

Memo: You Can Anti-Trust Me

*By Mary McGrory
The Washington Star*

MEMORANDUM

PERSONAL AND CONFIDENTIAL

TO: ALL NETWORK VICE PRESIDENTS,
NEW YORK

FROM: LISTENING POST, WASHINGTON
SUBJECT: ANTI-TRUST SUITS AGAINST
CBS, NBC, ABC

I'm sorry we got that call from the Justice Department, but I can assure you there's nothing to worry about. If we handle the whole thing the ITT way, I'm sure it will come out all right.

I have studied the transcript of the hearings, and it seems to me ITT took a couple of early steps that we can take to assure victory.

1. Ask Peter Flanigan about the ripple effects.
2. Build a motel.
3. Move next door to an attorney general.

The one thing that jumps out of the transcript of the hearings is that everybody in this Administration is an antitrust buff. They'll drop anything any time to talk about it, even the people you'd least expect — not the case itself, mind you, but the general philosophy of economic hardship.

For instance, people think of Charles Colson of the White House staff as a political type. But Edward J. Gerrity, the vice president in charge of public relations for ITT, went in and saw him about balance of payments.

Also Herb Klein. He's the communications director. But Gerrity talked to him about "a relaxation of requirements for bringing dividends home." Klein promised to check it out.

There's a lesson for us here. Whenever and wherever you meet anyone from the Nixon Administration, start talking. Find out how they feel about "bigness per se." They can't resist it.

Also ITT has proven that something like this can result in a much more efficient operation. You remember how, after Jack Anderson got hold of that memo, they turned the situation to ecological advantage, cleared out their files and shredded them?

Well, to me, what we have here is a long-needed opportunity to re-think our entire approach to programming and rescheduling.

For openers, I'd like to say I think we've given far too much time to the ITT hearings. Who cares what Dita Beard said to John Mitchell in the buffet line at the Kentucky Derby buffet? (Have we got someone going this year, by the way? It's boring and, as

Senator Roman Hruska often says, irrelevant.

I think it's a marvelous time for the three network presidents to come down and talk to Vice President Spiro Agnew about his comments on our programs. Maybe we should offer him his own newscast, say an hour on all networks between 6:30 and 7:30, seven nights a week?

Also I see no reason to cover the Democratic primaries. They're terribly repetitive and inconclusive. And, incidentally, has a serious effort been made to find some Americans who do not grouse about the high price of meat? I think people are fed up with this eternal carping.

I have long thought that we should cover Billy Graham's crusades around the world, live, by satellite. And what about having him for our analyst after presidential speeches? I think that Eric and Walter sometimes overlook the spiritual content.

Are we doing enough on osteopathy? I mean, why aren't we capitalizing on a rising public interest in this neglected branch of medicine. The President is now taking osteopathic treatment. Mrs. Beard's doctors might be available for a documentary. Most people tend to think of osteopathy as bones, but apparently, since she is a heart patient, they treat the heart as a bone, which may be a scientific breakthrough we should bring to our listeners' attention.

How about late-night movies? Why haven't we been showing "Patton"? It's the President's favorite movie and we could run it twice a week. Also, we haven't done nearly enough with President Thieu, or the South Vietnamese army! Couldn't we run some of that footage backwards so they would be appearing to dash into battle?

And how about sending an investigative team to report on that woman in Paris who wrote the embarrassing book about Henry Kissinger? I think it would be fairly easy to prove that she didn't write, or only wrote parts of it or was distraught and upset — and probably drinking — when she wrote them. We could bring in the Irvings as the authenticity experts.

Well, these are just a few of the ideas that come to mind as I consider the months ahead. I think whatever way it comes out, we should consider making a contribution to the Republican party, just to show we are grateful for their time and attention. It would prove that we don't think there's the slightest connection between the ITT antitrust suit and the one being brought out against us, just as ITT showed there were no hard feelings after they got their case settled out of court.

Please destroy this, huh?