

The original documents are located in Box 29, folder “Input - Bill Carruthers” of the Michael Raoul-Duval Papers at the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.

Copyright Notice

The copyright law of the United States (Title 17, United States Code) governs the making of photocopies or other reproductions of copyrighted material. Michael Raoul-Duval donated to the United States of America his copyrights in all of his unpublished writings in National Archives collections. Works prepared by U.S. Government employees as part of their official duties are in the public domain. The copyrights to materials written by other individuals or organizations are presumed to remain with them. If you think any of the information displayed in the PDF is subject to a valid copyright claim, please contact the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

October 18, 1976



MEMORANDUM FOR:

BILL CARRUTHERS

FROM:

DORRANCE SMITH *DS*

SUBJECT:

Presidential Preparation for Debate
#4

It is critical that the briefing materials which the President reads be prepared in such a manner that the net result be that he has a selected few points, carefully worded, that he uses in more than one answer for the purpose of pushing forth those themes and ideas which we want to express to the American people. He should be visionary in a manner that relates to the common family man. Secondly, he should leave an impression that Governor Carter is a man of dubious experience, with a shaky public record--a man whose characteristics in the past weeks have left great doubts and insecurities in the minds of the American people as to who he really is, and what he really stands for.

We must increase this sense of doubt and insecurity that the American feel toward Jimmy Carter. It is not adequate that the President do this in his summation. He must make these points in the body of the debate and use his summation to pull the thematic thrust together.

Carter was adept at pushing across the same themes in different answers during the first two debates. One thing Carter does effectively is to act as a spokesman for the common person in his answers. The President's response to this approach has been defensive--he resorts into defending his programs and his Administration. We should not let Carter act as the spokesman and put us on the defensive.

Debate #1 and #2 illustrate a number of the differences in style between the two candidates.

Debate #1 - The Carter Approach

Basically he sticks to his old themes. He's very predictable. In speaking for the American people he uses "our people" seven different times in Debate #1. Six times he alludes to the current lack of leadership. Five times he distinguishes himself from the rich. Three times he talks about the bureaucratic mess and then falls into his "economical, simple, efficient, purposeful, and manageable." Sprinkled throughout are Carter catchwords or phrases:



"heal our country"

"the ability of people to understand their own government"

"causes havoc in people's lives"

"The average American person can't do it."

"cooperating for a change, in the open for a change, so the people can understand their own government"

"I owe everything to you, the people of this country, and I believe that we can bind our wounds. I believe that we can work together, and I believe that if we can tap the tremendous untapped reservoir of innate strength in this country that we can once again have a Government as good as our people and let the world know what we still know and hope for, that we still live in the greatest and the strongest and the best country on earth."

Debate #1 - The Ford Approach

The President's basic answer to the question is to refer to programs he has initiated or suggested. He talks mainly in clinical and statistical terms. On numerous occasions the President is put on the defensive in outlining his programs and accomplishments.

Aside from the clinical and statistical style, the President has a tendency to overuse the word "we" in such a way that it separates him from the people. It becomes a "we-they" approach and it does not bring the viewer in the living room together with the President, rather it separates him. To further this, Carter always refers to "our people", and the President has a tendency to always address the people as "taxpayers" (six times). In one question follow-up sequence the President used the word "we" a total of 31 times:

THE PRESIDENT: In the last two years as I indicated before, we had a very tough time. We were faced with heavy inflation of over 12 percent. We were faced with substantial unemployment. But in the last 24 months, we have turned the economy around and we have brought inflation down to under six percent, and we have added employment of about 4 million in the last 17 months to the point where we have 88 million people working in America today, the most in the history of the country.

"The net result is we are going to have some improvement in our receipts, and I think we will have some decrease in our disbursements. We expect to have a lower deficit in fiscal year 1978.

"We feel that with this improvement in the economy, we feel with more receipts and fewer disbursements, we can, in a more moderate way, increase, and I recommended, over the next 10 years a new parks program that would cost \$1.5 billion, doubling our national park system.



"We have recommended that in the housing program, we can reduce down payments and moderate monthly payments but that doesn't cost any more as far as the Federal Treasury is concerned.

"We believe that we can do a better job in the area of crime, but that requires tougher sentencing, mandatory serving prison sentences for those who violate our criminal laws. We believe that you can revise the Federal Criminal Code, which has not been revised in a good many years. That doesn't cost any more money.

"We believe that you can do something more effectively with a moderate increase of money in the drug abuse program.

"We feel that in education, we can have a slight increase, not a major increase. It is my understanding that Governor Carter has indicated that he approved of a \$30 billion expenditure by the Federal Government as far as education is concerned.

"At the present time, we are spending roughly \$3 billion 500 million. I don't know where that money would come from.

"But, as we look at the quality of life programs--jobs, health, education, crime and recreation--we feel that as we move forward with a healthier economy, we can absorb the smallest costs that will be required."

MS DREW: Sir, in the next few years, when you try to reduce the deficit, would you spend money for these programs that you have just outlined or would you, as you said earlier, return whatever surplus you got to the people in the form of tax relief?

THE PRESIDENT: We feel that with the programs that I have recommended, the additional \$10 billion tax cut, with the moderate increases in the quality of life area, we can still have a balanced budget, which I will submit to the Congress in January of 1978. We won't wait one year or two years longer, as Governor Carter indicates.

"As the economy improves--and it is improving--our Gross National Product this year will average about 6 percent increase over last year: We will have a lower rate of inflation for the calendar year this year, something slightly under 6 percent; employment will be up, revenues will be up; we will keep the lid on some of these programs that we can hold down. And so we will have a little extra money to spend for those quality of life programs, which I think are needed and necessary.

"Now, I cannot and would not endorse the kind of programs that Governor Carter recommends. He endorses the Democratic platform, which, as I read it, calls for approximately 60 additional programs



The President's tone changes totally in his closing statement. We find new words like: "trust," "individual freedom" and "our children". His appeal is greater in his closing statement in that he incorporates people into his perspective, a tact I think we should follow in this debate.

Debate #2 - Carter Approach

Again we find Jimmy hitting old themes--He talks about hte "current secrecy" six times--again being able to separate himself from the status quo and cast insinuating remarks without substantiation. Four times he launches into the idea that "America is not respected abroad." He mentions "idealism" and "vision of the future" on four separate occasions. Three times each he talks of 1) the hurt character of the country; 2) domestic weakness; 3) current lack of leadership.

"Our country is not strong anymore. We are not respected anymore" (Page 2)

"Mr. Ford has shown a lack of leadership." (Page 3)

"I have talked to them, and I have listened, and I have seen at first hand in a very vivid way the deep hurt that has come to this country" (Page 7)

"What we were formerly so proud of--the strength of our country, its moral integrity, the representation in foreign affairs, of what our people are, what our Constitution stands for--has gone." (Page 7)

"I believe I know what this country ought to be. I have been one who has loved my nation, as many Americans, and I believe there is no limit placed on what we can be in the future, if we can harness our tremendous resources--militarily, economically, the stature of our people, the meaning of our Constitution--in the future." (Page 7)

"We are weak and the rest of the world knows it." (Page 7)

"...but my background, my experiences, my knowledge of the people of this country, my commitment to the principles that don't change--those are the best basis to correct the horrible mistakes of this Administration and restore our country to a position of leadership in the world." (Page 8)

"We are weak at home economically." (Page 14)



I. Notice the use of "our" again.

"These characteristics of our country have been endangered under Mr. Ford. We are no longer respected." (Page 19)

"And when we are weak at home, weaker than all our allies, that weakness weakens the whole free world." (Page 19)

"...but as far as strength derived from the unity without our country; as far as strength derived from the people, the Congress, the Secretary of State, the President, sharing in evaluation and carrying out of foreign policy; as far as strength derived from respect of our own allies and friends, there is assurance that we will be staunch in our commitment, that we will not deviate and we will give them adequate attention." (Page 25)

"We not only have problems at home, but we export those problems overseas. So far as respect of our own people toward our own Government, as far as participation in the shaping of concepts and commitments, as far as trust of our country, among the nations of the world, as far as dependence of our country in meeting the needs and obligations we have expressed for our allies, as far as the respect of our country, ever among our political adversaries, we are weak." (Page 25)

Closing Statement

"This election will also determine what kind of world we leave our children. Will it be a nightmare world, threatened with the proliferation of atomic bombs, not just in five major countries, but dozens of smaller countries that have been permitted to develop atomic weapons because of a failure of our top leadership to stop proliferation? Will we have a world of hunger and hatred and will we be living in an armed camp, stripped of our friendship and allies, hiding behind a tight defense that has been drawn in around us because we are fearful of the outside world?"

"We have been hurt. Our people feel that we have lost something precious."

THE FUNDAMENTAL SIMILARITY OF EACH OF THESE QUOTATIONS IS THAT THEY CAN BE USED AND WILL BE USED, REGARDLESS OF THE QUESTION.

Debate #2 - The Ford Approach

We directed our answers at trying to answer the specific question posed.

Conclusion

The success of the Carter campaign depends on their ability to convince the American people that they are hurt and uncared for, that the country

is weak and unrespected as a result. The success of our campaign will depend on our ability to articulate our strength and optimism, and to further point out the damage done to this country by a man who must depend on it for his own self-interest. Statistics, programs, and proposals will not matter from this point forward. Rather it is incumbent upon to set forth a view of the future based on the President's leadership of the last two years. Our approach must be thematic and continuously repeated throughout the body of the debate regardless of the question.

In the past few weeks I have run into a great many people with this common voice. The thought of Jimmy Carter as President is frightening and unconscionable, but nobody is saying this. Not only is it time for us to become frightened of this prospect, it is time for us to articulate this.

cc: Dick Cheney
Dave Gergen
Mike Duval ✓



THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

October 13, 1976



MEMORANDUM FOR:

MIKE DUVAL

FROM:

BILL CARRUTHERS
DORRANCE SMITH

With regard to the President's performance during the second debate, we have the following comments:

1. It was painfully apparent that the President was preoccupied with the use of his camera to the extent that it may have interfered with his train of thought. I will, however, reserve my final verdict on this matter until I have had an opportunity to talk to the President.
2. Throughout the entire debate the President appeared stiff and very grim. He was not nearly as fluid physically as he was during the first debate.
3. I think that the lack of preparation time was also a major factor in the President's performance in San Francisco. The President is completely squared away on the physical and technical aspects of the debate arena so further rehearsals with regard to those aspects are not necessary. However I do feel that the Q & A sessions with electronic review are most valuable to the President and to those preparing his materials. I urge strongly that we reinstate these sessions as soon as we can in preparation for the final debate.
4. I realize that it is most difficult to relate foreign policy and defense matters so that the average viewer can understand them but, I feel that it is important that the President's briefing materials reflect programs and policies that the common man can understand. The President's answers are overcomplex due to a heavy ingredient of facts and figures. We need to provide him with simple and direct themes that can be easily delivered and easily understood.

September 9, 1976

MEMORANDUM FOR: BILL CARRUTHERS
FROM: MIKE DUVAL
SUBJECT: DEBATES

Mike

Bill, I think we should stay away from the design that Jim Karayn has suggested for the set. I don't like the idea of that curving wall which is lowered on the Carter side and slightly higher on the Ford side, permitting both men to appear to be standing at equal heights. The fact is that the President is taller than Carter, and we should do nothing by way of set design to minimize that fact.

Additionally, Terry O'Donnell makes the point that the President is not comfortable standing alone in front of a standup mike. He's much better with some sort of an airport stand or a small podium. You may want to keep this in mind as you negotiate with Jack and Jim concerning set design.



THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

September 20, 1976



MEMORANDUM FOR:

MIKE DUVAL

FROM:

BILL CARRUTHERS

There are several items that must be attended to prior to leaving for Philadelphia regarding the first debate. They are as follows:

hit theater 345

Mr Ford not going

1. We must schedule an audio-visual check for the President in the theater substantially prior to 9:30 p.m., Thursday, September 23. Duration of this event in the theater should not exceed 15 minutes. The President should be wearing the exact wardrobe he will wear for the event.
 - a. ~~absolutely~~ recommend that there be no press coverage during this check.
2. We must determine whether there will be a photo opportunity with both candidates prior to air time. No. *After*
3. It is requested that the President meet the League officials. I would suggest that this be accomplished following the debate. (*AFTER*)
4. The audience will be admitted at 8:30 p.m. Doors will close at 9:10 p.m. *good.*
5. The President's dressing rooms, if needed, are designated as Rooms 1-C and 1-D directly behind the stage. The Carter dressing room will be adjacent to the President's dressing rooms and has been designated as the Helen Hayes Suite. Frank Ursomarso is making all other arrangements for the staff in the theater. Please be advised that we will be limited to 20 backstage passes.



6. In my opinion, the President's arrival time for the actual debate should be just prior to 9:30 p.m.

7. There will be a coin toss on stage Wednesday at noon to determine which of the candidates will receive the first question. The result of the coin toss will determine the following:

- a. The candidate who wins the toss will receive the first question and the first position for closing remarks on Debate Number One.
- b. The winning candidate would then receive the second question and the closing summation for Debate Number 4.
- c. A second coin toss will determine these elements just prior to the second debate.

No press coverage

8. We must determine how and when the President will exit the stage at the conclusion of the debate. The League has suggested that Ed Newman, the moderator, would proceed to the candidates on the stage and shake hands with them. I would suggest that prior to that the President shake hands with Mr. Carter. Please be advised that the President will be attached to a microphone cable which will be coiled at the base of his podium.

9. The League has agreed that there will be three unilateral mini-cams in the theater lobby prior to the debate. There will, of course, be attendant correspondents with these cameras.

10. We have asked that WOCA provide a cassette recording capability at the President's temporary residence in Philadelphia so that he can review the debate if he wants.

11. The League has agreed that there will be four non-motorized still cameras on tripods at the extreme left and right sides of the balcony.

12. Independent and network radio facilities will be set up in the projection booth behind the audience area in the balcony.

OK



- OK
13. Frank Ursomarso has arranged for TV receivers in the President's dressing room and in the White House staff room. I will also request direct pool feeds for both of these locations.
 14. The network pool has requested a stand-in for the President all day Wednesday and Thursday, and we will ~~OK~~ provide that stand-in through Joe Carlin, the theater manager.
 15. If it is determined that the President should wear makeup, it should be applied prior to his camera check, ~~OK~~ removed and reapplied prior to his arriving at the theater. I assume this could take place at the President's temporary residence in Philadelphia.
 16. ~~NO~~ I have recommended to Dr. Lukash that the President's liquid intake be kept to a minimum during the hours prior to the debate.



It has been agreed that each of the candidates should receive an equal amount of questions. Should the program timing prevent equal opportunity for both candidates with regard to the full question and answer sequence, the moderator will indicate a change in format to the candidates in order to provide for the program to get off the air within the allotted time. If this should occur and I believe that it is highly likely, I would like to respond to the League with regard to dropping either the rebuttal element or the follow-up question. This is something that we should discuss.

cc: Dick Cheney



Debate Format
Thursday, September 23, 1976
9:30 P.M. E.D.T.

9:30 00	Individual network introductions
9:31 00	Edwin Newman opening remarks, debate rules, introduction of candidates, and introduction of journalists
9:32 30	First question (Questions and answers continue until 10:49 30)
10:49 30	Edwin Newman indicates that each of the candidates will have a closing statement not to exceed ? four minutes
10:49 45	First closing statement
10:53 45	Second closing summation
10:57 45	Ed Newman close
10:58 45	Program concludes



THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

August 30, 1976

MEMORANDUM FOR: MIKE DUVAL
FROM: BILL CARRUTHERS
SUBJECT: Debates

The 1976 Presidential debates comprise a most important issue of our short campaign. The negotiation of the various aspects of the debates in retrospect will be more important than the debates themselves as they will establish the groundrules, physical parameters and theatrics. As a result of this conclusion and based on last Wednesday's meeting, I would like to make the following points:

1. It is important to note that the Nixon-Kennedy debates were based on three individual and different formats. It is also important to realize that while Nixon won the debates on points, Kennedy won them on popularity and the subsequent election. The public will perceive the debates as a "beauty contest" and we must acknowledge that they, the public, have a short memory for substantive issues.
2. I think it is important to consider whether the President of the United States should be put in a situation where he is required to respond to questions off-the-cuff.
3. As I understand the proposed debate format, it appears to me to be more a joint press conference as opposed to a two-man dialogue on the issues that face the voting public.
4. From the McCarthy and Maddox quarters, it would appear that the League of Women Voters have contrived an evasion of the equal time rule.
5. I understand that it has been proposed that a panel of three members of the press plus a moderator will ask the questions of the President and Mr. Carter. Once again we fall into the trap of allowing the press to



become the arbitrator of what's in the national interest. Why should a third party influence the content and subject matter of these debates? As a result, we will find ourselves in a three way dialogue between the President, Carter, and the press with the press outnumbering the candidates. I recommend that you consider a single moderator for each debate who functions primarily as a mechanic controlling the format and insuring that the debaters adhere to the groundrules. The subject topic and subtopics can be agreed upon by representatives of both sides and provided to the moderator. A format can then be constructed that will provide for a debate as opposed to a joint press conference.

6. I realize, of course, the legal requirement of providing an audience, but it it, in my opinion, one of the most sensitive and potentially dangerous aspects of the debates. If there is any way we can preclude the appearance of an audience, we should do it. All of the debates should take place in Washington. I see no advantage to us in travelling to various neutral sites to stage the debates.
7. Regardless of the venue of the debates, they should be "produced" in a theatrical atmosphere, not in an hotel or in some other similar situation that smacks of a convention of cosmetic salesmen.

cc: Dick Cheney
Dave Gergen



August 30, 1976

MEMORANDUM FOR:

DAVE GERGEN

FROM:

BILL CARRUTHERS

SUBJECT:

Debates



I realize, of course, that we may be pre-mature in predicting the conditions that currently surround the negotiations on the debates. I mentioned to you in an earlier memo today, that I feel strongly that the debates could very well be lost at the negotiation stage. If my instincts, and I sense yours, are correct, I suggest the following:

1) That a statement be prepared for Dean Burch to deliver at the outset of the negotiations Wednesday morning. The substance of that statement should go something like this.

Gentlemen,

We are most appreciative of your suggestions with regard to the key points surrounding the 1976 Presidential Debates and we have carried the recommendations of both the League and of Mr. Carter's designees to the President. I'm sure you understand the sensitivity of Presidential involvement in a nationally televised debate and I am sure you will concur that the President has a responsibility to the American public that only he can perceive. The President cannot be expected to talk to the American people on someone else's ground rules. Therefore, there are certain non-negotiable points

a.) The President considers any time frame of less than 90 minutes for each debate is inappropriate in the sense that it will not allow he and Mr. Carter to fully discuss their points of view on any of the specific issues.

b.) The President will only entertain a format which contains a clearly drawn and specific issue, such as National Defense, Foreign Policy, and Economic Issues as they pertain to the Domestic Outlook.

c.) The President will consider a format which clearly isolates the issue, agreed upon areas of questioning, and a predetermined time for open rebuttal between he and Mr. Carter.

When appropriate, either Mr. Burch or Mr. Ruckelshaus to the assemblage that the President does not regard the Kennedy-Nixon debates relevant to any discussions to be held in the preparation for these debates. It would be important for either member of our team to indicate to both the League and Mr. Carter's designees, that never before in the history of our country has a President been involved in a political debate.

At some point, perhaps at the conclusion of the President's non-negotiable points, it should be stated that if Mr. Carter has a real feel for the Presidency, he would be sensitive to these requirements.

(Note: While we have discussed over and over again during the past few days the pluses and minuses of rehearsing the debates, I have resolved it in my own mind that the President must do whatever he feels is necessary to prepare himself for the debates.)

