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MEMO

TO: ED MEESE

FROM: ANTHONY R. DOLAN

RE: DEBATES

file

Some of this is elementary. From someone who has not been involved in the debate preparation. But that ~~they~~^{they} offer some perspective.

1. THE TV DEBATE IN AMERICAN POLITICS IS NOT A DEBATE -- This is the first and most important point about this curious political event. The fastest way to disaster is a candidate with a mindset that wants to outpoint the other guy. This was Nixon's mistake in the 60 debate. Those who listened on radio or read the transcript (surveys showed) thought that Nixon had won. But those who watched on television had a different impression. Kennedy did not respond to each of Nixon's points as Nixon was trying to do -- rather he used the moment to speak directly to the American people.

2. SPEAK DIRECTLY TO THE AMERICAN PEOPLE -- our candidate should obviously not ignore the points made by his opponent and he should cite facts and figures. But our candidate must view this ^(not) as an opportunity to outpoint someone but an opportunity to speak directly to the American people. He should thank the League of Women Voters, note that Americans feel that they are entitled to presidential debates, regret Mr. Carter's absence, note the deficiencies in Carter performance and promise, ~~his broke~~ mention the ~~broken~~ promises and especially the inconsistency, suggest that the election is a referendum on the Carter record and then propose tax cuts, peace, prosperity and strong leadership.

3. DON'T SCREW UP THE CANDIDATE -- The one thing Ronald Reagan has going for him in this election is Ronald REagan. (God knows it's not staff members who don't get to meetings on time and never wear their ID badges.) Ronald Reagan's ^{my}midset is instinctively the one described above: slightly combative but keeping an eye on the major objective -- speaking to all those Americans who want to see candidates under fire, want to get to know them. That's why this debate is so important. Most people want to vote for Ronald Reagan. But the American electorate, especially the women, are conservative: they won't pick a new president unless they are sure of him. (Read any of Caddell's memos from 1976 -- they constantly note Carter's difficulty with being accepted over Ford, who was trusted.) The campaign and especially the debates are part of this process. If you will, a "legitimatizing Process." Facts, figures and coaching are fine as long as they don't screw up what we have going for us: Ronald Reagan. LET's not overcoach.

4. DON'T TAKE IT EASY EITHER: On the other hand, let's not take the attitude the CARter forces did just before the 76 debate. They thought Jimmy's inherent talents would see him through and no special preparation was needed. Well, Jimmy blew the debate and nearly the election.

5. PHYSIQAL SETUP COUNTS --- Make sure the candidate has a chance to visit the stage, see where the cameras will be set up, text the microphone, -- just get comfortable.

6. APPEARANCE -- ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ Ronald REagan looks presidential. In the 76 debate, Ford wore a three-piece suit and towered over Carter physically. It was a strong pyschological edge.

7. TELL THE TRUTH -- Let's rob Carter of his greatest weapon: the cosmetic approach to government. RR should say: "Mr. Carter has shown he can't govern but that his staff is good at putting together a ^{Political} campaign built on TV imagery. The Nimitz incident, the Wisconsin primary, the Rose Garden strategy -- only the other day he made a big ceremony ~~of~~ out of signing a military pay raise bill that he had actually opposed in Congress. I don't think this is a mature or presidential way to campaign. The American people don't want ~~gover~~ a "media presidency" or government by gimmick ^{and} ~~or~~ media event. They want leadership from a president who knows enough to be himself."

8. COACHES ETC.

The day before the debate and the day of the debate Ronald REagan should have his coaches with him. However, he should not be denied the presence of those who relax him. He is not in basic training. Cliff White Has always stressed the importance of keeping any candidate relaxed and letting him be himself. I also thinks he understands Ronald REagan. It would be a good idea to have him around to keep an ~~eye~~ ^{eye} on things as the debate gets closer.

9. FRANK SHAKESPEARE -- He is absolutly the best at understanding media preparation. He should be brought down for a day or two.

10. THE FOLLOW-UP -- The press will be looking for a lead and listening to our people for what they thought. I've seen candidates wipe out another candidate in a debate and then loose it the next day in the papers because his people didn't work hard enough with the press immmediately afterwards. (They were too busy celebrating their victory) We should have our people available after the debate and they should have a consistent point of view.

11. DON"T IGNORE ANDERSON -- We should have one or two zingers prepared for Anderson. We should say "Like Jimmy Carter, (we should always join them together in the debate) Mr. Anderson has competly changed his views and is now liberal. We need consistency, leadership etc."