

GOP Memos on '72 Campaign

Washington

A top-level White House strategy to assure President Nixon's reelection by undermining Democratic presidential hopeful Edmund S. Muskie was portrayed yesterday in memos released by the Senate Watergate committee.

The plan called for boosting the candidacy of Senator George McGovern, a Muskie rival for the Democratic nomination.

Other memos showed that the White House organized an extensive campaign to draft letters and telegrams—to be sent over other persons' signatures—praising President Nixon and denouncing the news media after a presidential press conference in late 1970.

Many of the 34 political memos were written by presidential speechwriter Patrick J. Buchanan and addressed to the President's most senior aides. Buchanan testified before the committee yesterday.

WARNING

In early 1971, when Mr. Nixon's standing in national opinion polls had slipped, Buchanan advised Mr. Nixon that Muskie was his biggest threat and should be attacked at once.

In a memo entitled "The Muskie Watch," Buchanan told the President that if Muskie were to win most of the Democratic presidential primaries, he would be certain to capture the nomination.

"And if Mr. Muskie is not cut and bleeding before he goes into New Hampshire, he will very likely do massively well there," Buchanan told Mr. Nixon.

PERSONALITY

Buchanan suggested that Muskie was most vulnerable in the recesses of his own personality, citing what he called Muskie's short temper and reported indecision.

On July 28, 1971, Buchanan suggested to Attorney General John W. Mitchell that Muskie be painted as far left as possible and that "pickets and the like" be prodded to demonstrate at rallies of the political opposition.

IDEA

In a memo dated Oct. 5, 1971 and addressed to White House chief of staff H. R. Haldeman and to Mitchell, he said consideration should be given "to promote, assist and fund a fourth party candidacy of the left Democrats and/or the black Democrats."

"We should do what is within our power to have a black nominated for No. 2 at least at the Democratic national convention," Buchanan wrote.

By April 12, 1972, Buchanan reported to Haldeman and Mitchell that "our primary objective to prevent Senator Muskie from sweeping the early primaries... has been achieved."

"What we need now is a decision on whom we want to run against," he said and offered his own nomination.

"McGovern is our candidate for dozens of reasons," he said of the South Dakota Democrat.

In a memo to Mitchell on June 6, Buchanan said McGovern was viewed by the nation's voters as a moderate and even a conservative.

Everything that can be done must be done to change that image, Buchanan said, "before McGovern begins changing his positions from left toward center."

Other memos outlined White House plans to criticize the news media, or to sway public opinion against various newspapers and television networks.

A Dec. 11, 1970 memo, from White House aide Jeb Stuart Magruder to H. R. Haldeman, states, among other things, that:

• "Ten telegrams have been drafted by Buchanan. They will be sent to Time and Newsweek by 20 names around the country from our letterwriting system."

(The White House "letter-writing system" apparently indicates a system whereby persons around the country permit their names to be used on letters drafted in the White House.)

• "Letters to the editors of the (New York) Times, (Washington) Post, (Washington) Star, Chicago Daily News, St. Louis Post-Dispatch are being prepared and sent."

• Lyn Nofziger, then a White House aide, "has contacted Victor Lasky, who has agreed to run a column." (Lasky is a conservative columnist and author.)

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