

March 1992

Mr. President - Dear George:

Impressions/reflections of a friend:

1. Impression/reflection: With all sorts of unfriendly and non-supportive critics freely talking about - to - at you, no virtue, value, friendly support or assistance offered is manifested by my being silent. Hopefully these reflected impressions provide another viewpoint to and of the President. They are offered free of request or requirement for response.

2. Impression/reflection: Images (yours) and Issues are not in sync. The character and integrity of George Bush are blurred in the media, i.e. the distorted impression of your "being concerned only with the rich and not the poor and homeless". The present projection process of your image and message is failing transmission amid the confusion and domestic distress across the country. Your public relations and communication staff could be partially responsible. Both Presidential image and message need clarification and more "how to" specifics.

3. Impression/reflection: The "winds of change" are being reacted to (rather than responded to) by presidential staff and campaign advisers like a whirling "weather vane", turning in every direction rather than setting and holding a steady course toward gathering and steering bipartisan and independent ability into a process of solving economic and social problems.

4. Impression/reflection: The President believes he has set the course to improve life in the nation (and beyond) for all people, and the reflected impression from the White House is that the chief, if not only, obstacle to progress along the course is an obstructionist Congress. There must be more imaginative ways of overcoming the stalemate than waiting on new elections.

5. Impression/reflection: The people are looking to (for) a Presidential lead that rises above the petty partisan debate about "the most caring" and calls the Parties in Congress and other public and private sector leadership to cooperative effort (under TV coverage) to define and work out solutions for the life threatening problems plaguing the Nation.

6. Impression/reflection: The efforts of opponents to reduce the image of the one in the role of a "leading President" to that of a "partisan politician" is only offset by the President being seen more in Washington "leading" and less traveling - where he is too often perceived as attempting to "defend his turf" at the country's expense. A President observed in frequent and regular consultation with the combined Congressional leadership of both Parties, and providing specific leads to the branches and agencies of Government that better serve the American people, with a minimum of travel, can have a winning advantage over all other candidates.

7. Impression/reflection: The President is becoming so absorbed and wearied by the pressure of campaign demands and public criticism that his schedule is omitting adequate time for consideration, conversation and imagination stimulation concerning fresh ideas, varied approaches and new ventures and adventures for himself and the Country - which both need. Campaign and governmental systems (which you didn't invent) are too complicated and burdensome, producing more difficulties than accomplishments. A new style of campaigning and course of Presidential action is needed now. Improves those systems and you win more easily.

8. Impression/reflection: A need for a weekend "retreat" to Camp David as soon as possible with no more than seven savvy congenial persons, with whom the President could review ideas, test plans, consider varied strategies. At least one other woman and Barbara need to be included. No staff, Party, or political advisors types, no "ax-grinders", advocates or activists, no "social climbers" or practicing lawyers should be present. Respected successful effective influential business and communicator types with more national than personal interest are needed. Results of such a consultation for the better part of two days might well provide a refreshing, renewing, relaxing, clarifying experience for the President. (names suggested upon request)

9. Impression/reflection: Ideas that might develop in such a "retreat": Some actions that might be immediately initiated by the President to ease more effectively some of the more obvious and oppressive human needs. Surely there are some immediate beneficial actions possible.

10. Impression/reflection: Clearer and more specific proposals need stating by the President that news conferences become more the President's menu of announcing the leads and advances and less inquisitions by the press. Possible responses might include: "I can't talk to you about prayer in public schools right now. The needs of the unemployed and homeless and reducing the national debt are demanding attention." Or concerning the "National Arts Foundation controversy", "You know that at present with the National Debt so crippling, the Foundation for the Arts for awhile may have to depend totally upon the private sector." The idea is not to get snared or smeared by issues with lower priorities that can wait. The "one issue self interest groups" are sapping and short-circuiting the national strength.

11. Impression/reflection: Some ideas for consideration, perhaps immediately useful: (a) a "fire side chat" broadcast to explain the benefits of lower taxes on "capital gains to the many people with annuities other than the very wealthy, many seemingly ignored by Congress. (b) A fresh Presidential lead calling the Congress into public view (C Span, etc.) to join in a cooperative negotiation with the Administration to simplify the whole taxing system to be fairer and more easily understood by all effected. Surely it requests no more of our public servants than is being asked of the Israelis and Palestinians negotiating in a peace conference. (c) Act to release highway construction funds to the several States for a period of time without requiring matching funds.

POST SCRIPT 1:

Presumptuous, pretentious, preposterous, intrusive, irritating - all such I want to avoid being, or even appearing. The hope in the foregoing reflections is to share some impressions that might attract consideraation or stimulate imagination. The intention in not to offer advice. To presume that you need advice could be irritating. Additional sources of irritation you clearly don't need. While through my Arkansas origin and connections I've known and liked Bill Clinton a number of years, to you both as President and friend my confidence and support is committed.

page 4. Pres 3/6/92

POST SCRIPT 2:

Terry Waite is to be in this country March 16th-20th, for an interview with Barbara Walters - I assume for a showing on ABC 20/20. Should you wish to speak to him, I know he would happily respond.

POST SCRIPT 3:

At the time of Terry Waite's release, when I phoned at his request to inform you, as we were ending the conversation you told me of some expression of harsh criticism you had been informed had come from the Presiding Bishop. Distressed by that report, I made a point during a recent dinner meeting with Ed Browning in New York to ask what he knew of the incident. He in turn was distressed, saying that he could recall no comments he had made that he felt could be interpreted as snide criticism. He assured me that he had certainly not intended such.

He did recall a copy of a cartoon which was uncomplimentary, reportedly or apparently printed in the Church's national paper, which Jim Baker had given to him. Although having no direct control over the editorial and publishing process of that paper, he reported to me that he had taken the cartoon to the editor of the paper, telling him how out of line and unhelpful it was. He was genuinely sorry to hear you were distressed.

POST SCRIPT 4:

You and Barbara and all the family continue in my prayers.
Grace and Peace

Faithfully,

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

March 13 92

Dear Jack,

I'm flying now to Camp David after another hectic week - this one in Washington except for today's trip to Michigan.

At CD I will think about the many points raised in your letter.

Reputably in this highly partisan election year there is ~~no~~ way to avoid a battle with Congress. I have held out my hand only to have it snubbed by the most partisan leadership I've ever seen in my many years in public life - I will keep trying.

I will not reply to each
coherent point you make.
I will simply say that
your letter, from the heart,
is most welcome.

I have gotten quite
tired - so has Barbara.
We are very lucky to have
Camp David and the
48 hours there that lie
ahead.

My special thanks;
and, oh yes, give Mother
a big hug from this son
who loves her so much -

Ag