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THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

January 14, 1983

MEMORANDUM FOR ELIZABETH H. DOLE

FROM:

BOB BONITATI 3

SUBJECT:

An Action Plan for Labor

I have attached my suggested labor strategy for the next several months. I would suggest that we try to reach a consensus on the strategy at an early date so we can begin to impact the media stories that will surround the AFL-CIO Executive Council meeting in Bal Harbour beginning February 21.

Attachment

AN ACTION PLAN FOR LABOR

While union members seem less inclined than ever to follow the political exhortations of their union leaders, the relationship between the leaders of organized labor and the Administration still continues to present us with some very serious political and public relations problems.

Over the last two years the active opposition of most union leaders has contributed to the development of the "fairness issue" for the President, has presented us with continuing negative media coverage, and has offered major obstacles to several Administration initiatives on Capitol Hill. In addition, there is strong evidence that the heavy involvement of organized labor in the 1982 campaign contributed substantially to an increased voter turnout of union members (who normally vote for Democrats at a two-to-one ratio).

We also continue to receive criticism from opinion leaders who have difficulty understanding why we have such difficulty in dealing with the leaders of organized labor. A recent Journal of Commerce assessment of the Administration's relations with organized labor claimed that "President Reagan's relationship with labor appears to be worse than that of any chief executive in recent history."

While a Republican Administration can seldom expect to receive much support from organized labor, the development of a "working relationship" has been hampered by a long held labor suspicion that the President is anti-labor, the enormous difficulties the Department of Labor has had in relating to the labor community, and some policy decisions which have only served to further convince our labor detractors that "we are just as bad as they thought we were."

Perhaps the major ingredient in developing the rather hostile environment that currently exists, though, has been the attitude of Lane Kirkland whose intransigence has transformed the conventional labor/Republican Administration "pragmatic working arrangement" into one of outright political warfare. Unfortunately, the President of the AFL-CIO sets the pattern for other union officials who feel compelled to follow the leader. After two years of the Kirkland style of political leadership, though, some major labor leaders are now beginning to feel that his style and rhetoric have become counterproductive.

Whether or not there may be a "crack in the dike," it would appear as though it is in the best interest of the Administration to attempt to lessen the degree of hostility and to develop a "pragmatic working arrangement" with some of the leaders of organized labor. Such a working arrangement began to be developed in late 1981 in response to our initiatives, but a worsening of the recession substantially damaged those prospects.

By developing a more conventional "pragmatic working arrangement" with organized labor we should seek to achieve the following objectives:

1. To lower the level of criticism of the President and the Secretary of Labor in order to help control the "fairness issue" and to curtail some of the negative media stories.
2. To provide national opinion leaders with evidence that the Administration does have the political savvy to "contain" our problem with labor.
3. To attempt to slowdown the intense mobilization of the labor political/campaign structure that we witnessed in 1982.
4. To develop a pragmatic working arrangement with the labor lobby on the Hill that can be used to protect or advance Administration initiatives before the Congress, i.e., Caribbean Basin, MX, Enterprise Zones.
5. To begin to expand the group of national, state and local labor leaders that are likely to support the President's reelection efforts.

In order to pursue a more positive working relationship with organized labor, agreement on some general principles is needed:

1. That developing a working relationship must be an Administration-wide effort and not merely a White House effort and that the Labor Department and other Departments must take a major role in this endeavor.
2. That it is politically sound to avoid further antagonizing organized labor and that we should closely assess actions that only serve to mobilize and unify them, i.e., the HHS decision to use Medicare funds to reimburse so-called "union busting" consultants and the Dotson nomination to the NLRB and the Right to Work episode with OPM.
3. That we be willing to make some policy accommodation on labor critical issues especially if there is a quid pro quo available. Policy impact is the major objective of most unions and our willingness to accommodate has been the principal factor in developing the current support we now have. The maritime unions offer the best illustration.

Strategy wise we should continue the activities we agreed upon in November 1981: to consult on labor sensitive appointments, to disperse White House Presidential "perks" (State Dinners, etc.), to maintain an open door policy and to place a priority on addressing the needs of our labor supporters and more friendly unions.

This basic policy has served us fairly well in maintaining and expanding our group of supportive unions and union leaders. We have "taken care of our friends" and this has not gone unnoticed in the labor movement. This policy has permitted us to expand the group of unions who actually endorsed the President in 1980 (Teamsters, National Maritime Union and PATCO) from three to a group of nearly a dozen labor organizations that are either supportive or very friendly.

In order to achieve our five basic objectives, the following recommendations are offered:

1. Steps should be taken to assure that there is increased cooperation and communication between the White House Office of Public Liaison and the Office of the Secretary of Labor. Both offices should be working closely together to further develop the desired working relationship with labor.
2. The Secretary of Labor and the DOL political appointees should be encouraged to accelerate their outreach effort to the leaders of organized labor. Since labor leaders have been reluctant to initiate such a dialogue, the DOL should take the initiative in establishing both formal and informal regularized communications with labor leaders. A suggested first step would be for the Secretary to institute a regular monthly informal off the record breakfast meeting with a representative group of labor leaders.
3. At an early date, the President should invite five or six supportive labor leaders to breakfast or lunch to solicit their ideas on how the Administration can establish a working relationship with other union leaders. The President can reiterate his desire to establish such a relationship and express his personal commitment to doing so. Such a session should be designed to attract media attention.
4. Greater cooperation with the White House Communications Office will be required to focus attention on making our labor outreach efforts very visible to the public. Particular attention should be paid to the reporters covering the labor beat.
5. The President should display greater concern and sensitivity to the plight of employees from distressed industries such as automobiles and steel. The large industrial unions are the backbone of the labor movement and are currently undergoing dramatic changes. To dramatize the President's interest, he may wish to consider meeting with labor and management from each of these distressed industries to give the President a first-hand report of their status.

6. As an alternative to labors' frequent requests for a reindustrialization policy, the President may wish to consider appointing a blue ribbon panel of labor, management and government officials to study ways the Federal Government can "strengthen American industry." Such a panel might also help counter Democratic criticism that we are unconcerned about our eroding industrial base -- a likely 1984 campaign theme.
7. With the PSI emphasis on assisting displaced workers, we are presented with numerous opportunities to involve the President and Vice President with union leaders in a visible and relatively non-controversial format. The PSI effort also provides meetings and media opportunities outside of Washington.
8. With five newly chosen Presidents of major unions, we should take advantage of the opportunity to get acquainted by arranging sessions with the Vice President, Meese, Baker etc. Such sessions allow us to clearly underline our "open door" policy.
9. The Vice President's consultations with labor leaders should be reinstated holding periodic meetings devoted to a specific topic such as defense policy, trade issues, etc.
10. Department of Labor efforts should be redoubled to insure that all union newspapers are included on their press mailing lists to ensure that the Administration's views are available to them.
11. The White House Media Relations Office should plan one of their White House briefing and entertainment sessions for union newspaper and magazine editors. No Administration has ever done so and this will be duly noted.
12. The Cabinet must be sensitized to the need to work with labor and avoid policy actions that merely serve to antagonize labor. Cabinet members should be asked to "flag" the White House on regulations and legislation that are likely to encounter strong labor opposition. The smooth working relationship with labor recently developed by DOT on the highway user legislation can serve as an example of how consultation and accommodation can be used to the advantage of the Administration.
13. The White House Legislative Affairs Office should seriously consider instituting a regular, informal information exchange with the key AFL-CIO legislative directors. While there is no need to reveal secrets, having a working relationship with the key lobbyists can be helpful to the Administration legislative program and would clearly send a signal of our interest in better communications.

14. We should continue to include a representative of organized labor on high visibility Presidential commissions and study groups. Including labor representatives on the Social Security Commission and the Strategic Forces Commission has won us some plaudits and sent an important signal.
15. The White House Conference on Productivity (scheduled for 1983) should be seen as a key opportunity to bring labor representatives and the President (and other top Administration officials) into numerous non-controversial meeting opportunities. The Conference also provides meetings and media opportunities throughout the country.
16. The White House must energize the Republican National Committee to develop a program of media visible activities for the RNC's Labor Advisory Committee. At present, a program of activities for this group is non-existent.
17. The State of the Union Address should be used to display the President's sensitivity to the employment problem and to underscore the Administration's commitment to fair trade and vigorous enforcement of our trade laws. The loss of American jobs to foreign workers is becoming a major issue with labor leaders as well as rank and file workers.

Whether or not we agree with the agenda of organized labor, it is a powerful institution in this country and we must learn to deal with it effectively if we are to further the President's goals and objectives. Hopefully, the foregoing recommendations will help us to do this.

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THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

LABOR LEADERS

If one were to "consult" with or "touch base" with some labor leaders in a perfunctory sort of way, the following should be consulted:

Lane Kirkland, President; or,
Tom Donahue, Secretary-Treasurer
AFL-CIO
815 16th Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20006
(202) 637-5231
(Donahue: 637-5221)

Doug Fraser, President
United Auto Workers
8000 East Jefferson Avenue
Detroit, Michigan 48214
(313) 926-5000

Walter Shea, Vice President
(also serves as Executive Assistant to
Roy Williams, President)
International Brotherhood of Teamsters
25 Louisiana Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20001
(202) 624-6881

Robert (Bob) Georgine, President
Building and Construction Trades
Department, AFL-CIO
815 16th Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20006
(202) 347-1461

William (Bill) Wynn, President
United Food and Commercial Workers Union
1775 K Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20006
(202) 223-3111

Richard Trumka, President
United Mine Workers
900 15th Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20005
(202) 842-7200

Labor Leaders
Page Two

If one were to solicit advice on labor issues from reasonably friendly sources, the following should be consulted:

Walter Shea, Vice President
International Brotherhood of Teamsters
25 Louisiana Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20001
(202) 624-6888

Shannon J. Wall, President
National Maritime Union
346 West 17th Street
New York, New York 10011
(212) 620-5705

Robert (Bob) Georgine, President
Building and Construction Trades
Department, AFL-CIO
815 16th Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20006
(202) 347-1461

Jesse Calhoon, President
Marine Engineers' Beneficial Association
444 North Capitol Street
Suite 800
Washington, D.C. 20001
(202) 347-8585

Honorable William (Bill) Usery
(Former Secretary of Labor)
1730 Rhode Island Avenue, N.W.
Suite 301
Washington, D.C. 20036
(202) 466-6260

Teddy Gleason, President
International Longshoremens' Association
17 Battery Place
Room 1530
New York, New York 10004
(212) 425-1200

Jackie Presser, Vice President
International Brotherhood of Teamsters
Ohio Conference
1870 East 19th Street
Cleveland, Ohio 44114
(216) 771-6339

Jan,
1983

AN ACTION PLAN FOR LABOR

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Such a panel might also help counter Democratic criticism that we are unconcerned about our eroding industrial base... a lively 1884 campaign theme.

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January 11, 1983

MEMORANDUM FOR THAD GARRETT

FROM: BOB BONITATI 

SUBJECT: Labor Activities for the Vice President

As we begin 1983, I would like to suggest a number of labor activities for the Vice President. If possible, I would like to try to schedule many of these meetings prior to the AFL-CIO Executive Council meeting which begins on February 21 in Bal Harbour, Florida.

The activities I am suggesting are as follows: (a) a resumption of the "regular" consultations with labor leaders; (b) a series of get-acquainted meetings with some newly elected union presidents; (c) a meeting with a supportive rail union leader about an Administration policy initiative which has caused much political damage amongst railroad workers, and (d) a reception for the Members of the Republican Labor Advisory Council.

More specifically, I would propose the following:

1. A meeting during the week of January 23 with a group of AFL-CIO leaders on the subject of trade issues. This subject will be a priority with them for the next few years.
2. A meeting with a group of non-AFL-CIO unions on the subject of trade issues during the latter part of February.
3. A meeting with a group of AFL-CIO leaders (including Kirkland) following the Vice President's trip to Europe. He can give them a report on his trip. (I would suggest the week of February 13th.)
4. A breakfast or a luncheon meeting with Bob Georgine and the newly elected presidents of the Plumbers' Union and the Carpenters' Union. Georgine has already asked for a courtesy meeting.

5. A get-acquainted session (15 minutes) with Richard Trumka, the new president of the United Mine Workers.
6. A get-acquainted session (15 to 30 minutes) with Owen Bieber who will become president of the United Auto Workers in May. I would suggest that Doug Fraser also participate as he continues in office until that time.
7. A meeting with John Sytsma, president of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers. Sytsma is supportive and serves as a member of the Republican Labor Advisory Council. He has been concerned with an Administration proposal to "defederalize" the railroad retirement system. This proposal, which has caused considerable damage to us amongst railroad employees, has no chance of being enacted by the Congress and OMB has no plans to advance it again. At this point, Sytsma doesn't know that! This meeting should be held ASAP.
8. The postponed RNC Labor Advisory Council reception at the Vice President's home should be rescheduled in conjunction with the next meeting of the Labor Advisory Council.

I would further suggest that it would be appropriate if your successor, Steve Rhodes, planned to be in attendance at the AFL-CIO Executive Council Meeting in Bal Harbour. It will be a good opportunity to get acquainted with many of the labor leaders and staff that he will be dealing with in the next two years.

cc: Elizabeth Dole