

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

August 16, 1974

MEMORANDUM FOR: BILL SEIDMAN

FROM: BILL BAROODY, JR.

SUBJECT: Preparations for Economic Summit

As per your request, the following is an outline of activities leading up to the Economic Summit on which we recommend implementation. This outline has been formulated keeping in mind the desirability of participation at various levels of all relevant segments of society. Furthermore, it is comprehensive in that it provides for input from interested parties from across the nation. Finally, it provides for the involvement of the total resources of the entire governmental structure.

A. PRE-SUMMIT MEETINGS AND ACTIVITIES

There should be three series of pre-summit meetings. The first series would consist of four meetings in the White House with participation by the President and selected Administration economic leaders. The second series would consist of meetings of private sector leaders organized and conducted by the relevant Departments and Agencies of the government. The third series would be conducted by the Governors with state and local officials.

1. White House Meetings

- a. Cabinet meeting, August 20, (a.m.). President briefs the Cabinet on summit plans and charges them with their specific departmental responsibilities.
- b. Congressional leaders, August 20, (p.m.). President outlines what he hopes to accomplish substantively through the economic summit and describes the preparatory steps to the summit as well as the action follow-up which he hopes will flow from it. Ask leaders to urge MCs to hold small constituent conferences in Districts during Labor Day recess and send reports to President by September 6. Insist that Greenspan be approved immediately as he will play lead role in summit.

- c. Labor-Management leaders, August 22. President outlines plans for the economic summit, discusses economic situation, seeks advice and input from them and stresses importance of restraint in private economic decision-making. Specific recommendations to be submitted by September 5.
- d. Academic, business and labor economists, August 26 or 27. President discusses with economic leaders the current state of the economy and possible new approaches to dealing with the problems. He asks the group to draft its recommendations and submit them to him by September 5th for analysis and discussion at the Summit.

2. Department Meetings

The second level of the pre-Summit conferences will be department and agency meetings. There will be a total of seven meetings to take place during the week of August 26, 1974. The purpose of each meeting will be to discuss relevant subjects in seven different areas. These seven areas reflect the major seven substantive areas ~~which will appear on the agenda for the Summit.~~ The departments and agencies will chair and conduct the meetings, and invite participants from a broad cross-section of leaders in that area. There is not expected to be Presidential involvement in these meetings.

- a. General Manufacturing - Commerce Department to take the lead. Include: CEA, Small Business Administration, Treasury Department and Labor Department.
- b. Service Sector - Commerce Department to take the lead. Include: CEA, SBA, HEW and Labor. Focus on medical, retailing, service, etc.
- c. Banking and Finance - Treasury Department to take the lead. Include: CEA, State and HUD. Focus on: interest rates, loans, credit, capital formation, stock market, international economic problems.

- d. Housing and Construction - HUD to take the lead.
Include: CEA, Treasury, Labor, Defense, GSA.
- e. Energy - Federal Energy Administration to take the lead. Include: CEA, Interior Department, EPA, Treasury and Labor.
- f. Agriculture - Agriculture Department to take the lead.
Include: CEA, State, Labor.
- g. Transportation - Department of Transportation to take the lead. Include: CEA, HUD, EPA. Focus: automobiles, mass transit, railroads, trucking, airplanes, buses.

The Council of Economic Advisors is included in all Departmental meetings because we would use them as the White House collection, analysis and synthesis agency.

Need to determine whether it would be proper to include independent regulatory agencies in these meetings such as SEC, FTC, etc. Also, should Federal Reserve be included in appropriate meeting?

For specific details on organization of Departmental meetings, please refer to Tab A.

3. Governors Meetings in 50 States

On August 20, a telegram should be sent to the 50 state Governors. The telegram should reference the previous week's meeting with Governors, Mayors, and county officials. The telegram should urge the Governors to convene leadership meetings with state and local government officials on what they can do to help on the economic problem areas. Reports with recommendations should be submitted to the President by September 5.

B. FOLLOW-UP TO MEETINGS

All departmental meetings and the economists' meeting should prepare an analysis of the current situation and policy recommendations

based on the meeting agenda. These should be forwarded to the President by September 5th.

Between September 5th and the opening of the Summit on September 17th, the reports received should be integrated for use at the Summit and forwarded to participants by September 13th. At the same time, they should be released publicly.

Prior to the Summit, the Administration should begin to develop its post-Summit action program, using the reports as the basis for its work.

C. THE SUMMIT

While the memorandum does not attempt to detail how the Summit should be organized, several points are recommended.

- a. All of those who participated in White House and Departmental preparatory meetings should be invited at least as observers to the Summit. However, each group should select a spokesman or spokeswoman to present that group's report to the President.
- b. There should be a dialogue, not just speech-making. Discussion should take place between participants and between the President and Administration leaders and the participants.

D. POST SUMMIT

A. The President unveils his action program to Congressional leaders about September 23rd, with public release immediately following.

B. Conferences are scheduled around the country beginning early October, to give the Administration an opportunity to explain the program and mobilize support.

E. IMMEDIATE ACTION

A task force should be appointed to coordinate effort. Membership should be drawn from CEA, OMB, Domestic Council, and from offices of Rush, Seidman, terHorst and Baroody.

A

As referenced under Part A. Subsection 2, Departmental Meetings, the following is a suggested organizational outline and format for all departmental and agency meetings. It is also relevant to two of the four White House Meetings, i. e., the Labor-Management Meeting and the Economists Meeting.

DATE: Week of August 26, 1974

TIME: Begin at 9:00 a. m. and last all day

LOCATION: At lead agency headquarters location

PARTICIPATION: 15 to 40 persons at lead agency's option. The group must be diverse and must represent all significant positions within the sector including consumer and labor interests as appropriate.

COORDINATION: All meetings to be coordinated with Baroody Public Liaison Staff at White House:

William J. Baroody, Jr.
Jeffrey P. Eves
Donald A. Webster

GOAL: To develop a consensus from outside organizations on recommendations for the President on the current state of the economy as well as on the specific problems encountered in the sector each Departmental meeting represents. New ideas strongly encouraged.

AGENDA:

For maximum results, it is important that a carefully drawn agenda be prepared for each of the departmental meetings and for the President's meeting with the economic leaders.

The agenda will not be the same for each meeting. The agenda will reflect in large part the substantive aspects of the economic sector involved. However, insofar as it is appropriate for each meeting, the following topics of a general nature should be included on agendas for discussion and action recommendations.

- a. Government's role in the economy.
- b. Responsible private wage and price behavior.
- c. Cushioning the effects of unemployment.
- d. Problems of supply management in a world of shortages.
- e. Increasing productivity.
- f. Capital Formation.
- g. The U. S. in the international economy.

FOLLOW-UP:

- (1) To select relevant spokesmen from each meeting to participate in the Summit. All meeting attendees could be invited as observers.
- (2) To prepare a complete report on each meeting to be submitted to the President by September 5th.

THE PRESIDENCY AND CURRENT ECONOMIC PROBLEMS

The most important single element in achieving economic stability and progress is the restoration of confidence in the U. S. Government, especially in the Presidency.

The change in the occupant of the Presidency will bring renewed confidence, at least initially. There will be respected leadership at the helm and a honeymoon of support for the President.

Then, the more difficult task begins, to translate ephemeral confidence into sustained confidence.

The two basic economic problems, domestically and internationally, are energy and inflation. America is the only developed nation with the resources and the technology to solve the "energy crisis". The question is: Has it the will?

The President can instill Americans with that will. That is his first and foremost responsibility. He must implement the policy of developing our potential energy resources (coal, off-shore oil, shale oil, nuclear, solar, etc.). He must outline clearly what must be done, how we will achieve significant independence, how important that is -- and then seek and obtain the cooperation and the support of the American people.

Once launched and successfully progressing, such an effort will bring the U. S. to a position of potential supremacy energy-wise. As such, America once again can lead the developed, developing, and undeveloped free nations toward greater human progress and achievement.

Though obviously difficult, solving the energy problem is far easier than controlling inflation. Once again this takes leadership by the President and abiding support from the American people. It means cutting Federal expenditures ("leading the pack", so to speak); working with business, labor and consumer groups, closely and personally, to adopt similar thrifty policies; on occasion spectacularly moving in when any industry or group starts a "way-out-of-line" price or wage hike.

Most of all, it means close coordination with the European Community and the Japanese on all economic levels - trade, currency, credit, etc. - in a joint effort. The "interdependency" of the developed nations is now an established fact, though many Americans do not yet realize its depth and penetration.

The free market, domestically and worldwide, will work its way out of the current condition of galloping inflation, albeit more slowly than one would hope. But to start working in the right direction it needs leadership from the President and a deep confidence in him on the part of the American people.

Ed's line passed by by Federal Reserve

To MEET CURRENT

ORGANIZING THE EXECUTIVE ECONOMIC PROBLEMS ^

To say that we have entered an era when geo-economics takes precedence over geo-politics is not much of an exaggeration. At the least they are equi-dynamic. ~~But~~ ^{But} the U. S. Government is not geared for geo-economics. It must be.

Likewise, the domestic economy is no longer an entity unto itself. It is considerably dependent on the economies of other developed nations and vice versa. Our government is not organized to function well in this condition of interdependency.

As of now, so many departments have jurisdiction over aspects of economic policy-making that it is essential first to organize the White House for economic policy-making under these new conditions.

At first the new President should take command himself. He should establish one overall economic policy council, for both domestic and international economic policy, of which he is the Chairman. Basic components are the Secretary of State, Secretary of Treasury, Secretary of Commerce, Secretary of Labor, Secretary of Agriculture, President's Special Representative for Trade Negotiations, Chairman of CEA - and, of course, the President can add any other personal selections.

That policy group should have two sub-groups - one for international economic policy headed by the Secretary of State, one for domestic headed by the Secretary of the Treasury.

One specific suggestion: At least for the first few months of his administration, President Ford should appoint

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one individual to his staff to act as Executive Director of the overall economic policy group, to coordinate domestic and international economic policy, to report on a daily basis to the President until such time as economic policy is established and is being implemented successfully.

Nothing is more important right now than the economic problems within the United States and worldwide. By establishing the above organization he will have a direct controlling hand in this vital field.



August 15, 1974

Mr. Clay Whitehead
The White House
Old Executive Office Building
Washington D.C.

Dear Mr. Whitehead:

It was a pleasure to meet you yesterday, and to have the opportunity to discuss how the President might structure his Economic Summit.

In reflecting on our conversation, I think we might have gotten distracted by our discussion of the media away from what I think is the central point. The most important thing which can be done to make the Economic Summit an educational experience for the American people is to structure the dialogue around a sequence of alternatives or "National Choices" for tackling the problem. This subject is so complex, and the experts are in such disagreement, that the public could easily become confused, bored or frustrated.

But if the dialogue is focused around a series of concrete alternatives for tackling the problem, and dialogue at the Summit is structured to deal with one element at a time, the American people will be able to learn that there are no benefits without pains---a very important lesson. And I think areas of agreement will emerge along with disagreement. The important thing for the public to see is that the President is willing to listen to all points of view, that he has relatively few options--and all will provoke criticism from some quarters. By bringing the people in on the deliberative process, they will be willing to live with whatever decisions he feels he has to make. And I do not think balloting is an essential component by any means.

It will be difficult to arrive at the most important 8-10 National Choices. But my soundings with business, labor, and consumer groups indicates a willingness to get involved with framing national issues for debate. They only need be invited to do so. If this course of action is decided upon, I think I can be helpful in designing the process of involvement.

Please let me know how I can be of further help.

Sincerely,

Michael J. McManus

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P.S. Incidentally, beginning August 19, I will be working as a full-time consultant to the Urban Institute working to create the kind of National Town Meetings described in more detail in the enclosed memo.

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How to Create an American Issues Forum

(by building a series of National Town Meetings)

by

Michael J. McManus

A shortcoming of the American press probably graver than any faults displayed during Watergate is the lack of expertise in many fields, a failure to develop the techniques necessary to inform the public on highly complicated subjects, to lay out alternative choices and possible solutions in an increasingly baffling world. Cliche thinking and reporting are a greater danger than bias.

...the press will have to help rebuild an American consensus, a new agreement as to the country's meaning and goals. That will require a tremendous effort, perhaps some new habits of thought and work on the part of the press and new, broader ways of giving the public access to print and to the air.

Henry Grunwald
TIME Managing Editor
TIME Essay, July 8, 1974

Background

Last fall, Walter Cronkite conceived an idea that became known as American Issues Forum. Like most good ideas, it was a simple one:

- Establish a calendar of topics for study and discussion throughout the Bicentennial year by the entire population of the United States;
- Make the topics broad enough and interesting enough to encourage all segments of the population to engage together and directly in a serious examination of the history of the nation, its possible future, and goals for America's third century;
- Involve both the mass media and voluntary organizations in developing plans related to the monthly themes between September, 1975 and July, 1976.

After some preliminary work by historians coalesced by the National Endowment for the Humanities, a 10 member group including Walter Cronkite, Joan Ganz Cooney (founder of Sesame Street), and several newspaper editors and scholars finalized that calendar. Unfortunately, it has not yet been released. However, the monthly themes are reportedly very broad: "Man and the Land" is one and "America and the World" is another. But what future-oriented issues will be framed---detente, foreign aid? This is unclear. And will individual citizens have a way to register their opinions?

Coincidentally, this writer developed a detailed "Prospectus for a Series of National Town Meetings" which spells out how millions of Americans might be given an opportunity to "ballot" on various alternatives for tackling the major problems facing the country. Equally important, the Prospectus suggests a way to develop a consensus on what are the most important "National Choices" and what is the information the citizen needs in order to make an intelligent judgment on what new public policies ought to be encouraged. This proposal for National Town Meetings could thus provide a means for implementing part of the American Issues Forum. It is based on solid experience in a number of cities, and has won the backing of many national organizations. Details are below.

The Town Meeting Concept

The purest form of democracy began centuries ago in New England and continues to be the dominant form of government in hundreds of small New England villages today---the Town Meeting. This approach gives individual citizens a personal way to hear about community problems, listen to alternative solutions, and vote on what they think should be done.

How can this satisfying sense of participation be given to an American people who live mostly in sprawling metropolitan areas, too large for all concerned citizens to be able to sit down together?

How can the nation's best thinking about solutions for such problems as crime and corruption be taken off the shelf and given to the people for debate and reaction?

Finally, how can a people which have gone through a tumultuous decade of war, assassinations, riots, and unprecedented government corruption--- a people whose faith in the future and whose optimism has turned to a sour enervating gloom about the future---be given a sense of hope?

A promising answer to these questions may be found in a recent movement inspired by the New England Town Meeting. In 20th Century "Town Meetings," the mass media---usually television and newspapers---have been used to help citizens living in many separate but adjacent communities consider common problems and alternative solutions. Then the citizen is given a way to respond by marking a "ballot" published as a public service by newspapers and distributed by citizen groups. These "Town Meetings" are, of course, entirely unofficial. No decisions are really made by the balloting which always requires followup action by government. But the mass media and the computer gave 20 million people living in a single metropolitan area an opportunity to gain an understanding of the forces shaping their society, and to have a voice in bending present trends of inertia. This process has also generated needed political changes.

The writer of this paper directed CHOICES FOR '76, the largest Town Meeting experiment to date, for the Regional Plan Association, a New York civic group which is the nation's oldest metropolitan planning agency. On the theory that large numbers of people wouldn't get involved unless there was an unprecedented harnessing of the mass media, we convinced every TV station between New Haven and Trenton to donate six hours of airtime to broadcast a series of carefully sculpted documentaries produced by Regional Plan Association. While all the TV stations in a metropolitan area had never jointly broadcast programs before, we involved WCBS-TV, WNBC-TV, WABC-TV, and WNET-TV. plus 14 other stations in broadcasting a series of programs aired in Spring, 1973. The issues were also presented in written form via a paperback book, How To Save Urban America, which sold 100,000 copies. Twenty-six daily newspapers published ballots at no cost.* And a half dozen papers also published articles on the issues presenting information on the Choices at another level, in addition to the TV programs and the book.

There were these results of CHOICES FOR '76:

1. An average of a tenth of the Region's homes with 2 million residents saw the programs--though most were aired on Sunday or Saturday afternoon.
2. Between 15,000 and 42,000 ballots were mailed in for each Town Meeting, from people whose income and education was above average.

*Unfortunately, The New York Times, Daily News and New York Post were not among the 26 cooperating newspapers which donated space. They did not want to become part of "someone's project" publishing articles on issues suggested by non-journalists.

3. On about 60% of the Choices, people agreed on what should be done regardless of their race, age or income.
4. Television had a powerful impact on attitudes. Support for an opinion often grew from a 5-3 margin to as much as 3-1. And a scientific poll conducted by Gallup revealed shifts in the attitude of the public at large on some issues.
5. CHOICES FOR '76 can only claim some credit for political action, because many other forces were at play. But a number of the new policies decisively supported by CHOICES balloters have become political reality a year after the Town Meetings were held: state and federal subsidies for mass transit; a change in New York State's school aid formula to give extra help to low achieving children; movement in New York, New Jersey and Connecticut legislatures to ban disposable cans and bottles; a reversal of the trend in Connecticut to locate corporate headquarters and new colleges on isolated suburban sites in favor of urban locations; and the beginnings of a movement to replace local property taxes for schools with some form of a statewide tax.
6. The television programs and the project itself were of high enough quality for the New York Chapter of the Academy of Television Arts and Sciences to present its Governor's Award, its most prestigious "Emmy," for "an unprecedented concept and a unique use of the television medium." The American Institute of Architects conferred its "1974 Architecture Critics Citation"---a national award---to Regional Plan Association "for an imaginative and far-reaching program designed to inform citizens of the opportunity and responsibility for participation in the problem-solving process."
7. More important, a diverse assortment of metropolitan areas are creating their own Town Meetings patterned on the CHOICES model. A Town Meeting in Chicago revealed strong public support for creating a metropolitan Transit District, prompting the Illinois State Legislature to authorize a referendum on the issue which later won public approval. The margin of support in the referendum was small, while it was very wide in the Town Meeting; but the Town Meeting helped build a climate of acceptance. On a budget one-tenth of CHOICES, a series of Town Meetings has been created in Roanoke, Virginia, involving five TV stations and eight newspapers. The first three stimulated an extraordinary percentage of the population to send in ballots-7% of everyone over age 13, or about 50 times the per capita percentage of those who participated in CHOICES FOR '76. And Roanoke's participants had almost exactly the same racial and income breakdowns as recorded by the Census for that metropolitan area-9.9% of the participants were black compared to 10.2%, for example. Hartford and Milwaukee held Town Meetings this spring, and efforts are underway to launch them in New Orleans, Columbus, Cincinnati,

North Adams, Baltimore, Washington, D.C., Philadelphia and Corpus Christi. This writer has served as a consultant to all of these cities.

The Need For National Town Meetings

While many cities of varying size have discovered the value of harnessing their mass media to give their citizens a voice on the future of their communities, each of them have run into one major problem that has diminished the quality of what has been done. Many of the issues which communities want to grapple with are national in scope. However, local Town Meeting efforts either avoid "National Choices," or they are dealt with inadequately because local communities typically do not have the capacity to tap national expertise on solutions.

Of course, the deeper problem is the fact that most communities are doing little if anything to think through what their alternatives are for solving problems that extend beyond municipal borders. Millions of dollars are spent annually in planning at the local level but rarely with more than a handful of people. Consequently, the plans rarely have much impact on the development inertia. Meanwhile the citizen is bombarded with daily headlines on problems, many of which could have been avoided if there were adequate planning.

Finally, the nation itself needs a way to inform the American public about some critical decisions or "National Choices" which must be made soon. And the American people should be given a voice on these issues, once given the facts. An example of a major National Choice was revealed this spring after the Ford Foundation invested four years and \$4 million in a series of studies called the Ford Energy Policy Project. Ford's aim from the outset was to "organize knowledge in such a way as to help the nation make choices" on how to meet the conflicting need to conserve natural resources while providing for a soaring demand for increased energy consumption. Unlike most reports of this sort, the study did not make a list of "recommendations;" rather, it showed the tradeoffs---or the pains and benefits---of three different "alternative futures." To over-simplify the options:

1. Historic growth: Energy consumption could be tripled by the year 2000 using only domestic sources of energy if: there is massive drilling on the continental shelf, a 50-fold increase of atomic energy plants, and widespread stripmining of coal. There are dangers in each approach, and one result might be a depletion of oil supplies so that little is left beyond the year of 2000.
2. Technical Adjustment: Energy growth rates could cut in half, requiring the tapping of only one of the three major domestic sources of energy. But to make this reduction some changes are required: higher costs of oil and gas, a widespread use of solar heating and cooling, redesign of auto engines, a shift of government transportation subsidies from cars and planes to mass transit, end of mineral depletion allowances.

3. Zero growth: It is possible to achieve a level of zero energy growth by 1985 if America is willing to make dramatic changes in life style in addition to the technical changes outlined above: This will require an acceptance of higher density living (perhaps all homes to be built in the future should be apartments and not detached single-family houses). In addition, we will have to curtail the use of plastics particularly for wrapping, make small car use mandatory, and change our industrial processes to build products for durability rather than obsolescence.

While the issue is complex, it is possible in an hour documentary to illustrate what each of the options are and to provide a variety of pro and con arguments on each so that the citizen will feel competent to draw his own conclusions on what sacrifices (if any) he is willing to make for his grandchildren who will live far into America's third century. In other words, the issue being raised is a value judgment question on which the citizen is expert if given the facts.*

In virtually every other field of public policy, there are a number of "solutions" which have received some public visibility and expert support. They need to be taken to the people to see if they are willing to accept the pains of higher taxes or political changes in order to get the benefits. Each of these "solutions" involves tradeoffs with other social objectives and costs which are not usually discussed publicly by proponents of the plans. Here are some National Choices, but there are many others.

Should the United States provide jobs for the unemployed, and, if so, for whom?

Should each state be given a lump sum from the federal government for transportation and be allowed to decide how to allocate it?

Should correctional facilities be decentralized, with prisoners serving part of their sentences in minimum security halfway houses located near jobs and training?

Should states prepare land use plans which would prohibit development in some areas and encourage it elsewhere?

Should taxes be raised to cover federal budget deficits and dampen inflation, and, if so, whose taxes?

The American Issues Forum

Thus, there is a clear need for conducting Town Meetings on a national basis--a need for involving network television and national magazines in framing National Choices for debate and resolution. I have called these media-sparked events "National Town Meetings." But they could be called American Issues Forums just as easily. What might be the elements of an American Issues Forum?

*Citizens should not be asked technical questions such as whether it is better to have coal gassification or atomic energy development, on which the experts can't agree.

A single Issues Forum, for example, might pose four to six National Choices in these ways during a single week:

1. A commercial network would broadcast a one hour documentary which it produced to summarize the history of a given problem area, and what is projected if present trends remain unchecked. Then a series of possible solutions are framed as National Choices, with an objective analysis of the pains of the options as well as the benefits. The TV program is not a panel of experts talking, but a quick-paced film in which many different kinds of people are talking, sometimes interspersed with animation of points difficult to describe, tied together by a very carefully written narration. Hopefully, this film will be rebroadcast during the week by the public television network.
2. During the same week that the documentary is aired, a number of national magazines would publish articles on the issues and carry a ballot which citizens can use to register their opinions on the issues. Magazines and television would cross-promote each other's contribution. Each magazine would have the freedom to pose the pros and cons anyway they thought suitable.
3. For those who wanted more depth on the Forum Issues, a paperback book would be available on newsstands which would contain the background papers which had to be written before the TV show or magazine articles were prepared.
4. During that week, hundreds of thousands of people would be gathered in small groups to watch the programs, discuss the issues, ballot, and consider relevant local action as followup. These groups would be organized by churches, civic groups, and students who have the project assigned as homework. Small group participation provides another way to give people a feeling of involvement.
5. Three weeks after the American Issues Forum has been held, the results of the mailed in ballots could be presented and reacted to by key public and private sector leaders in a "Feedback Program" broadcast perhaps by public television. For example, if the Forum is on campaign finance reform, it would be interesting to get reactions from John Gardner, whose Common Cause has been pressing for such a change and Representative Wayne Hays, Chairman of a House Committee who has been unsympathetic to Common Cause proposals.

Need for a Pilot American Issues Forum

One of the mistakes made in creating CHOICES FOR '76 was that we did not have a pilot program. Rather, all five Town Meetings were scheduled between March and May, 1973. The result was that there was no time to adjust for inevitable mistakes, or to profit from successes. Our advertising

campaign was a disaster, for example, but we were stuck with it even though it ended up having a negative impact. We found that the Episcopal Church did a phenomenal job organizing church members to participate, but did not have time to help other denominations learn the techniques which were successful with the Episcopalians.

Therefore, it is essential to schedule one pilot American Issues Forum for late spring of 1975, so that there is time to learn from the pilot before moving into a monthly production of American Issue Forums in the fall of 1975.

Content Development

Of course, the crucial question in creating the American Issues Forum is how are the decisions to be made on the content of the monthly Forums. The Century III Panel of the American Revolution Bicentennial Administration (ARBA) has indicated it is not interested in cooperating with the American Issues Forum, but it has suggested a way to frame public policy choices which is worth considering:

1. Have ARBA write a letter to the president of every major corporation and union, the governor of every state, the director of every major national organization, church denomination, and ask them to have their "futurist" or long range planner frame what they think are the several most important choices facing the country. The expectation is that some 2,500 letters would be mailed out, tapping a wide cross section of people whose profession is to think about the future. The results of this effort would be boiled down into 30-50 most important issues facing the country.
2. Then there would be "Convocation" in February of perhaps 200 of the most thoughtful people who would discuss the issues and try to arrive at some conclusions.
3. Presumably, there would then be an attempt to get the results on the media, but there are no concrete plans at this stage for media involvement or citizen balloting -- though they could be added to the plan.

What is likely to emerge from such a process is a set of philosophical questions about where the country is going that is likely to be profound and worthy of publication. However, compared to the process of content development suggested by the National Town Meeting Prospectus, there are some important gaps in the Century III model:

1. It would not personally involve the heads of major national organizations such as the League of Women Voters, the AFL-CIO, U.S. Chamber of Commerce, Common Cause. Without the personal involvement and commitment of people like George Meany, John Gardner and Arch Booth, it is unlikely that their organizations will invest major energy in getting their memberships involved in the American Issues Forum.

2. In framing public policy choices for debate via the mass media it is essential to tap the best experts in a given discipline, and to have an interaction between experts with different philosophies, if a balanced presentation of pros and cons is to surface. Since the Century III approach goes to "futurists" without regard for subject matter, and does not provide for interaction among experts within a given field, the product is more likely to be philosophical rhetoric rather than more concrete, pragmatic public policy options that the citizen can react to if given the facts.
3. Another kind of person not likely to be tapped is the creative practitioner, the police chief who has found a way to reduce robberies by deploying his police force in a new way. Such a person would never call himself a "futurist," but his work is likely to be known within his discipline.
4. And somehow there should be a step in the content development process in which the American people themselves are given a voice on what topics should be dealt with.
5. Since the Convocation is scheduled for February in the Century III approach, there would not be enough time to create a pilot American Issue Forum in the spring of 1975.

It was in order to meet these admittedly difficult demands, that the National Town Meeting Prospectus suggested a five step process of content development outlined below. While the process is complicated, some content development can be completed earlier than the Century III model, thus permitting the creation of a pilot American Issues Forum in May, 1975. The five steps I recommend are these:

- A. Invite the 100-200 leaders of America's most important national organizations---those with local constituencies---to join an "American Issues Forum Committee"* which would hold a two-day meeting in September to accomplish two important tasks:
 1. After dividing up into roundtables of diverse people, the group would take the American Issues Forum calendar of topics and suggest 5-10 "National Choices" per topic to be taken to the people. These Choices should be oriented toward possible solutions to concrete problems rather than to philosophical questions. The lists of Choices which emerge are not final, but are to be submitted to experts in each field after the conference.
 2. Organizational leaders should then gather into sector oriented groups (religious leaders together, etc.), and develop concrete goals and a strategy on how to organize their members to participate in the American Issues Forum by watching the programs, discussing the

*The leaders of 20 metropolitan areas with experience in giving their citizens a voice in the future of their communities should be present as well.

issues, and balloting. Hopefully, the meeting will end with commitments to assign staff to do the necessary legwork to organize the widest possible participation for the pilot American Issues Forum, in May, 1975.

- B. Once the citizen leaders have provided an outline of issues which will be raised in the American Issues Forum, the next step is to tap the best expert thinking and experience on those issues. Panels of perhaps a dozen people should be appointed for each topic with a strong chairman---such as James Q. Wilson of Harvard on crime, and James Coleman on education. They should have the freedom to reject some of the issues suggested by the citizen leaders, and to add others. They should select a knowledgeable journalist to draft a background paper which summarizes what is known about the costs and benefits of each possible solution framed as a "National Choice."
- C. Final decisions on which "National Choices" (or American Issues) are to be taken to the people can be made for the initial programs by the American Issues Forum Committee at a meeting in December or January. This gives the Expert Panels three months to prepare their background papers which are to be the basis for final decisions on content. And it leaves five months to prepare the documentary which is to be aired in the pilot American Issues Forum in May, 1975.
- D. There can be an ad campaign in November which announces the American Issue Forum's two goals:
- informing the American people about the facts bearing on major national problems, whether clear solutions exist, and, if so, at what cost
 - giving every concerned citizen a voice on the future

It could then list the dozen topics selected by the American Issues Forum Committee, and ask the public which topics should be dealt with first. This gives the American people a voice on content. Those who would like to contribute \$5 to help can get on a newsletter mailing list---giving the project its own base of citizen activists. The ad would list the names of the Committee's distinguished members, and their organizations. Even if there is no ad budget, these ads can be run in cooperating magazines and by the Ad Council elsewhere.

- E. Of course, the final step in content development is to be left in the hands of various magazines and television network. Their task is to make the issues interesting to their respective audiences. While the writer of each background paper should work with the producer of that TV program, final decisions on content and balance are to be made by the network.

Willingness to Get Involved

Of course, much depends on whether a significant cross-section of top leaders is willing to get involved with a project as outlined. Fortunately, the reactions from the leaders of a number of national organizations have been most encouraging.

The Urban Institute, a Washington, D.C. nonprofit policy research organization, has tentatively agreed to undertake the difficult task of managing content development for the National Town Meetings. The Urban Institute is already involved in substantive research efforts on many of the problems which are likely candidates for inclusion in the series: crime, education, local taxation, housing, transportation, employment, public welfare and income maintenance. In addition, the Institute has a proven ability to get some of the best scholars and experts in the country to work on important public policy issues. In addition to generally making the results of its work available to this project, the Institute can prepare the necessary background papers on these and other subjects subject to the availability of funds to cover the costs of work not currently on the Institute's agenda. It is also willing to work with the major national organizations associated with this project and to revise the content of the background papers based on their review.

A wide range of national organizations are willing to invest the energy needed to review background papers developed by The Urban Institute. In fact, the top leaders of a number of these organizations are willing to invest personal time, if schedules permit, to meet with media executives and with the co-sponsors of the American Issues Forum: the National Endowment for the Humanities and the American Revolution Bicentennial Administration. They will also help decide which organizations ought to become involved in content development and will put their own names on the line to get others involved. These are the leaders who have made such a commitment thus far:

Alexander J. Allen	Deputy Executive Director, National Urban League
William Cassella, Jr.	Executive Director, National Municipal League
Ruth Clusen	President, League of Women Voters of the U.S.
Nelson Cruikshank	President, National Council of Senior Citizens
Dr. R.H. Edwin Espy	Chairman of the Forward '76--a coalition of religious leaders of all faiths (former Executive Director of the National Council of Churches)
William Gorham	President, The Urban Institute
Carl Madden	Chief Economist, Chamber of Commerce of the U.S.
Thomas Matthews	Vice President, Common Cause

Roy Wilkins, Executive Director of the NAACP, has endorsed the project. and representatives of a number of other key national organizations have been initially receptive and are seeking full-fledged commitments from their organizations: AFL-CIO, Ralph Nader's Center for Study of Responsive Law, National Center for Urban Ethnic Affairs, National Center for Voluntary Action, National Governors Conference and the United Way of America.

Willard Wirtz is chairing a new Citizen Involvement Network to help 10-20 metropolitan areas give their communities a voice on their future, patterned on Goals for Dallas and CHOICES FOR '76. He could see that the National Town Meetings could help local goal-setting efforts by providing high-quality input on those matters which are hardest to deal with locally--national issues. The directors of local Town Meetings in such cities as New York, Chicago, Roanoke and Corpus Christi have indicated a strong interest in cooperating with a national effort.

What these people most liked about the proposed National Town Meetings were three things:

- it would show the American people that there are alternatives for tackling many of America's thorniest problems
- it would harness the power of the mass media to present possible solutions as "National Choices" with an honest statement of the pain as well as the benefit of all proposed changes of public policy
- it would give the American people themselves a way to be heard-- a step which could be a major healing force across the land at a time when it is needed

Media Reaction

Henry Grunwald, Managing Editor of *TIME*, responded warmly to the first draft of the National Town Meeting Prospectus last October. After reading a more recent Prospectus, he remained intrigued but said he could not commit the magazine until he knew who would be involved in deciding what National Choices would be taken to the people. Last week, after seeing a list of the diverse national organizations who had made commitments, he said: "You've answered my questions. I really hope the project comes to pass." Evidence of his commitment can be seen in the remarkable quote on the first page of this paper drawn from one of his rare signed Essays which was published recently.

The initial reactions of the managing editors of *Business Week* and *Scholastic* (which reaches 500,000 high school students) were also positive. *Scholastic's* editor envisioned having students debate the issues, with the magazine publishing excerpts. *Business Week's* editor said his magazine could give the pros and cons from the businessman's point of view. The publisher of *The New Republic* and an editor of *National Review* were equally warm to the idea, despite their obvious differences on national issues.

While many national organizational leaders are excited about working with the mass media to give citizens a voice and a variety of magazine editors are clearly intrigued, the reception by the networks has been cool so far. John Schneider, the President of the CBS Broadcast Group, and other members of his staff were very interested; but the CBS News Division was not. At ABC it was just the reverse: a key executive in the news division said, "All of the networks know how to cover the candidates, but no one has done a good job of defining issues and presenting choices. We have already decided to produce a series on issues for 1976, with or without your project. You have developed a way to improve on what we were planning to do anyway--by providing more substantive input on content, involving the print media, organizing citizens to watch, and giving them a chance to ballot. I think your proposal is a hell of a good prospect."

Unfortunately, the initial reaction of other ABC executives is reportedly cool because they feel their journalistic independence would be compromised by producing programs suggested and even outlined by an outside group--however prestigious. This is an understandable reaction. It is the same basic reason why *The New York Times* and *Daily News* refused to cooperate with CHOICES FOR '76. On the other hand, WABC-TV, WNBC-TV, and WCBS-TV did broadcast CHOICES films, and WCBS-TV even took the lead in getting other stations involved. And in the end, the tough-nosed professionals who run the New York stations thought enough of CHOICES FOR '76 to award Regional Plan Association an Emmy. Yet the network-owned stations had relatively little control over the films shown on their stations because they permitted the Regional Plan Association to hire its own producers to make the films. What is suggested here is that the network assume full responsibility for making the films. The Urban Institute wishes to work closely with the producer of each film, using the person who wrote and rewrote the background paper as a technical advisor. And the Institute would like to bring in several experts and citizen leaders to comment on the film at the rough cut stage. While final decisions are up to the network, The Urban Institute only requires that there be mutual agreement between it and the network with respect to whether the final product shall be associated with the Institute. Such a relationship is quite different from having the Institute produce its own films and present them to the networks for airing, as was done in the case of CHOICES FOR '76.

At the time of my conversations with CBS and ABC, none of the national organizations mentioned above had made a commitment to help create the National Town Meetings, nor had any of the magazine editors. Conversations with NBC have only been preliminary to date. Perhaps what is most encouraging is that the National Endowment for the Humanities has found some network interest in broadcasting the American Issues Forum--though not along the lines described here. For these reasons, I remain convinced that one of the networks will be interested in cooperating with the creation of the National Town Meetings as part of the American Issues Forum.

A Final Word

It should be noted that the basic purpose of the balloting is to give the public an incentive to become quite well informed about the major choices our society will have to make in the next decade or two. By giving people a voice on these issues, leaders of government will have a way to test what an informed electorate is willing to support. Of course, courageous political leadership will still be needed to effect results. But the odds for sound decisions would appear to be enhanced.

It will not be easy to create the National Town Meetings or American Issue Forums described above. The project is bigger than any one single institution, and all of the institutions mentioned will have to stretch themselves beyond normal operating procedures in order to cooperate with the project. What has been heartening to me is the willingness of The Urban Institute, a diverse cross-section of national organizations, and the editors of a number of magazines, to plunge into new waters in pursuit of the dream of informing the American people on the real choices facing our society and of giving citizens a way to be heard as we move into our third century of American life.

Henry Grunwald, Managing Editor of *TIME*, best articulated the need and the work required when he said that the media will have to help America forge "a new agreement as to the country's meaning and goals. That will require a tremendous effort, perhaps some new habits of thought and work on the part of the press and new, broader ways of giving the public access to print and to the air."

About the Writer of this Paper

After working for small daily newspapers in Connecticut, New York State, and North Carolina, Michael J. McManus was a *TIME* correspondent in Argentina and Washington, D.C., from 1963 to 1968. His assignment in Washington was to cover the impact of the Great Society legislation in health, education, and urban affairs. While reporting a cover story on then HEW Secretary John Gardner, Mr. McManus came across the remarkable Goals for Dallas program which gave thousands of people a voice on 100 public policy goals.

Inspired by the Dallas project and its results, Mr. McManus left *TIME* to join the National Urban Coalition where he wrote case studies on effective local Coalitions and studied how other cities used television in public policy formulation. In 1969, Mr. McManus convinced the Corporation for Public Broadcasting and the White House to co-sponsor "Town Meetings on Hunger" with public television stations in Jacksonville and Washington. The White House wanted to know what the average person felt the federal role should be. So the stations produced programs posing Choices, giving citizens a way to respond with IBM card ballots distributed by churches, PTA's and civic groups organized by Mr. McManus.

With this experience, he persuaded Regional Plan Association, the nation's oldest metropolitan planning agency, to sponsor CHOICES FOR '76, a series of "Town Meetings" which involved broadcasts over all 19 TV stations between New Haven and Trenton, the publishing of ballots by 26 daily newspapers, and organizing 20,000 people in small viewing groups. After directing that project, he became a consultant to Roanoke, Hartford, Washington, D.C., Milwaukee, Corpus Christi and other cities interested in creating Town Meetings.

The J.M. Kaplan Fund, the first foundation to support CHOICES FOR '76, recently awarded a \$5,000 grant to the CENTER for Responsive Technology to enable Mr. McManus to work at launching his National Town Meeting idea.

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

To: Clay Whitehead

From: Roger Porter

Re: Congressional Schedule

August 12, 1974

Labor Day Recess

The Senate has scheduled a Labor Day recess from August 23 until September 4.

The House of Representatives has scheduled a Labor Day recess from August 23 until September 11.

Series of Presidential Messages

The timing on the series of presidential messages to the Congress is tied to the date on which Congress reconvenes in January. The 20th Amendment to the Constitution stipulates that: "The Congress shall assemble at least once in every year, and such meeting shall begin at noon on the 3d day of January, unless they shall by law appoint a different day." Congress frequently has reconvened after January 3rd depending on how late in the previous year they adjourned.

The White House Office of Congressional Liaison expects that Congress will reconvene on January 6, 1975. This is based on the assumption that there will be no post-election session. Should Congress resume activity following the November election then they would likely reconvene later in January, perhaps around the 20th.

Traditionally, the State of the Union message has been delivered within a matter of days following the commencement of the congressional session. It is followed by the Budget Message, which must be submitted within 15 days after Congress has reconvened. The President's Economic Report is traditionally submitted following the Budget Message. The State of the Union Message, the Budget Message, and the Economic Report traditionally are submitted to Congress in a period of a week to ten days.

The new Budget Reform Act will not alter this pattern. In the past, Congress has been willing to extend the date on which the Budget Message and the Economic Report are submitted for two or three days if necessary.

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