

12 January 1969

MEMORANDUM TO THE PRESIDENT-ELECT

From: Price

Subj: Inaugural

Sections

1. A guide to the enclosures.
2. Thoughts about the occasion.
3. Why the Theme of community.
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1. A guide to the enclosures:

These include two drafts, slugged Draft 2 and Draft 3.

(You already have an earlier draft, slugged Draft 1b).

They also include an additional set of Supplementary

Notes, and a partial collection of quotes from old speeches.

Of this material, the principal item to be read is Draft 3. The rest is back-up, in case you're fishing for additional ideas, themes, language, etc.

Draft 3 works. Whatever other bases ought to be touched, whatever substantive changes it needs, the structure and the rythm flow. I like it. Draft 2 doesn't work. It was an attempt to develop a theme. The theme could be a good one, but it would need better formulation; and as a prospective speech draft, this has some fairly conspicuous missing elements. But it does have the spark of a unifying, thematic idea, and it does have some occasional bits of good language.

-more-

Draft 3 borrows some pieces from Drafts 1b and 2; it also borrows a couple of Safire lines and the Buchanan quote from FDR.

The Spplimentary Notes are the usual left-over scraps.

The collection of lines from previous speeches is only a beginning (and they're still in my own original rough-typed form). The number after each is a page-number reference from Nixon Speaks Out. I was looking, not for the often-used lines, but for the little-used or little-noted ones that would be less likely to be recognized (more about this in the notes that follow), and that might fit an inaugural.

2. Thoughts about the occasion.

a. The great speeches are those that sieze a moment, that meet a crisis, that catch a mood. In the Battle of Britain, Churchill rallied a people to dare death and defy the Nazi juggernaut. In the despair of the Great Depression, FDR electrified a nation with a crisp, clear voice of confidence hope. In 1960, to a restless nation JFK offered a promise of action, challenge, greatness -- and grace.

The mood today is like none of those, and neither is the crisis comparable. The people are waiting, wondering, disillusioned with easy promises, surfeited with expansive rhetoric, unhappy with the old and skeptical of the new -- all gnawingly aware of a deep sickness in the society,

but most of them also fiercely, jealously protective of the good that they know is there too; apprehensive about the future; hoping for hope, but wanting more than empty hope.

It's not a time for the hard sell. If anything, I think cautious understatement will catch fire better than extravagant overstatement (see Lippmann column, enclosed, from the current Newsweek); and I think diagnosis can be as important as prescription. We've been enduring a crisis of confidence -- in our leaders, in ourselves as a society -- and nothing, at this point, would do more to restore confidence than to have the audience sit up and say, "That's it! That]s the trouble. He understands."

In terms of history, use of the Inaugural to diagnose the crisis can nail this date to the calendar as a turning-
p point; and it can ~~be~~ provide for future generation the frame of reference that makes the memorable phrases more than mere eloquent arrangements of words. It can match them to the ~~the~~ moment. Apart from that "darkest hour" in Britain's history, "blood, toil, tears and sweat" would be a dismal jumble; apart from the bitter agonies of civil war, "with malice toward none, with charity for all" would be little more than a Sunday sermon. [Note: I drafted the preceding paragraphs in a fit of logical clarity while in the process of trying to pull Draft 2 together. Having now seen the faults of Draft 2 and the virtues of Draft 3 in juxtaposition, I'm less sure of my reasoning -- though one of the reasons Draft 3 works,

I think, is that even in foreshortened form, it does feature the diagnostic element.]

b. I see this ~~is~~ an occasion for a relatively low-key inaugural, leaning more toward simple eloquence than grandiloquent, aimed ~~at~~ at calming passions rather than firing them.

c. However, this occasion is the supreme ceremonial rite of the democratic ~~process~~ process, and thus, even if simple, the rhetoric should still have a studied eloquence.

d. It should have a large dollop of philosophy -- and, in terms of its durability, it should capsule at least a part of this in memorable, epigrammatic lines, and drop in a few phrases that either put an idea in new perspective or provide a new insight.

e. It should touch the chords of faith -- faith in God, faith in man, faith in America, faith in the future; faith that the ills man got us into, man can lead us out of.

f. Within the ~~the~~ theme of "forward together," the address should not only summon us together, but suggest ways that we can come together.

3. Why the theme of community:

This section rambles a bit; it's not necessary to read.

One of the reasons this Inaugural presents so many problems of construction, of course, is that there are so many ways

*But history of
growing up
history - religion
90 years ago - religion
Indian
I know no
easy answers
it's obvious
(Please will
come
because
w/ unity)
at a time
when faith is
I believe in
this country*

to skin this particular cat. There are so many possible themes, and so many variations on the theme.

But the more I roll them around, the more I ponder the particular crisis of the spirit America is caught up in today, the more it seems to come down to one thing: community.

Examples, briefly:

- a. Race (becoming one community)
- b. Environment (of the community)
- c. Participation (the framework of community)
- d. Peace (building a world community)
- e. Bring us together (as a community)
- f. Safety (the function of community)
- g. Government (the framework of community)
- h. Lower our voices (behave as a community)

...and so on.

In pursuit of the Great Society, the American community has fallen apart.

We're faced with a crisis of discontinuity -- between the generations, the races, the old religions and the new morality, the old restraints and the new hedonism, the old linear structures and the new, non-linear patterns of perception and learning.

All these have had their impact on our sense of community, and on the solidity of the structures that hold it together.

It's been cracking up.

We find ourselves talking in different languages -- and

I think anything is possible -- not a defeat of hope -- not a play of hope -- consult our dream

this is one of the reasons people are shouting so loudly.

One of the essentials of community is a set of commonly-agreed-upon standards of public behavior. We don't have these any more. Permissiveness has been carried to the ridiculous extreme of condoning riot in the name of free expression. [I wonder, incidentally, if the old liberalism isn't enduring its final convulsions in today's turmoil on the campuses -- the old liberalism within which the outs could do no wrong, and the ins could do no right, within which "reform" was virtuous and the "status quo" evil -- and now on the campus, in ~~the~~ the classic pattern, the revolution is devouring its children -- or perhaps, in this case, being devoured by its children.]

In the passion for Instant Everything, we're losing the disciplines needed to produce anything.

In one way or another, practically all the aspects of our turmoil, division, distrust, of our difficulties in coming to terms with the new technology, with the pace of change, even -- and especially -- the conundra we face abroad, are aspects of the strains on our sense of community. Race troubles, transportation, the environment, urban congestion, youth, rebellion, strikes, the shrillness of public discourse, wars and threats of war -- people haven't learned to live together in a mid-twentieth century setting, and each new advance -- whether technological or social -- creates a new set of strains.

If we're to be brought together, we've got to re-establish a sense of community. We've got to build a new structure of values, standards, restraints, incentives -- and find the spiritual cement that can hold this structure together.

I've been playing around these past couple of months, with a theory that many of the ~~worst~~ worst of our civil disorders, including crime, riot, and youthful rebellion, are rooted in an increasingly desperate (though often unrecognized and unconscious) yearning for structure; that those who have cast off its disciplines and denied its relevance are angriest precisely because they've no longer got it to hang on to. The concept is a complex one, centered in part on a hunch that our present crisis has a great deal to do with our being in a transitional stage in our dominant patterns of perception; that there are increasing numbers today whose dominant information-processing patterns are non-linear, and who are simply unable to comprehend the old structures -- but who haven't yet got anything to take their place. I won't try to detail this concept here, but introduce it by one small corner only to suggest that even beyond what meets the eye, I think there's a great deal to the idea of re-cementing community as a central theme.

[Note: Draft 2 attempts to develop this "community" theme in a speech context, but in this version it fails. Within a larger context, it's a major theme of Draft 3]

4. Notes on method:

- a. I'd recommend that instead of trying to pull this together Miami-style, without help, you let me work with you (if, as it now appears, I'm to be the principal collaborator) on the final drafts. I find it hard to believe that you're actually going to have as much time and attention free for it during your last week before taking office, as you expect to have. You're likely to be faced with more last-minute Johnson ploys that have to be countered, and also, inevitably, with a snaggle of unanticipated loose ends, not the least of them probably deriving from the human distractions of putting one life behind and taking up another. Beyond this, the mood, temper and tone of an Inaugural is different from that of an acceptance. As the occasion is more solemn, the prose is more stately; and to give it both stateliness and life ~~is~~ requires, at least in my own experience, long, agonizing hours of arranging and re-arranging words, of trying and discarding and trying again. A lot of this, a writer can do for you -- and you shouldn't be saddled with it.

- b. On the technique of delivery: I'd recommend, as at Miami, fixing it well in mind but using a written text -- on paper, not on TelePrompTer. I'm sure that, at Miami, having the text in front of you enabled you much better to concentrate on delivery rather than on remembering what came next -- with results that were stunningly effective. Also, on a highly formal

occasion like this, when delivering what obviously is a carefully prepared address, there's an element of honesty and straightforwardness about have the text visibly in front of you.

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