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MEMORANDUM:

TO: Lee R. Johnson, Presidential Papers Staff
FROM: Edward C. Smith
DATE: July 3, 1978
SUBJECT: White House Staff Exit Interview for the National Archives and
Records Service.

Prior to joining The White House Staff I was the Assistant Director of The Heights School in Washington, D. C. as well as an Adjunct Professor of Communications at The American University. I took a year's sabbatical from The Heights School to work at The White House as an Associate Director to Ms. Margaret "Midge" Costanza, Assistant to the President for Public Liaison.

Of the groups that I dealt with; Afro-Americans, Neighborhood and Community Organizations, Military, Religious, and Asian-American Associations, the only one that seemed to want more substance than ceremony from the Office of Public Liaison were the Asian-Americans.

The Asian-American community justifiably feels very slighted by the Administration, especially in the area of senior level appointments. They simply wanted me to employ the resources of my office to secure for their community more responsible visibility in the higher echelons of government.

The Neighborhood and Community groups primarily wanted to exercise influence in the formation of the National Urban Policy but most of them, however, also had private access to the key White House channels of decision-making and tended to utilize those resources extensively; the same conduct would also apply to the blacks and the religious organizations as well.

The Military associations, however, represent another matter entirely. I feel that the Administration has made a very serious error in not appointing a highly ranked and respected academician as well as an equally highly ranked and respected military advisor to The White House Staff.

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I cannot recall when a President's staff has been without the likes of a McGeorge Bundy, Arthur Schlesinger, Patrick Moynihan, General Maxwell Taylor, General William Westmoreland, or General Alexander Haig. To have in effect amputated these two highly influential constituencies from having direct White House input is probably going to cause the President some serious problems in due time.

Furthermore, the Administration has not seen the wisdom to take advantage of golden opportunities to bridge this very crucial constituency gap. For example, when General Chappie James died the President did not attend his funeral, although he was in town. He sent the Vice President instead, but its the President, not the Vice President, who is the Commander-in-Chief. Chappie James was a highly decorated and honored four star General who exemplified, more so than many others, the depth of the veteran's commitment to America. The President should have used the unfortunate occasion of the General's death to pay homage to his military constituents. After all, veterans perform the most wrenching form of public service, armed combat with the enemy; and there are very few American households that have not had to send some family member off to war.

Also, it appears that the inexperience and arrogance of the President's inner circle of advisors has served to separate him from individuals of tenure, insight, and vision who could be very helpful in getting his messages across to larger national audiences. The Presidency is an institution more so than an office and in many ways the President's influence rests more in the prestige than in the assumed power of the office.

The President is elected to be a national leader, not a national manager. He is expected to be a Field Marshal, not a First Lieutenant. He is expected to be on a hill examining the vast panorama of national and global problems, not in the trenches going one-on-one with individual issues. Furthermore, a President must be identified with certain national themes, if not unique at least unifying. Above all else, it is the President who must, by his manner, conduct, and vision, establish our national tone. A President's success is largely determined by how well he deals with Congress, the press, foreign leaders, career civil servants, and public interest and lobby groups. Consequently, to meet the diverse demands of each group, the President must employ all of the resources and perquisites of his office (to

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inform, educate, and influence the nation) if he is to fulfill the goals of his Administration. If he shuns them, as President Carter has demonstrated a tendency to do, or over indulges in them, as President Nixon did, a commitment to either course of action is doomed to failure. For example, I think that the decision to sell the Presidential yacht was a serious mistake. Past Administrations have made excellent use of Potomac cruise-dinners at dusk to introduce and to influence individuals to support the President's program. Contrary to the prevailing opinion of the present Administration, there is nothing devious, undemocratic, much less "imperial" about entertaining in such a manner; it is in fact expected of the office. As a matter of fact the Founding Fathers used the splendors of their plantation estates to do much of the same thing.

Furthermore, I was disappointed to learn that several key members of the President's Senior Staff wanted to close The White House Mess on the grounds that it was a relic of the era of the so-called "imperial Presidency." Such thinking represents a serious misreading of the American mind. For most Americans, The White House is this nation's Buckingham Palace, Vatican, and Notre Dame Cathedral all rolled into one. It is the only monument in America, where people actually live and work on a daily basis, that is the source of national pride and countless pilgrimages as is evidenced by the long lines of tourists who endure the weather and the wait just to get a few glimpses of a few ceremonial rooms.

The average American doesn't want the President to be just another average American. Most Americans want their President to act as special as the office and building he occupies. In fact, they may be initially amused by, but will soon tire of a President who insists on carrying his own luggage and pretending to be just like everyone else. It is interesting to note that a few weeks ago Tim Kraft, newly appointed to the Senior Staff, admitted, in a Washington Post article about the White House Mess breakfast he had arranged for key Democratic Party leaders, how much he regretted how long it has taken him and others close to the President to realize how to make greater use of the White House's impressive resources.

In closing, I appreciate the opportunity to submit these observations. I have attempted to be frank in my description of the problems of the Carter Administration because it is my feeling that if the President plans to earnestly seek reelection, he will have to come to grips with some of the views expressed in this memorandum.