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OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

1730 GROVE STREET
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August 12, 1983

Joyce Thomann
Office of Public Liaison
White House
Suite 191
OEOB
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Joyce Thomann,

Thank you for the invitation to attend the Wednesday afternoon Central American briefings. As we discussed, I've passed this invitation on as well to George Weigel, another Council staffperson who is in Washington, D.C. a week each month.

You'll find enclosed the memo I did for the Department of State which raises some of the problems we discussed about, from my point of view, the inadequacy of the Administration's attempts to deal with our present polarized political arena as it deals with problems of security and peace.

As I said, either George or I would be glad to do a briefing on the "geology" of the peace and disarmament end of the political spectrum: an explanation of how that peculiar constellation of feelings and ideas has gathered and why so many people genuinely concerned about peace and human rights end up advancing the Soviet agenda instead of challenging it.

I know your outreach sessions are for groups that are primarily in support of the Administration's policies. But unless something is done about the presently polarized argument, no workable policy can come into being. If Faith Whittlesey is interested, I'd value the opportunity to go over all of this with her and to suggest additional outreach programs that may be of interest.

The other enclosures are for your information.

Sincerely,

Robert Pickus
Robert Pickus
President

cc: George Weigel
Steve Boyd
Bob Woito

*1:15-3:30 Wed.
before 11:45 Thurs.
5-4 Thurs.*

August 3, 1983

FOR: Ilmar Heinaru/Joyce Curry
Tom Bleha
John McCarthy
Dick Hecklinger/Jerry Helman

*Full
For Faith W.
+ Joyce T.*

FROM: Bob Pickus *RP*

RE: Proposed September Department of State Conference for
Leaders of American Nongovernmental Organizations

I've had a number of intensive experiences this summer: with the California Association of Teachers of Foreign Languages; with Livermore Lab Civil Disobedience; with Evangelical Christians setting out to organize 40 million of their fellows to accept a World Council of Churches' peace perspective; at a meeting of wealthy, foundation world liberals who want to set up a Peace Fund; with Computer Scientists for Social Responsibility; at a League of Women Voters' arms control planning group; with the Peace Program for the International Association of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences . . . it is a very long list. When my parallel list of work with the Heritage Foundation, the Institute for Contemporary Studies, the American Legion, the Smith Richardson Foundation is added, I can only salute your courage in inviting everybody to your house!

Here are some specific suggestions for avoiding what could be a damaging experience and just perhaps getting something constructive out of the exercise.

Tell me if you want help on any of this.

1. A focus and a theme for the meeting.

In the present climate, few NGO leaders are ready to learn from a Department of State briefing. They are full of their own ideas, worries, protests and angers. There will be great resentment if they cannot express these views, and there will be a great imbroglio if they do. They will also resent a simple "venting" session as manipulative. You may end up asking, with hindsight, why State offered a platform to its critics with an adversary press eager to build the event into a major attack on the Administration.

There are, I believe, good reasons for holding this conference--but only if it is set up to speak to what Jim Rosenau accurately describes as "fragmentative" America (a fragmented public arena in which the many fragments have been integrated into opposing, polarized views that make broad consensus on foreign policy almost impossible to achieve).

Hence these suggestions.

2. Title the Conference.

"A Peace and Security Policy for America: Clarifying Our Disagreements"

This is the key idea: this is not a traditional Department of State briefing. It is an attempt to address a central problem. It is an opportunity for the

Department of State to listen to and to engage NGO leaders in an exploration of our present disagreements and of the possibility of reconstituting common ground for US policy.

3. In the invitational letter, make clear your intention.

This conference is a first step in an attempt to regather America for a constructive role in world politics. That is not likely to happen without new ground for agreement forming in the country and that cannot happen without a more searching exploration of where we disagree. At present, the Security/Liberty pole of the argument and the Peace/Disarmament pole dominate the discussion. Truths lie at both poles, but they have yet to be melded into a perspective more adequate to the problems of both nuclear weapons and Soviet reality and capable of rebuilding a thoughtful center in the American foreign policy arena. This conference will explore the differing goals, assumptions, and analyses that underlie our disagreements on specific issues. It is an exploratory meeting. State will explain present policy. It will be just as eager to listen and to understand competing perspectives. This conference is the beginning of a major new effort by the Department of State to engage independent sector leaders in a common task.

In addition to this substantive agenda, the meeting will also explore ways in which the Department of State and NGOs can work together to improve their relations and to improve the public dialogue on war/peace questions (cf. Carol Laise's 1974 memo "From Uncertainty to Dialogue--and Perhaps to Consensus").

4. Prepare a Pre-Meeting Questionnaire which gives participants an opportunity to spell out their perspectives (cf. Teller/Panofsky Questionnaire I left with Dick Hecklinger).

5. Prepare an analysis of their responses as a common working paper for the Conference.

6. Structure the Conference carefully.

- A morning plenary session to give participants

- a) contact with a very senior figure (Shultz?) who explains Department of State intentions in this first conference and who explains the common work process ahead and its importance.

- b) then--a first class presentation of the Administration's US Foreign Policy overview: values, goals, obstacles, policies designed to overcome them. Explain what this means in three specific areas, say US/USSR relations/ Security, Arms Control, Disarmament/Central America. (My candidate would be Richard Burt or Eagleburger.)

- Workshop I: Focuses on where do we agree, where do we disagree, using the report on responses to the questionnaire and the morning presentation to structure the discussion.

These first workshops (ideally 30 people to a section) all have the same agenda and purpose: A) to clarify our disagreements: Are they rooted in

different views of the facts? different assumptions? different expectations of the consequences of certain policy lines? different goals, values, views of the Soviet Union and of our own society? B) To show how these differing perspectives lead to different policy positions. C) To identify common ground or at least ground on which more constructive public debate can proceed.

In each workshop, a skilled moderator guides the discussion and tries to clarify it so that a coherent report can emerge. Department of State people are on hand as resource people, to listen to and to make their own report on the session. They should at the end, speaking from the point of view of those responsible for present policy, respond to major themes in the discussion.

Moderators and Department of State folk should have a preparation session the day before the conference.

- Luncheon Panel Presentation: Improving the Public Dialogue on War/Peace Questions. A weighty panel: academic, NGO leader, DoS person give their views of the present public arena: what's wrong? How to improve the public dialogue on war/peace questions? What should the role of the Department of State be?

and then

Luncheon Table Workshops: Built around a Suggestions for Improvement Questionnaire. Emphasis on what Department of State and Independent Sector groups should do to improve the public dialogue.

- Workshop II: America Takes the Initiative: Competing Views.

Again, all workshops have the same format, but this time, there are only four. In each, a panel of three speakers from the academic and NGO worlds present competing views on what American policy should be. Emphasis is on the next five years, not tomorrow's headlines; on the speaker's sense what change is needed in US foreign, security and peace policy. The floor is then open to comment. At least one senior DoS person is present throughout the workshop.

- Final Plenary: What I Heard

--Four senior Department of State people respond to what they heard: what they agreed with, where they disagreed and why. How can elements of competing views contribute to wiser policy?

--Conference chairman announces proposed next steps in this process (taking into account luncheon table workshops) and asks participants to indicate on a ballot which of these proposals they believe deserve priority attention:

Note: I left a number of memos with Tom and Dick which detail some of these proposals. Tell me if you want more copies. I discussed f) and g) with Tom Hubbard last month.

e.g., a) Circulation of DoS statements such as Security and Arms Control: The Search for a More Stable Peace, with response questionnaires. Seminar to discuss results of each.

b) Proposed State of the World: The American Response (modeled on the US Foreign Policy for the '70's series)

- c) Regional conferences like this one.
- d) Late winter DoS issues conference, at DoS, organized along traditional briefing lines.
- e) Regional consultative groups to act as reactor panels for DoS.
- f) A US Ambassador to the NGO world.
- g) Proposed changes in DoS training and liaison programs as they involve the independent sector.
- h) Proposed opportunities for NGO leaders in the DoS.
- i) An NGO role in US Public Diplomacy programs.
- j) Early warning Options Papers with request for NGO leaders' responses (e.g., The Democracy Program).
- k) Present opportunities and future plans for improving funding for independent sector activity (e.g., the President's Youth Exchange Initiative).

I'm convinced that we need a program, not just a conference. This conference could provide a sounding board for such a major effort by the Department (and by related agencies--DoE, AID, ACDA, NEH, USIA). At a minimum, the conference outlined above could provide a useful and constructive experience for all involved.

The fundamental thrust behind the entire effort was well outlined by Carol Laise in her paper and in work by Charlie Bray when he was in Public Affairs. Eagleburger's new Public Diplomacy Office could play an important role in all of this, relating our overseas public diplomacy efforts to this crucial work with American nongovernmental organizations.

A conference like the one outlined above would need considerable advance work on:

- a) who comes
- b) a kit of materials
- c) careful choice of speakers, from both DoS and NGO world
- d) planning for post-conference report and media coverage

I and others on our staff will be glad to help as you request it. I would in any case be eager to hear your reactions. I'll be back in my office Tuesday, August 9. (415) 845-1992.