

Ronald Reagan Presidential Library
Digital Library Collections

This is a PDF of a folder from our textual collections.

Collection: Bonitati, Robert: Files
Folder Title: Labor Strategy (5)
Box: OA 6845

To see more digitized collections visit:

<https://reaganlibrary.gov/archives/digital-library>

To see all Ronald Reagan Presidential Library inventories visit:

<https://reaganlibrary.gov/document-collection>

Contact a reference archivist at: reagan.library@nara.gov

Citation Guidelines: <https://reaganlibrary.gov/citing>

National Archives Catalogue: <https://catalog.archives.gov/>

WITHDRAWAL SHEET

Ronald Reagan Library

Collection Name BONITATI, ROBERT: FILES

Withdrawer

KDB 10/24/2005

File Folder LABOR STRATEGY (5)

FOIA

F01-108/01

Box Number 6845

MCCARTIN

54

DOC NO	Doc Type	Document Description	No of Pages	Doc Date	Restrictions
1	MEMO	BONITATI TO ELIZABETH DOLE RE PROPOSAL REGARDING A POSITION	1	7/24/1981	B6

Freedom of Information Act - [5 U.S.C. 552(b)]

- B-1 National security classified information [(b)(1) of the FOIA]
- B-2 Release would disclose internal personnel rules and practices of an agency [(b)(2) of the FOIA]
- B-3 Release would violate a Federal statute [(b)(3) of the FOIA]
- B-4 Release would disclose trade secrets or confidential or financial information [(b)(4) of the FOIA]
- B-6 Release would constitute a clearly unwarranted invasion of personal privacy [(b)(6) of the FOIA]
- B-7 Release would disclose information compiled for law enforcement purposes [(b)(7) of the FOIA]
- B-8 Release would disclose information concerning the regulation of financial institutions [(b)(8) of the FOIA]
- B-9 Release would disclose geological or geophysical information concerning wells [(b)(9) of the FOIA]

C. Closed in accordance with restrictions contained in donor's deed of gift.

WITHDRAWAL SHEET

Ronald Reagan Library

Collection Name

BONITATI, ROBERT: FILES

Withdrawer

KDB 10/24/2005

File Folder

LABOR STRATEGY (5)

FOIA

F01-108/01

MCCARTIN

Box Number

6845

54

DOC Document Type

NO Document Description

No of Doc Date Restriction
pages *tions*

1 MEMO

1 7/24/1981 B6

BONITATI TO ELIZABETH DOLE RE PROPOSAL
REGARDING A POSITION

Freedom of Information Act - [5 U.S.C. 552(b)]

B-1 National security classified information [(b)(1) of the FOIA]

B-2 Release would disclose internal personnel rules and practices of an agency [(b)(2) of the FOIA]

B-3 Release would violate a Federal statute [(b)(3) of the FOIA]

B-4 Release would disclose trade secrets or confidential or financial information [(b)(4) of the FOIA]

B-6 Release would constitute a clearly unwarranted invasion of personal privacy [(b)(6) of the FOIA]

B-7 Release would disclose information compiled for law enforcement purposes [(b)(7) of the FOIA]

B-8 Release would disclose information concerning the regulation of financial institutions [(b)(8) of the FOIA]

B-9 Release would disclose geological or geophysical information concerning wells [(b)(9) of the FOIA]

C. Closed in accordance with restrictions contained in donor's deed of gift.

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

June 22, 1981

MEMORANDUM FOR ELIZABETH H. DOLE

VIA: Red Cavaney/Jack Burgess

FM: Bob Bonitati

RE: Labor Strategy

At the conclusion of our labor strategy meeting on June 12 with Lyn Nofziger, it was agreed that our next step would be to arrange a meeting with Jim Baker, Ed Meese and Lyn Nofziger to discuss how we can implement a labor strategy.

I would further suggest that Dave Gergen be included in that meeting as the Communications role is a key one in that strategy.

As soon as you schedule such a session, I will prepare a proposed agenda for your consideration.

*Bob -
We to setup for
week of 6/24 w/Baker
et al. Let's start to
work on proposed agenda.*

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

June 22, 1981

MEMORANDUM FOR ELIZABETH H. DOLE

VIA: Red Cavaney/Jack Burgess

FM: Bob Bonitati 

RE: Labor Strategy

At the conclusion of our labor strategy meeting on June 12 with Lyn Nofziger, it was agreed that our next step would be to arrange a meeting with Jim Baker, Ed Meese and Lyn Nofziger to discuss how we can implement a labor strategy.

I would further suggest that Dave Gergen be included in that meeting as the Communications role is a key one in that strategy.

As soon as you schedule such a session, I will prepare a proposed agenda for your consideration.

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

June 22, 1981

MEMORANDUM FOR ELIZABETH H. DOLE

VIA: Red Cavaney/Jack Burgess

FM: Bob Bonitati

RE: Labor Strategy

At the conclusion of our labor strategy meeting on June 12 with Lyn Nofziger, it was agreed that our next step would be to arrange a meeting with Jim Baker, Ed Meese and Lyn Nofziger to discuss how we can implement a labor strategy.

I would further suggest that Dave Gergen be included in that meeting as the Communications role is a key one in that strategy.

As soon as you schedule such a session, I will prepare a proposed agenda for your consideration.

*Bob —
We to set up for
week of 4/24 w/Baker
et al. Let's start to
work on proposed agenda.*

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

7/20/81

TO: Ed Rollins

FM: Bob Bonitati

Just a reminder that I could use that polling data on union membership sentiment on the President's economic programs.

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

June 11, 1981

MEMORANDUM FOR ELIZABETH H. DOLE

VIA: Jack Burgess

FM: Bob Bonitati

RE: Meeting with Lyn Nofziger, June 12 3:30 p.m.

The purpose of our session with Lyn Nofziger tomorrow is to discuss the components of a labor strategy and try to reach some agreement on the system needed to implement such a strategy.

The attached Executive Summary of my proposed labor strategy incorporates the principal ingredients necessary to achieve our objectives:

- A) To hold, and to attempt to expand for 1984, the 44% of the union vote received by President Reagan in 1980.
- B) To expand the group of national labor leaders supporting the President by building alliances with selected labor groups.
- C) To develop a group of state, local and regional labor leaders who will be supportive of the President and his policies.
- D) To move organized labor closer to a policy of bipartisanship.

I believe our meeting tomorrow should attempt to:

- 1) Reach some agreement on these objectives.
- 2) Determine how we get White House commitment to achieving these objectives.
- 3) Determine what system or resources we will need to achieve these objectives. (You and I cannot wage this campaign by ourselves.)

I'll be glad to talk further with you if you want to go into greater detail.


THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

May 28, 1981

MEMORANDUM FOR ELIZABETH DOLE

VIA: Red Cavaney/Jack Burgess

FM: Bob Bonitati 

RE: Labor Strategy

Per your request, I have prepared a 3 page Executive Summary of the Labor Strategy recently submitted to you.

As I recall, this is to serve as the basis for a meeting of Baker, Meese, Nofziger, etc. on the subject of adopting a labor strategy and the means to implement it.

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

JK

April 27, 1981

TO: BOB BONITATI
THRU: MAX L. FRIEDERSDORF *M.G.*
FROM: POWELL A. MOORE *pm*
SUBJECT: Labor Issues

I made notations about the issues in which the labor lobbyists expressed concern at our luncheon the other day. They are as follows:

1. The Thurmond bill making a Federal case of violence in labor disputes.
2. Food stamps for strikers.
3. The reduction for NLRB from \$123 million to \$98 million.
4. The suitability requirement under unemployment insurance.
5. Trade adjustment.
6. The reduction in the Senate Budget Resolution for Davis-Bacon enforcement.

Since they wanted us to pass their concern along to policy makers here in the White House, you may want to take steps along that line.

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON
March 12, 1981

TO: Elizabeth Dole
VIA: Red Cavaney/Jack Burgess
FROM: Bob Bonitati
SUBJECT: SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES FOR THE NEXT 30 DAYS

I would suggest that your limited schedule during the next month be used to fulfill four basic objectives:

1. To acquaint Cabinet members and White House Senior Staff with the need to "work with" the labor sector.
2. To develop a basic strategy for dealing with organized labor and setting basic objectives for the next 6 to 12 months.
3. To take some symbolic actions which will communicate to the labor world that the Reagan Administration wants to be open and accessible to organized labor and more importantly that we want to work with them.
4. To solder our relationship with our campaign supporters and friendly unions.

In an attempt to fulfill some of these objectives, I would suggest the following activities:

1. Accept the Teamsters invitation to lunch at their headquarters (see attached).
2. Once you have had lunch with the Teamsters, initiate a call to Lane Kirkland indicating you would like to visit the AFL-CIO offices and meet some of his key people. Spend some time at "labor central" shaking hands and touring the facilities. (This event and the Teamsters event are a bit unprecedented and ought to send a clear message that we are reaching out to organized labor.)

3. Arrange courtsey calls with the Secretary of Transportation and the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development. Both of these Departments are critical to labor unions and we will have to be dealing with them on an extensive and continuing basis (i.e., the issue of auto import restrictions).
4. Call Jesse Calhoon (President of the Marine Engineers Beneficial Association MEBAP) to ask him if he would like a White House briefing on the President's Economic Renewal Program for his key leadership and his affiliates. Jesse has five smaller unions affiliated with MEBA.
5. If the President agrees to speak to the AFL-CIO Building and Trades Conference on March 30, you should communicate that message to Bob Georgine.
6. Initiate a call to Secretary Donovan suggesting that we need to develop a "game plan" for working with and "wooing" organized labor. I have already talked with him on a preliminary basis about such a strategy.
7. Sometime in early April, it would be useful to conduct a "mini seminar" for key White House and Administration staff to educate them on how organized labor operates, who the players are, what to expect, and where our opportunities lie. This might be a joint venture with Lyn Nofziger. It is clear to me that many of the key players in the Administration need a cram course in dealing with labor.
8. Hold an informal mid morning get acquainted coffee with selected labor leaders to introduce them to several cabinet members (like Donovan, Lewis and Pierce) or top White House personnel such as Stockman, Meese and Baker.

I will be pleased to work out the details of these suggestions if you want to proceed with any or all of them.

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

April 23, 1981

MEMORANDUM FOR ELIZABETH DOLE

VIA: Red Cavaney/Jack Burgess
FM: Bob Bonitati *by*
RE: Economic Briefings for Labor Leaders

Since there has been some apprehension expressed about bringing labor union presidents to the White House complex for briefing and discussions of the economic package, we have shifted the site of these briefings to the Labor Department.

Secretary Donovan will be hosting two such briefing/discussions on April 27 and 28. We expect about 30 labor union presidents at each session. The briefings will be conducted by Secretary Donovan, Secretary Regan and possibly Murray Weidenbaum.

I plan to attend both sessions.

You should also be aware that I am working with Paul Russo and Secretary Donovan's staff in planning a blue-collar oriented media tour through some of the industrial states for Secretary Donovan and Secretary Lewis. The purpose of the tour will be to focus on the President's economic package in selected states where support is needed. The first of several days we have scheduled for this tour is Thursday, April 30 when Secretary Donovan and Secretary Lewis will spend the day in Ohio.

Not final labor
strategy

WASHINGTON
THE WHITE HOUSE

A SUGGESTED LABOR STRATEGY

Introduction

As the Administration begins to shape a strategy for working with the political activities of organized labor, the following comments and observations are worthy of consideration:

1. There is a growing unrest among rank and file members of labor unions. This unrest stems from a number of factors:
 - a) Rank and file union members are beginning to question the traditional alliance with the Democratic Party. This questioning of the Labor/Democratic alliance comes from both ends of the labor spectrum: The liberally-oriented union members are beginning to believe that the Democratic Party has shifted to the right, that the Democrats have taken labor for granted, and that Democratic officeholders are no longer as responsive to them as in the past. The middle-of-the-road and more conservative union members tend to be disillusioned with the Labor/Democratic alliance because they believe that the Democratic Party has become the party of big-spending, softness on defense and foreign policy issues, and has espoused too many liberal social causes. (The middle-of-the-road and more conservative union members are increasing in numbers as their incomes rise. Basically these union members are beginning to question whether the Democratic Party is still the "party of the workingman".
 - b) A growing feeling that many of the elected union leaders have "lost touch" with the rank and file and that their leaders no longer speak for them on economic, social and political issues. This attitude becomes more pronounced as union members rise in the economic structure and their wage levels increase. The 1979 California referendum on Proposition 13 is a good case in point; nearly all of the labor leaders were opposed to Proposition 13, while polls showed strong support for its passage from the rank and file.

- c) A perception by growing numbers of rank and file union members that their elected union leaders have become too closely aligned with the Democratic Party and that they should be more "independent" in their political outlook. This was made quite evident in the 1980 Presidential campaign where the endorsement of Jimmy Carter met strong resistance and opposition at the local union level.
2. While there is growing unrest in the rank and file, one should not assume that these attitudes dominate the labor movement. They don't! But there are clear signs that the numbers of union members holding these views is increasing.
3. The growing unrest in the rank and file and the results of the 1980 election is prompting many national labor leaders to reassess their political activities and operations. Some are merely disenchanted with the Democratic Party and what they perceive to be Democratic officeholders' lack of "responsiveness". Others have become sensitive to the changing economic status of their members and the growing restiveness of the rank and file, while others have decided that the political climate of the country is changing and that they need to be more pragmatic if they are to be politically effective.

To varying degrees, elected national union leaders are examining the following questions:

- a) Should they seek ties with both Democrats and Republicans.
- b) How do they relate to a Republican Administration (and a popular Republican President) and a Republican/conservative-oriented Congress. This is the first time they've had to face that question since 1954.
- c) Should labor begin to narrow its political agenda. (Many leaders feel that organized labor needs to concentrate more on gut labor issues and deemphasize social issues - civil rights, welfare, women's rights, etc.)

- d) How can labor have a greater impact on the Presidential nominating process - so they don't get stuck with candidates like Jimmy Carter.

The first stage of this reassessment by labor leaders would have to be characterized as the "wait and see period". Many labor leaders are watching the early days of the Reagan Administration to see what its basic attitudes and policies are toward labor unions. They are also carefully watching the Republicans on Capitol Hill to see if legislation they perceive as anti-union begins to move and how much influence their perceived enemies (Sen. Hatch, Sen. Thurmond, Sen. East and others) actually exert.

It should be noted that the more liberal-oriented labor leaders (such as Jerry Wurf, Bill Winpingsinger and Glenn Watts) are concentrating their reassessment efforts on ways to strengthen discipline in the Democratic Party and to wrest control of the Party apparatus so that labor can have a stronger impact on the nominating process. Some of these labor leaders feel that a major reason for labor defections to Republican candidates in recent years is the shift to the right by the Democratic Party.

These labor leaders are also exploring ways to better their communications with the rank and file in the hope that if members are better educated on issues and candidates, they will be more responsive to the recommendations of the national union.

- d) How can labor have a greater impact on the Presidential nominating process - so they don't get stuck with candidates like Jimmy Carter.

The first stage of this reassessment by labor leaders would have to be characterized as the "wait and see period". Many labor leaders are watching the early days of the Reagan Administration to see what its basic attitudes and policies are toward labor unions. They are also carefully watching the Republicans on Capitol Hill to see if legislation they perceive as anti-union begins to move and how much influence their perceived enemies (Sen. Hatch, Sen. Thurmond and others) actually exert.

These labor leaders are also exploring ways to better their communications with the rank and file in the hope that if members are better educated on issues and candidates, they will be more responsive to the recommendations of the national union.

It should be noted that the more liberal-oriented labor leaders (such as Jerry Wurf, Bill Winpingsinger and Glenn Watts) are concentrating their reassessment efforts on ways to strengthen discipline in the Democratic Party and to wrest control of the Party apparatus so that labor can have a stronger impact on the nominating process. Some of these labor leaders feel that a major reason for labor defections to Republican candidates in recent years is the shift to the right by the Democratic Party.

In developing a strategy to take advantage of organized labor's current restiveness, it is wise to keep these observations in mind:

1. While any number of labor leaders might show signs of pragmatism, there is still a strong identification with the Democratic Party. In general, labor leaders feel that Democrats have usually championed their causes and Republicans have fought them.
2. There is general suspicion and skepticism about the Reagan Administration. Campaign statements advocating repeal of Davis-Bacon and the application of anti-trust laws to unions scared the daylights out of many union leaders. Subsequent clarification of those views relaxed some of their fears but has led many labor leaders to wonder whether this was done to merely "win votes" in a close campaign.
3. While there are more than 60,000 union locals and many thousands of individuals involved in the local, state and regional leadership structure of unions, almost all unions are personally run and dominated by the national union president. They control the staff and the communications, and they usually set the policy, especially when it comes to political activities and positions on issues. Except for the occasional maverick local or state leader, most people in the leadership structure of a union usually "go along" with the elected national union leaders. It should also be pointed out that the leader of a large or powerful local union can often be a strong influence on the national union president if he is well-informed and decides to flex his political muscle. The endorsement of President Reagan by the Teamsters is a case in point.
4. The AFL-CIO is still the dominant force in labor's political actions. While none of the 108 unions affiliated with the AFL-CIO is bound by its policies on issues and candidates, the unwritten rule is that you don't "buck" AFL-CIO Headquarters. If an individual union wants to depart from the AFL-CIO policy, it is usually done in a relatively quiet or low-key manner. Discipline was much stronger during the Meany reign, but shows signs of weakness under the newly elected Kirkland.

5. Many union leaders have expressed covert support for the President and several have indicated a desire to develop a friendly relationship with the Administration. At this point, they are reluctant to publicly voice their support because of the negative signals emanating from AFL-CIO Headquarters and their fear that the Reagan economic plan may turn out to be a failure. It is unclear whether some new realignment is in the making or whether these leaders are merely being very pragmatic.
6. Symbolism is very important in the labor movement. The handshake and the promise are the stock in trade. One's word sometimes seems to have more impact than one's deed. Positive moves by an Administration in terms of public posture and public relations always have great impact on the total labor community. Reasonable appointments to the NLRB, labor leaders being included in visible new events, labor leaders conferring with the President and Administration officials "reaching out" to labor will be interpreted positively.
7. The leadership of the labor movement starts out with very low expectations of a Republican/Reagan Administration. They don't expect to be consulted, they don't expect to be "included", so whatever positive steps are taken will have disproportionate impact.
8. Union leaders are accustomed to dealing on a "quid pro quo" basis. If the Administration does something for a union, they will fully expect to be called upon to reciprocate.
9. In previous Administrations, relations with organized labor were usually channelled through the AFL-CIO and the Washington labor establishment. The labor establishment consists of about 25 unions of varying sizes that have high visibility in terms of political, lobbying and public relations activities. Few efforts have been made to reach out to labor organizations which didn't have a Washington presence or to deal with powerful state and local union officials.

10. All labor leaders are politicians within their own union. They have to stand for reelection and tend to be receptive to the usual activities that enhance their elected positions with their members. All of them like to portray themselves as being important enough (in the eyes of their members) to be consulted by the White House, invited by the White House and appointed to key advisory commissions, boards, etc.
11. Like all politicians, labor leaders don't like surprises. If a policy affecting them, their industry or their members is announced and they are caught off guard, the reaction is likely to be negative. Even if the policy pronouncement might adversely affect their members, being forewarned of such an announcement can help to soften the blow and makes the union leader appear to his membership to be more knowledgeable about what's going on in Washington.
12. Most unions do not have very extensive research or policy analysis units within their organizations. They are frequently not well equipped to analyze issues and will follow the lead provided by either the AFL-CIO, another union in their industry, or the management position in their industry if the issue directly affects that industry. Currently one will find the building and construction unions relying on the nuclear power industry for nuclear power issue analysis, the airline unions for airline economic analysis, and the maritime unions on the shipping industry for programs to improve their economic health.

13. Coalitions are often formed within the labor movement on an industry-by-industry basis. It is not uncommon to find high degrees of cooperation today between labor and management on political issues that directly affect their members such as trade policy, tax policy and regulatory matters. These ad hoc coalitions usually operate outside the AFL-CIO structure and are usually initiated by management operatives who try to enlist the support of employees for the "good of the industry."

With some of these observations in mind, the Administration should attempt to achieve the following long-range objectives during the next few years:

- A) Hold on to and continue to expand the approx. 41% rank and file labor vote received in the 1980 election for 1984.
- B) Expand the group of labor leaders supporting the President by building alliances with selected labor groups.
- C) Move organized labor closer to bipartisanship than they are now.

In terms of short-range objectives, the Administration should:

- a) Try to minimize confrontations and avoid being portrayed as anti-worker or anti-labor.
- b) Cultivate a group of union presidents who will offer visible support of the President and his programs.
- c) Make a major attempt to be portrayed as taking the initiative in being open and accessible to organized labor.
- d) Make a major effort to sell the President's economic package as being good for the American worker.
- d) Attempt to neutralize or minimize labor opposition to Republican candidates for the 1982 elections.

WORKING WITH THE RANK AND FILE

While the proposition of seizing upon the restiveness in the rank and file of union members may be tempting, directly communicating with an organized work force of approx. 20 million is a difficult proposition unless we build a vast communications network to deal with them. In addition, labor union members do not vote merely as labor union members unless they feel their rights as union members are threatened or under attack. Recent internal AFL-CIO studies show that union members (in general) are affected by issues and candidates much like any other group of citizens except that there has been a long identification with the Democratic Party as the party of the "working man."

In dealing with the rank and file union members, the Administration should accept the premise that the union members' attitudes about President Reagan, the Administration and the Republican Party are shaped primarily by the news media and secondarily by the communication (meeting, publication) he receives from his union. The more a union member identifies with his union, the more susceptible he will be to his union communications. In recent years labor leaders have just begun to recognize that the rank and file is losing his identification with his union and has become more susceptible to other social, economic and political pressures that may be exerted upon him. This is especially true of the middle income union member.

In general our efforts to communicate directly with the rank and file must be geared to dispelling the notion that the President and/or the Administration is anti-labor, and that the President's policies are in the best interests of working men and women.

This can probably be best accomplished through the news media, through symbolism and through direct communications with union leadership below the national level.

In trying to directly affect the rank and file union members, the following suggestions are offered:

1. The Administration and its key spokesmen should appear in the news media to be friendly to unions and their leaders. Much of this can be accomplished in symbolic ways by appearances and meetings with union members and leaders, visits to work sites and an interest in the problems of workers. Well publicized visits with workers in troubled industries can deliver a strong message to union members.
2. The Administration and its key spokesmen should be publicly portrayed as being "open and accessible" to organized labor and deserving of labor support and participation in the development of policy.
3. More public emphasis needs to be given to the job producing/economic growth aspects of the economic package. President Reagan's pledge "to put America back to work again" was a strong selling point to workers during the 1980 campaign.
4. The Administration should avoid the public impression of being locked in combat with the AFL-CIO and other major union spokesmen on labor issues (job protection, workers rights, job safety standards). In particular it would be wise to avoid situations where it appears that the Administration is helping big business at the expense of the workers.
5. A major effort should be made to publicize those instances where organized labor is supporting the Administration and its policies such as national defense, foreign policy and trade issues.
6. We should make a major effort to get Administration spokesmen to address large state and local labor meetings where a positive reaction can be reasonably forecast. For too many years, Republicans have passed up opportunities to address labor audiences.
7. The Administration should develop a program to systematically communicate with selected rank and file union members through its own newsletter-style publication. Such a publication (A Report From the President) wouldn't be identified as labor targetted but in actuality it would be mailed to a list composed primarily of labor union members. Such a publication could get the Administration message out to union members and help to counter some of the union house organs.

8. A special effort should be made by our media liaison office to impact the house organs of labor unions. There are thousands of local, state and national publications that are mailed to union members' homes each week and month that the Administration should be impacting in a positive way.
9. An effort should be made to identify supportive local and state union leaders bringing them to the White House for briefings, meetings and special treatment.
10. Our communications efforts need to be expanded from the normal pattern of only communicating with the elected national leaders of unions to state, local and regional union officials. At a minimum, these local, state and regional officials should receive regular direct communications through the mail so they do not have to depend on their national unions for information concerning the Administration and its policies.
11. Public opinion surveys that depict rank and file union sentiments at variance with the views of the national elected union leadership need to be widely disseminated and publicized by sources outside the Administration.
12. A special effort must be made by the Republican National Committee to "open the doors" to labor. The RNC should be portrayed as seeking labor input and support. This "invitation" to labor must be carried through at the state and local level.

WORKING WITH THE AFL-CIO

Like it or not, the AFL-CIO continues to be the focal point for championing the causes of organized labor. Like many institutions, it is run by the professional staff who have strong liberal/Democratic/anti-business biases. The principal spokesmen for the AFL-CIO, Lane Kirkland and Tom Donahue (the Secretary-Treasurer) can usually be expected to use whatever materials are placed in front of them by the professional staff. The AFL-CIO does little actual union organizing and collective bargaining but does consider its principal mission to be impacting public policy.

Ostensibly the AFL-CIO is governed by a 33-member Executive Council of union presidents which meets quarterly to shape policy of the Federation, but in actuality this group usually rubberstamps what the professional staff produces and Kirkland and Donahue advance.

In recent years (especially since Lane Kirkland became President), some members of the Executive Council have become disenchanted with the quality and direction of the staff work and have begun to question the lobbying and campaign operations of the Federation as well as the issues being emphasized. Most of this stems from the basic restiveness in the labor movement. While there is increasing dissent in the Executive Council, most of their actions are by unanimous vote. This stems from the perceived need for unity in the labor movement.

While some doubts about the AFL-CIO political agenda exist, it is difficult to conceive of any immediate major shift in the outlook of the AFL-CIO leadership toward Republicans or President Reagan. At the same time though, both Kirkland and Donohue have expressed interest in developing a "working" relationship with the Administration. What form or structure they might have in mind is unclear. Both of them sincerely believe that they have been reasonable, dignified and moderate in their criticism of the Administration and the President. That notion clearly is a matter of some conjecture by the media, by political observers and by many union leaders within the AFL-CIO.

The most likely assessment is that these two leaders of the AFL-CIO don't "know how" to establish a "working relationship" with the Reagan Administration. Because of the traditional orientation of the institution, the campaign rhetoric portrays Reagan as anti-labor, and the radical nature of the Economic Renewal package (which severely impacts programs they have fought for), the institution has been forced to react instinctively -- by lashing out.

Nonetheless, the AFL-CIO and its presence in our national political life and the attention it receives from the news media is a fact of life and must be dealt with.

Recognizing that the AFL-CIO is not likely to ever offer eventual political support to President Reagan, our basic objectives in dealing with the AFL-CIO leadership (Kirkland, Donahue and key staff) should be:

1. To provide few, if any, opportunities for critics to claim the Administration isn't listening to or working with organized labor.
2. To lessen the current atmosphere of hostility, so that individual unions will not feel constrained to "work with" or support the Administration.
3. To minimize their public criticisms of the Administration.
4. To emphasize and publicize those areas of policy agreement (national defense, foreign policy, trade) that potentially exist so that the AFL-CIO is portrayed as supporting parts of the Administration's program.

The following suggestions are offered in hopes of implementing these objectives.

1. At this stage of the Administration, no attempt should be made to "write off" or to "shut them out". Any effort to ignore Kirkland, Donohue and the institution of the AFL-CIO will only serve as a rallying point to those who want to believe that the Administration is anti-labor and will make it more difficult to work with individual unions.
2. For the first year, the Administration and its key figures should be open and accessible to the leadership of the AFL-CIO and willing to discuss their problems and issues. This openness and accessibility should be reassessed in early 1982 to see if it has had any impact on decreasing the current hostility emanating from the AFL-CIO Headquarters.
3. The Administration, in a quiet informal way, must communicate to the AFL-CIO leadership directly and indirectly that continued hostility and confrontation makes the Administration's efforts to develop a relationship with organized labor increasingly difficult.
4. Key figures in the AFL-CIO hierarchy should be invited to the White House for social events, briefings, meetings etc. and an effort should be made to have the President, Vice President and key Administration officials pictures with AFL-CIO leaders in the news media.
5. The Administration should try to avoid confrontation on highly emotional labor issues or appointments (like Davis-Bacon, NLRB appointments, sub-minimum wage, the Hobbs Act) that can be used as a rallying point by the AFL-CIO to unify its affiliate unions against us.
6. A conscientious effort should be made to educate AFL-CIO leaders on Administration programs and objectives and to win their support on selected issues. Trade issues, national defense and foreign policy issues are likely prospects for agreement.

7. Key figures in the Administration should seize the initiative in reaching out to the AFL-CIO leaders for advise and consultations. Such behavior is not expected of a Republican Administration and will serve to throw everyone off balance. Basically, the Administration should be perceived by the media and by the member unions of the AFL-CIO as trying diligently to build a working relationship with the AFL-CIO. If it fails, they must take the blame.
8. In developing some form of relationship with Kirkland and Donohue, the Administration must be cautious about strengthening them in their positions. While we should work with them, we do not want to bestow any new power on them. We must be able also be sensitive to the needs of the Teamsters who will be most unhappy if the Administration does not share its visible labor relationship with them.

WORKING WITH NATIONAL LABOR LEADERS

In trying to expand the group of labor unions supporting the President, our first priority must be to see that our friends (those four unions who supported the President) are treated well and that their good treatment is communicated to the rest of the labor community. Taking care of your friends is a well-established concept among labor politicians, and most are currently watching to see if the Teamsters, MEBA, the Professional Air Traffic Controllers and the National Maritime Union receive special treatment from the Administration. If other labor leaders see it is worthwhile to align with the Administration they will begin to follow suit.

A second priority must be to clearly send the message that the Administration wants to communicate with the leaders of organized labor, that we want to work with them and that we want their political support. In these early days, the Administration should also send a clear message that we don't believe communication is facilitated by street marches, shouting matches and inflammatory rhetoric.

A third priority is to identify "targets of opportunity" in the labor movement. Certain unions and their leaders are more susceptible to President Reagan and Republican philosophies and they should be singled out for cultivation and special treatment. The maritime unions, transportation unions and the building and construction unions appear a logical starting point.

In trying to expand our group of labor supporters, the following recommendations are offered:

1. Cabinet members and key Administration officials should be open and accessible to labor union leaders. No one should feel they are not being heard or consulted.
2. Key Administration figures need to make some symbolic outreach gestures to convey the message that we seek labor input and support. Speeches at union conventions, visits to union headquarters, and taking the initiative to reach out to labor leaders will not go unnoticed. Cabinet members should try to develop a personal relationship with those union presidents directly impacted by their Departments or Agencies and mechanisms should be established for regular communication.

3. National labor leaders should regularly be included on invitation lists for White House social events, important news events, bill-signing ceremonies, and high-level briefings. These officials should also be appointed to boards, commissions and advisory bodies. Special attention must first be devoted to our supporters and more friendly union leaders. Those who are inclined to excessive negative rhetoric and those who are publicly fighting the Administration should receive little or no attention.
4. While it is important to establish good communications and to practice all of the normal stroking operations available to the White House, the Administration must be prepared to "deliver" on substantive issues that concern individual unions. Establishing friendly relations with a union leader will normally not be enough to sustain a relationship. Eventually, we must be prepared to negotiate or make concessions on policy if we are to achieve continued support.
5. Special emphasis should be given throughout the Administration to keeping selected union leaders aware of possible policy changes affecting their union membership. None of them like surprises and advance consultation can often blunt criticism and sometimes win support. The transfer of the Maritime Administration from the Commerce Department to DOT is a case in point. Upon learning of the proposal, the maritime unions were initially opposed. Given some time and adequate discussion about the ramifications of such a move, the unions are now accepting and supportive of such a move.
6. The White House should develop a device for regular high level consultations with selected groups of national union leaders. This will assure them of having input into the White House on a regular basis and can serve to blunt any criticism that we aren't consulting with them.


7. The Republican National Committee needs to begin reaching out to the leaders of organized labor and should begin serving as a focal point for bringing together labor leaders and Congressional Republicans to listen to each other. The Chairman of the RNC can make some symbolic speeches, appoint a Special Assistant to "communicate" with labor and can begin to serve as a contact point for labor leaders' political concerns and requests.
8. The White House Legislative Liaison Office should develop a relationship with the political legislative operatives of some of the unions with strong political operations so that issue-by-issue coalitions can be developed to assist the Administration in achieving its legislative objectives. These political operatives are key players in the structure of a national union and continued contact can eventually develop into long-term relationships.
9. The Administration must try to reach beyond the Washington labor establishment and begin to work with labor union leaders who do not have a strong Washington presence. These unions could be more responsive to Administration overtures and tend to be more susceptible to the traditional stroking operations.
10. A special effort should be made to work with unions on an industry-by-industry basis, bringing together labor and management leaders to work on problems unique to their industry. Such a system provides an opportunity to avoid the AFL-CIO framework, develop better labor/management relationships, and lends itself to developing industry coalitions to support Administration policies.

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

April 16, 1981

TO: Ed Thomas
FM: Bob Bonitati 
RE: Catching Up With Policy Developments

I thought I would follow up on the conversation we had yesterday concerning the difficulties I've had learning about Administration policies under development that impact organized labor.

I've had several experiences now where I have learned about proposed Administration policy initiatives from sources outside the White House -- usually a labor leader.

It would be very helpful if we had an "early warning" system of some sort so we could be better prepared to build support for Administration programs and policies and/or to minimize possible criticism.

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

April 13, 1981

TO: Rich Williamson
FM: Bob Bonitati *B*
RE: Local Labor Support for the President

As part of our program of showing support for the President's economic program, we would like to be able to have two or three delegations of rank and file union members (and/or leaders) who would visit with the President or Vice President to tell them of their support for the economic renewal program.

The visits should appear to have arisen from grassroots sentiment amongst working people who believe the President is doing the right thing for the country. It should not appear as though any of these people were recruited to visit the White House, as such an event could easily backfire.

It occurred to me that some of the Governors who have good relations with labor in their states might be used to make such arrangements.

Please advise on the feasibility of such a program.

cc: Elizabeth Dole
Paul Russo

5. Many union leaders have expressed covert support for the President and several have indicated a desire to develop a friendly relationship with the Administration. At this point, they are reluctant to publicly voice their support because of the negative signals emanating from AFL-CIO Headquarters and their fear that the Reagan economic plan may turn out to be a failure.
6. Symbolism is very important in the labor movement. Positive moves by the Administration in terms of public posture and public relations always have great impact on the total labor community. Reasonable appointments to the NLRB, labor leaders being included in visible new events, labor leaders conferring with the President, Administration officials "reaching out" to labor are always interpreted positively.
7. The leadership of the labor movement starts out with very low expectations of a Republican/Reagan Administration. They don't expect to be consulted, they don't expect to be "included", so whatever positive steps we take will have disproportionate impact.
8. Union leaders are accustomed to dealing on a quid pro quo basis. If the Administration does something for a union, they will fully expect to be called upon to reciprocate.
9. In previous Administration, relations with organized labor were usually channelled through the AFL-CIO and the Washington labor establishment. The labor establishment consists of about 25 unions of varying sizes that have high visibility in terms of political, lobbying and public relations activities. Few efforts were made to reach out to labor organizations which didn't have a Washington presence to deal with state and local officials.

10. All labor leaders are politicians within their own union. They have to stand for reelection and tend to be receptive to the usual activities that enhance their elected positions with their members. All of them love to portray themselves as being important enough (in the eyes of their members) to be consulted by the White House, invited by the White House and appointed to key advisory commissions, boards, etc.
11. Like all politicians, labor leaders don't like surprises. If a policy affecting them, their industry or their members is announced and they are caught off guard, the reaction is likely to be negative. Even if the policy pronouncement might adversely affect their members, being forewarned of such an announcement can help to soften the blow and makes the union leader appear to his membership to be more knowledgeable about what's going on in Washington.
12. Most unions do not have very extensive research or policy analysis units within their organizations. They are frequently not well equipped to analyze issues and will follow the lead provided by either the AFL-CIO, another union in their industry, or the management position in their industry if the issue directly affects their industry.


MEMORANDUM


THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

March 12, 1981

TO: Elizabeth Dole

VIA: Red Cavaney/Jack Burgess 

FROM: Bob Bonitati 

SUBJECT: SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES FOR THE NEXT 30 DAYS

I would suggest that your limited schedule during the next month be used to fulfill four basic objectives:

1. To acquaint Cabinet members and White House Senior Staff with the need to "work with" the labor sector.
2. To develop a basic strategy for dealing with organized labor and setting basic objectives for the next 6 to 12 months.
3. To take some symbolic actions which will communicate to the labor world that the Reagan Administration wants to be open and accessible to organized labor and more importantly that we want to work with them.
4. To solder our relationship with our campaign supporters and friendly unions.

In an attempt to fulfill some of these objectives, I would suggest the following activities:

1. Accept the Teamsters invitation to lunch at their headquarters (see attached).
2. Once you have had lunch with the Teamsters, initiate a call to Lane Kirkland indicating you would like to visit the AFL-CIO offices and meet some of his key people. Spend some time at "labor central" shaking hands and touring the facilities. (This event and the Teamsters event are a bit unprecedented and ought to send a clear message that we are reaching out to organized labor.)

3. Arrange courtsey calls with the Secretary of Transportation and the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development. Both of these Departments are critical to labor unions and we will have to be dealing with them on an extensive and continuing basis (i.e., the issue of auto import restrictions).
4. Call Jesse Calhoon (President of the Marine Engineers Beneficial Association MEBAP) to ask him if he would like a White House briefing on the President's Economic Renewal Program for his key leadership and his affiliates. Jesse has five smaller unions affiliated with MEBA.
5. If the President agrees to speak to the AFL-CIO Building and Trades Conference on March 30, you should communicate that message to Bob Georgine.
6. Initiate a call to Secretary Donovan suggesting that we need to develop a "game plan" for working with and "wooing" organized labor. I have already talked with him on a preliminary basis about such a strategy.
7. Sometime in early April, it would be useful to conduct a "mini seminar" for key White House and Administration staff to educate them on how organized labor operates, who the players are, what to expect, and where our opportunities lie. This might be a joint venture with Lyn Nofziger. It is clear to me that many of the key players in the Administration need a cram course in dealing with labor.
8. Hold an informal mid morning get acquainted coffee with selected labor leaders to introduce them to several cabinet members (like Donovan, Lewis and Pierce) or top White House personnel such as Stockman, Meese and Baker.

I will be pleased to work out the details of these suggestions if you want to proceed with any or all of them.