

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

June 1, 1971

MEMORANDUM FOR BOB HALDEMAN

FROM THE PRESIDENT



I want a report on the operation of our mail office. As we get near the campaign period it will become increasingly important to see that we handle mail well and, clearly apart from that, from a personal standpoint, as you know, I have strong feelings with regard to keeping the standard of our mail at a high level.

What I would be interested in would be a comparison of our operation with that during the Johnson-Kennedy period. Are we giving as much personalized attention to mail as was the case then? In addition, I want to be sure that letters are read carefully to pick out any personal items like requests for pictures, etc., and are responsive. Where the letter offers an opportunity for a public response we should not miss that situation. I know there are many instances where our letters do receive local publicity. I just want to be sure that we are getting the maximum out of this possibility and that we concentrate even more effort in this direction in the months ahead.

I think the greatest deficiency is in having mail read for the purpose of getting out some nuggets which I can use from time to time in my informal remarks or even in speeches as I did at West Point. Ray's weekly mail sample is a very good step in the right direction as far as that goal is concerned. I would like to have one individual assigned to that who has high sensitivity and who will read mail with the idea in mind that I might use it for anecdote purposes.

I cannot emphasize too strongly the need for more anecdote material. Every speech that I make and on every occasion where I make informal remarks, the only thing that really has impact on an audience is an anecdote unless there is a real "grabber" as far as the line is concerned, or unless some major new program is announced. As far as the latter two possibilities are concerned, they are few and far between as we have learned from experience. Mail can provide more opportunities for anecdotes

than we have realized. In every instance it may not be necessary to refer to a letter. The letter may trigger the kind of mental process which will develop the anecdote. The major need is for one individual who knows that I consider this important and who tries to dig up material which can be used in appropriate occasions. I think, incidentally, that we have the same need as far as the overall responsibility for answering mail is concerned. If the individual in charge of the office knows that he is personally responsible to me we may get a better individual and also a better performance. I think the problem is that too often this falls between the stools because responsibilities are fragmented; no one really considers it too important; and in most cases as far as, for example, Ray's office is concerned, it is a secondary responsibility rather than a primary responsibility.

I am referring in this memo not to the personal mail which Rose handles to which she, of course, gives high priority attention, but to the general mail which does not come to her attention.

I would like to discuss this with you after you have had a chance to check the operation and prepare a report for me.