

October 11, 1996

MEMORANDUM FOR DON BAER & MARK PENN

FROM: MICHAEL WALDMAN

SUBJECT: THE NEXT MONTH

Speeches

You undoubtedly have thought of all this already, but ...

We risk cruising into reelection with the elite press, and much of the public, sourly believing that the President has not offered much of a second term vision. In fact, as we know, the President is running for reelection on an agenda -- while an assemblage of relatively small proposals -- that is much more concrete than those of any other recent incumbent.

I think that during the week or two following the San Diego debate, the President needs to take the campaign back up to a higher plane by giving a series of major speeches, seeking to a) spell out what his agenda is, especially in terms that are larger than our usual mini-proposals; and b) to claim a mandate for the major elements of the agenda. These should be indoors, to a university or Economic Club audience, that signifies "real speech." It would also be worth including audiences or stages full of validators -- the businesspeople were very successful.

I would recommend:

A major speech on balancing the budget. This is the major hole in the "Clinton has no 'big ideas'" argument: he talks about balancing the budget in every speech. (If he weren't, this would be the main elite count against him.) (He should be accompanied by the Nobel Prize winning economists, or whatever.)

Education. A full-length speech on education -- with all his proposals laid out, and the importance stressed. (To be accompanied by endorsements from university presidents, or whatever. Too late to do this?) This would be the time to place our education stuff not only in a values context, which we do routinely, but also as a linear continuation of our economic policies.

Foreign policy/NATO. (Already planned.)

Finally, a "common ground" speech on how we are going to meet our challenges -- e.g., local community action (school uniforms, curfews), public private partnerships (e.g., Internet), role of business (jobs for welfare recipients), role of religion, etc.

In these speeches, he should seek a mandate for his policies -- not by using the "m" word, but by saying, "if America votes for me, America is committing to balance the budget. etc."

I do not believe it is necessary to have news announcements in these speeches. (Though the NATO one is nice.) We will get coverage, excerpts in the press, etc., on what we do.

Visuals

To the extent that the last 3 weeks of the campaign are not major speeches, I would strongly recommend that each day have a strong visual component, and not just a rally. In other words, pictures that reflect the success of the administration -- e.g., a visit to an A-frame construction site, to symbolize the home-building boom; a visit to a factory, with sparks flying, to symbolize the rebirth of manufacturing; etc.

We should also consider using dramatic, patriotic backdrops for events, apart from specific linkage to a policy or achievement. For example, we should consider having him speak:

- With the Statue of Liberty in the background, from the Jersey shore (this is where Reagan announced his candidacy in 1980). This could be the backdrop for almost anything, including a stump speech.
- At Independence Hall or in front of the Liberty Bell.
- Gettysburg Cemetery (he could read Everett's speech) or Lincoln's grave (wherever it is ... in Springfield, Illinois (?)).
- Or very big flags wherever he speaks. (Look at the Reagan presidential documents book, the color pictures: they made great use of huge Patton-style flags as an A backdrop.)

After the election

To the extent that you are beginning to prepare recommendations for this period . . .

I would strongly recommend that the President go as dark as possible after the election. It would be a mistake to try and fill the time, or to seek to "define" the election by talking about it, or even to "thank the voters," all things we, or he, will want to do. That's what the Inaugural Address, State of the Union, and initial legislative package are for. We should not make the same mistake we made in 1992-3 of talking when we weren't ready to act. I suspect voters will be quite sick of us by a month from now. (This doesn't mean he shouldn't do year end interviews, etc., but rather that he shouldn't try and do a lot of events and speeches.)