a government that is on their side.*

**EITC.** Dramatically expanding the Earned Income Tax Credit, by over \$20 Billion, to lift every family with at least one working parent out of poverty.

**Family Preservation and Support.** To help reunify or keep intact families with children at risk of abuse or neglect and encourage parent education programs.

**Family and Medical Leave.** Protects working families from being forced to choose between their families and their jobs.

### **INVESTMENTS IN PEOPLE AND LIFETIME LEARNING**

*We have to stop spending money on special interests and start investing money in the future of the American people, so that every American has the skills and opportunity for a successful future.*

**National Service.** Will help over 100,000 young Americans to receive higher education in turn for service to their communities.

**Student Loan Reform.** Makes college more affordable and saves taxpayers money by direct federal lending, eliminating the middleman.

**Ryan White.** On track to full funding.

**WIC.** On track to full funding.

**Immunizations.**

### **RESTORING PUBLIC TRUST IN GOVERNMENT**

*The American people deserve a government that uses the national interest as a compass, and demands excellence as a standard.*

**Campaign Finance Reform.** Both Houses of Congress have passed bills which reduce the influence of PACs and level the playing field between challengers and incumbents.

**Lobbying Reform.** Eliminated the tax deduction for lobbying expenses.

**Reinventing Government.** Implementing hundreds of recommendations of the Vice President to make government work better and cost less.

**Record Correspondence.** People believe for the first time in a long time that the government is listening and can help. It's demonstrated in the record volume of mail received by the President. According to career personnel, it generally takes until at least June to reach 1 Million letters: this White House had received that many on March 2.

**Town Meetings.** Regularly engages in discussion with the American people and uses their input as a critical element of the governing process.

#### **ENGAGING THE WORLD**

*In the wake of the Cold War, we have committed ourselves to remain engaged in the world to preserve our national security, create trade and jobs, and promote democracy and human rights.*

**Opening Foreign Markets.** G-7 Summit in Tokyo, bilateral framework talks with Japan, APEC Summit, and seeking completion of GATT agreement.

**NAFTA.** Places us at center of world's largest free-trade area, expand export markets, create 200,000 jobs, strengthen democracy, clean up pollution, stem illegal immigration.

**Democratic and Market Reform in Russia.** Will allow us to continue to cut defense spending, open markets to hundreds of millions of consumers and eliminate Cold War competition.

**Bottom Up Review.** A road-map for structuring the military to face the new era, ensuring continued security while allowing even greater defense cuts.

**Middle East Peace.** Reinvigoration of peace process allowed momentous events, such as Israeli-PLO peace signing.

**NATO.** "Partnership for Peace" offers former Soviet republics and East European nations closer ties with NATO, helping NATO adapt to post-Cold War world and promoting transatlantic security.

**Addressing New Types of Security Issues.** New policies to stem illegal immigration and drug trafficking. New impetus to efforts to protect global environment and prevent proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.