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National Service Communications Strategy Memo by Prince/Dreyer

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**COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY
NATIONAL SERVICE LAUNCH EVENT
MARCH 1, 1993**

Pre-March 1 Activities:

o Develop Feature Broadcast Pieces

The following broadcast have expressed interest in developing a feature segment on national service in general and the President's plans in particular.

- PBS: McNeil-Lehrer
- CNN
- ABC: American Agenda
- CBS Sunday Morning

We are working with them to facilitate the segments. McNeil-Lehrer and CNN, in particular, are interested in running major pieces on national service in conjunction with the Presidential announcement on the evening of March 1. In addition we would like to contact **Parade**, **People**, **USA Today Weekend**, and other feature print forums to encourage anecdotal features on national service within the focus of the President's address.

o Eli and other surrogates for March 1(2) morning news programs

We would like to begin booking Eli and other appropriate surrogates for March 1 (and/or March 2) morning news programs.

o Embargoed Major Press Background Briefing

Major print press have been clamoring for interviews with Eli and specifics on the program and policy for three weeks. We recommend a late Friday afternoon briefing for a select group of national dailies, wire/syndicates, and key broadcast for late Friday afternoon embargoed for speech time Monday.

o President's Saturday Radio Address

We would like to explore avenues to target the President's Saturday radio address with its focus on national service to a youth oriented listening audience. For example, reaching Rockline through a satellite feed and pre-notifying college newspapers and radio stations through Josh's faxed college communiques toward the middle of the week.

o Talking Points/Surrogates

We are preparing talking points to be used on March 1 by key surrogates within the context of their press briefings and/or travels - including such potential spokespersons as Donna Shalala, Richard Riley, Bruce Babbitt, and the First Lady, Vice President, and Tipper Gore. In conjunction with Cabinet and other surrogate staffs, we will pre-arrange regional radio interviews for March 1 with such surrogates.

o Sunday New York Times Op-Ed

Robert has written a draft for review and editing to appear in the NYT on this Sunday in advance of the March 1 event.

March 1: Site yet to be determined

We envision a day with three primary components:

Mid-Morning Service Visit:

A participatory visit to a service site/activity that would be inter-generation and inter-racial in nature.

University Address:

A major address at a state university before a college audience with a significant high school audience component. The President would speak to the greater vision and American ethic of national service; announce the nature and purpose of the summer program; discuss as much as possible the legislative/policy variables of his program; and issues a somewhat interactive "call-to action/challenge" to young Americans.

MTV Interview:

Immediately following the address the President would spend approximately 15 minutes with MTV for a taped interview that would include his introducing two local students -- one high school and one almost post-college -- who had participated in the service event that morning as examples of young people making a difference. He would chat with MTV about the national service ethic and once again issue the interactive challenge.

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o Eli Segal College Leadership Briefing

Additionally, we consider the launch event a means to enhance Eli Segal's recognition and profile. We would like to plan an briefing event for Eli immediately following the speech with area student editors and student leaders and some members of the service community. Obviously, this would work best if the event is in a major media market.

Other possibilities:

o Hillary Rodam Clinton in Philadelphia:

If possible, the First Lady might also assist in the launch at an alternative site from the President's such as Philadelphia where she would participate in a service event that involved child immunization.

o Evening news formats:

In addition to possibilities with McNeil-Lehrer and CNN, we would like to explore expanded stories for the evening news programs such as Tom Brokaw's special interview features.

MEMORANDUM

TO: Eli Segal
CC: Distribution
FR: David Dreyer, Jonathan Prince
RE: National Service Communications Strategy Meeting, 1/25/93
DT: January 26, 1993

Monday's meeting outlined some broad themes, some potential problems, some items for research, a potential timeline, and the beginnings of a list of potential communications mechanisms.

BROAD THEMES

There are two broad aspects of the national service program that were linked to each other by Bill Clinton during the campaign: service as a national priority and universal access to higher education.

Universal Access to Higher Education

This is the first target for examination:

- 1 Does the American public believe the President has committed to providing universal access?
- 2 How important is that to them?
- 3 Is that commitment inextricably linked to national service or would public demand be satisfied through an alternative means of resolution?
- 4 At what pace does the public expect the President to move towards universal access? (students per year, percentage of need...)

Service as a National Priority

You effectively described the broad themes:

Citizenship
Diversity
Self-esteem
National needs.

An interesting corollary to this is the obvious ease with which this message enhances and underscores the broader contribution theme outlined by Carville.

POTENTIAL PROBLEMS

From a political/communications perspective the first major problem is the depth of the public's perception that the President has promised to provide universal access to education through the National Service Trust Fund. As indicated above, this should be explored through appropriate research.

The second issue for concern is the gap between the universal, nationwide character of the rhetoric and the current focus on youth as the only targeted group. We need to explore opportunities - and related payoffs - to every demographic segment of the population.

Third, is the difficulty in crafting a real program that will produce the diversity that is a core objective of the philosophical program. There must be a carefully created balance that provides opportunities attractive to whites in middle-class suburbs and minorities in inner cities.

Finally, there is a need to communicate to the public that this is not Points of Light, this is not volunteerism, this is not necessarily a jobs program. We must frame the core message of the program exactly as we want it framed. I believe that it is something akin to: **Each of us has an obligation to contribute, but nobody is asking for something for nothing; contributions provide a return on your investment.** This also needs exploration; we need to get a better grasp on current public perception about what national service means to people, about what they expect from it, what they want from it, and what they believe the President has promised. That information is essential to the refinement of the ultimate core message.

RESEARCH

The consensus last night was that, ideally, we would focus group prior to developing an instrument. Obviously, this must be discussed with the experts.

We have referred previously to the general topics identified thus far as needing exploration. In quick summation, they deal broadly with:

- 1 The interconnectedness of universal access to higher education and the national service program;
- 2 The extent to which people believe the President has committed to providing universal access;
- 3 What form Bill Clinton's national service program currently takes in the national mindset; and
- 4 What the most compelling message about national service is.

Additionally, mention was given to:

- 5 A name. As you have stressed, this is a critical component of the program's eventual success; it provides a focus and a rallying cry; it has the potential to become one of the defining characteristics of the President's term. Finally,
- 6 An examination of youth receptivity to a program directed much more towards post-high school opportunities and less towards post-college opportunities.

TIMELINE

There was a great deal of discussion over the relative benefits between rapid introduction of legislation (30 days) or a slower approach (6 months). Although there

was a general consensus that the six month approach was the better one, we will quickly summarize the arguments for each.

Thirty Days

- 1 No successful social program in history has been passed gradually; they have all been essentially rammed through Congress.
- 2 Immediate passage of legislation gives the program a focus around which to organize and build gradually.
- 3 Starting immediately instead of engaging first in a communications campaign helps to ensure that demand will not quickly exceed supply.
- 4 If we are going to have a series of difficult battles in the near term (economic program, health care reform, gays in the military, and so forth), this provides an opportunity for an early win.

Six Months

- 1 Most of the social programs in history have turned into bureaucratic disasters; that may be the single greatest risk inherent in this program's development (recall the message behind Eli's pledge to quit if ever the program has more than 100 employees).
- 2 Holding the legislation out in front as a short-term goal provides a target to shoot for and an early rationale for a nationwide campaign to build public demand.
- 3 There is a terrific opportunity in a campaign-style, take this on the road approach to crafting nationwide support for the program. The six or so months could be used to powerful advantage as a component of crafting the President's persona and, additionally, as a second-track vehicle for the delivery of the Carville contribution message.
- 4 There is no compelling need for immediate legislation; we can have a name, a slogan, a logo, and even a pilot program without it.
- 5 Hold the win in the can and pop it when we really need it.

COMMUNICATIONS MECHANISMS

In no particular order, a not-exhaustive list of ideas mentioned:

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Obviously, this list doesn't begin to scratch the surface of potential communications tools. The guiding principle of the campaign however should be to make a lot of noise, to generate excitement, and create a true demand.

We hope this is helpful. At your convenience, we should reconvene the same group or a sub-set of smaller working groups.

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