

*Chron Copy*

April 18, 1984

Memo to Warren Buffett File

John H. Tanton

On April 4, 1984, Mary Lou and I visited Warren Buffett at his offices in Omaha. I had called asking for an appointment. Buffett invited us to come by at the end of the day for conversation and dinner. We ended up staying for four and a half hours. What follows is a jumble from my notes written over the next few days of the many things we talked about. I have not tried to arrange this in any order by time or topic.

Mr. Buffett is a messy-desk person. I think, no doubt, he's well organized in his head, but my rule of thumb is that the messy-desk person should get one-page letters that can be quickly responded to, and don't need to be set aside where they will get lost in the pile. He himself specifically mentioned his affinity for the one-page letter.

We talked about the Berkshire-Hathaway Shareholder Designated Contributions Program. Something over 95% of the shareholders participated. Mr. Buffett feels many of them never give money otherwise, but that this form of giving can be done without the money ever being missed, since they never see it in the first place. Other corporations could do this, despite their protests. He mentioned one of his stockholders, whom I correctly guessed to be Robert Malottes, FMC, who quite liked the program because it gave his children, to whom he has donated some B-H stock, the chance to become donors. Only 2 out of 1,790 shareholders requested anonymity for their donations. Some folks, especially the major shareholders, wanted to give to more than three charities, because they did not want these people to know how much stock they owned. I mentioned Jim Gambles' charity bank, which solves this problem. He said Charlie Munger and Jim Gamble know each other quite well. Buffett also said that some people can set up their own private foundations to solve this "problem."

We talked at great length about Peter Kiewit, the entrepreneur in the building where Mr. Buffett is housed. He gave me an article (attached) that he'd written on the Kiewit philosophy. Mr. Munger once said that if we ever wanted to approach the Kiewit Foundation, we should do it through Buffett. I had hoped to make contact with him before getting to Omaha, but there wasn't time.

I had also hoped to see John Scott, but plead a similar excuse. Scott's name was on the door of the B-H Corporation.

Mr. Buffett gave us a copy of his 1983 Annual Report. It certainly makes fascinating reading, and is written in a very homey and forthright style that says much about the man.

Buffet suggested that we get in touch with Robert Wilson, one of the nine investors mentioned in John Train's book, The Money Masters. He gave \$250,000 to New York City Planned Parenthood, apparently, in part, when challenged to do so by Munger, whom he knows.

When we got to talking about marketing ideas, and television in particular, Mr. Munger brought up Mr. Ogilvy, of Ogilvy and Mather, the big international ad firm in which B-H owns a good deal of stock. He said that Ogilvy had written to him awhile back expressing a concern about population problems. He thought he might even donate some time to us. He owns a castle in France, and spends a good deal of time (and money) there. Munger did not know if he might be a source of contributions or not. He recommended highly reading Ogilvy's first and third books. The first is called Confessions Of An Advertising Man. Matt Gallagher recently loaned me the third one. I do not have its title handy. Buffett is quite a reader, as reading his Annual Report will show. Garrett Hardin often sends him items. We should keep our eyes open for a few appropriate items that he might like to receive.

The term "Elephant Bumping" came up once again. Both Buffett and Munger use this to describe a penchant for CEOs to get together and commiserate. They form a herd. This has been useful for such groups as Urban Institute, with which Buffett is associated in some capacity. The likes of Kathryn Graham will actually get on an airplane and go somewhere to make three or four calls, fully expecting to be asked back for contributions. Robert McNamara helps them also, I believe.

We talked about keeping one's spirits up. Buffett said he really couldn't stand to work on the population and the nuclear problems directly, because it was so dispiriting. Mary Lou and I both mentioned how exercise was a help to us.

On this point, Buffett by all appearances, does not take much in exercise. Whether in recognition of this or not, at one point he said he was certain that his wife would outlive him by odds of four to one. She does like working on projects, and even working with individuals. She's happy to be involved in the distribution side of things; Warren is entirely content to make the money.

He talked about his will, and how he had written a letter to his executors telling them that he had no interest in controlling things from the grave. At one point, he'd said it would be fine with him if they spent the money all in one project--negating Henry Hyde's anti-abortion news by providing for abortion nation wide. He said the amount of money he had amassed would just about take care of that job.

He mentioned Shirley Anderson's idea that Garrett should write a syndicated column. It should be noted here that Buffett has a great interest in newspapers and owns substantial interest in The

Washington Post, The Boston Globe, and The Buffalo News. He used to write some articles, but when he floated them by his editorial advisors, they didn't feel the public would be interested.

He told us the story, recounted in the 1983 Annual Report, of Mrs. "B" from whom he had recently purchased the Baskus Furniture Mart giving her a check for \$55,000,000. It is a delightful story, worth getting the Annual Report for on its own.

Concerning the finding of managers, Buffett said it's harder as one gets older, because you don't meet as many ambitious and talented young people. He very much prefers to buy a business with the management intact.

One of the problems with the nuclear and population issues, in Mr. Buffett's view, is that people like local news. The content of most newspapers testifies to this.

Buffett caught me a bit off balance at one point by asking what it was that I most wanted to do. I asked to let this pass for a little while to think it over, and then told him that I thought the most important project was increasing FAIR's size by a factor of three or four, to get it up to the point where it truly had some political muscle. We talked about the example of the Wilderness Society. Buffett wanted to know if having members was really that important. Mary Lou and I both told him that we were convinced it was.

We talked about U.S. ENGLISH, how it had gotten on, and how I hoped it would prove useful to the immigration movement by serving as a source of members.

Buffett wanted to know if we found any more major donors. We discussed how difficult it is to find people and to bring them along, and how this had led me back to direct mail as a fund-raising technique. I asked if he was acquainted with the mechanics of direct mail. He stepped to the wall and pointed out the Pulitzer Prize that the The Washington Post had received for exposing the fund-raising machine of Boys' Town.

We talked about the Simpson-Mazzoli Bill some, and how it was currently structured. Buffett said, "The best is the enemy of the good."

We retired to a restaurant in the same building, several floors down.

Mr. Buffett said that he and his wife agree entirely on the population and nuclear issues. She has apparently put a lot of time into this. She likes to work one on one. Mary Lou and I can't remember clearly whether Buffett said his wife liked to serve on boards or whether she had had enough of that. I note that she is still actively working with Shirley Anderson, who called me earlier

in the day to tell me about some program that she and Mrs. Buffett are working on to get the astronauts and cosmonauts together.

We talked about people not being numerate, to use Garrett's term. I asked Buffett how he had come to the population problem; he said it had always been obvious to him, as it would be to anyone who understood numbers.

We talked about some of the great marketing successes of recent years such as AARP, Mutual of Omaha, McArthur's insurance empire, and that of Mr. Stone. Mutual of Omaha used to put cards in public places where people could inquire, and also check a box that said no salesman would call. One of the salesmen loved to follow up on these; he would show up on the door step, and people would point out that they checked the little box where it said no salesman would call. The fellow's reply was, "I'm as close to 'no salesman' as a God!" He usually got in the door.

On the question of trying to prevent a nuclear confrontation from escalating to the point where the missiles go off, he told the story of how the hot line was put into service when McNamara was Secretary of Defense. It had been strung from the Kremlin to the Pentagon, but not to the White House. A call came in one night from the Soviet Premier, saying "If you want war, you'll get it." They couldn't get the message to the President! A line got strung in a hurry.

We talked about working from the "outback" such as Omaha or Petoskey. Buffett clearly thinks it is possible!

He has a t.v. security system at the front door. Buffett said he had had some threats recently from paranoids who were hearing voices. He didn't seem particularly upset about this, but just said he wanted to make sure that if he got shot, they didn't take the rest of the office help with him!

Buffett wanted to know how close to the margin of the I.R.S. rules we run. He said Mr. Munger would draw the line closer than he would. I told him that we stay within the rules, but tried to do what we think needs to be done.

We talked about how politics make strange bed fellows, and how that is necessary to get some things done. Mary Lou told how she had actually shaken the hand of Henry Hyde on one occasion. Thinking columnists came up as a way to get our ideas out. Buffett has a high regard for Mike Royko.

He asked which organization was doing the best job for population control. I tried to break the question down into international and U.S. domestic, and the latter down into the natural increase side, and the immigration component. The answer to the latter one was clear, and I also gave high marks to Planned Parenthood, for actually doing something beyond the theoretical. I

didn't (and don't) have the answer on the international scene.

J. D. Williams came up for mention, and I told him he had forgiven a good many bills on our behalf. Buffett wanted to know exactly what J. D. did, and whether it came down to "paying \$5,000 for a phone call." I tried to explain his services.

Buffett is greatly interested in marketing and sales ideas. We talked about Coors Beer and its decline when it went from being something special to something one could buy in the supermarket.

Buffett does not have a suggestion for a good western congressman who might serve as a "whip" for the S-M Bill.

I asked Buffett if he would be interested in my suggestions of good things to fund in the population field, and he enthusiastically said he would.

Buffett knows a great many people, and despite his disinclination to do so, could suggest many folks who might be helpful to FAIR.

I told him I was trying to raise an extra \$100,000 for FAIR for the final push on the immigration bill. He pushed me on what it would be spent for, and I brought up the t.v. ads in particular. He was skeptical of their value. I had led into this by saying that he had mentioned that some funds might be available for FAIR towards the end of the year, but I felt I should tell him that he could get the most for his money by putting some in now. Frankly, I did not do a very good job of acquitting myself on this point, and plan to drop him a brief follow-up note.

The evening closed by Mr. Buffett asking if there was anything else we should talk about. I gave him a copy of a proposed letter of recommendation that I had drafted by hand on the way to Omaha. It was written so it could serve for both Roger and I and FAIR. There was more than one page's worth. Buffett said he would boil it down to that.

It was an enjoyable encounter. Mr. Buffett is animated, likes to tell stories, and is very matter-of-fact about his efforts and accomplishments. It will be fun staying in touch with him, and with a letter of introduction, we should be a "leg up."

JHT/nlc

Attachment

cc: Roger Connor  
Jim Hickey

(Dictated but not read.)



MEMO

TO: Warren Buffett File

BY: John Tanton

DATE: August 23, 1985

On Saturday, August 17, 1985, I called Warren Buffet at his office to learn how his supper with the Lamms had gone two days prior.

Ebullient as ever, Mr. Buffett rushed forth that he, "really liked that guy." I asked him if the conversation got around to Lamm's political future; he said that was all they talked about. Dottie sat in for the whole supper and discussions, though Dick took Warren to the airport, and at that time told Buffett about his health problems.

Buffett said Lamm was an unusual politician in that he got a spiritual rather than a psychological benefit from a spiritual rather than a psychological award from politics, though he said these are basically the same thing. Buffett would like to help out, and will do anything that is legal, and will pass the "front page in the Washington Post test."

Buffett said that Lamm is a one-of-a-kind politician. He thought he could win a campaign this time that was not too expensive, but that he could not coast in, as a lack of work would be seen as arrogance. Lamm had spoken once again of his distaste for political fund-raising.

Buffett said that perhaps his wife could take a job with FAIR or with some other group, provided that it was all "out front."

Lamm told Buffett that he needed \$125,000 a year to get by in Washington. Buffett felt Lamm should say so straight out, and go ahead and make the necessary arrangements.

They talked of a political career as a ladder with rungs on it, one that only very seldom allowed for taking time out or skipping rungs. Lamm agreed with this. He also agreed that heading the political podium was far better than the academic one. Buffett told him of his father's own political career and his own personal experience in Washington as a kid, and felt this was helpful to the Governor.

In response to my question of who else Lamm should hear from, he said that he felt he'd heard enough now, and would proceed to make up his own mind.



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Buffett encouraged Lamm to invite Governor Bob Kerry of Nebraska to the WITAN Meeting in November. He's apparently a very popular politician.

Buffett repeated that he really likes Lamm, but said that it's easy to send some other fellow into the front-lines. He felt Lamm wouldn't be happy if he didn't do this, and that if he failed in the race for Senator, it would not be catastrophic, and would have been in pursuit of something significant.

In closing, he again reiterated his willingness to support Lamm.

JHT/nlc

cc: Lamm Political File  
G. Curtis  
R. Conner  
T. Rowland

316 1/2 East Mitchell Street, #4  
Petoskey, MI 49770  
616-347-1171

October 4, 1985

Mr. Warren E. Buffett  
1440 Kiewit Plaza  
Omaha, Nebraska 68131

Dear Mr. Buffett:

I've taken this whole week off from my medical practice to work on various sundries for FAIR, U.S. ENGLISH and other projects. It's been an extraordinarily productive time, and I thank you once again for making it possible.

Enclosed is a report on the monies you are giving us to be regranted to other projects (\$20,000 in 1984; \$23,000 this year and \$25,000 in 1986). As you can see, our Pittsburgh supporter also provided a substantial sum for this purpose (also including, as in your case, some funds for running this office). This flexible pool of funds has been one of the most useful tools in our kit. I would like to expand it even further, and if you like the type of projects, we've taken on, I'd be glad to have you make that possible. Please let me know if you have any questions.

The WITAN Meeting is going ahead as planned. I hope you will be able to attend. Some materials will be coming along shortly.

Cordially,

John H. Tanton

JHT/nlc

Enclosure



November 5, 1985

Mr. Warren E. Buffett  
1440 Kiewit Plaza  
Omaha, Nebraska 68131

Dear Warren:

Thanks for coming to Denver. Lots of good ideas...we're starting in on some of these already, especially Werner Fornos's system of organizing volunteers in each Congressional District. Werner gave me a demonstration of it earlier in the week.

Enclosed is a sheet from the last FAIR Board Book on our Emergency Fund. I'd be glad to have your reaction to this--you're welcome to pass it on to other organizations if you feel it has merit. The alternative is chronic financial crisis.

Also enclosed are reports on U.S. ENGLISH:

1. July Special Appeal to prior donors (one of four we send each year).
2. The newsletter RRE (Business Reply Envelope) program (there are six newsletters per year, with no appeal for funds, only an easy means of responding if the reader is so moved).

These are the payoffs on a direct mail program: FAIR is about one-third this size.

Cordially,

John W. Tanton

JWT/nlc

Enclosures



**Federation for  
American  
Immigration Reform**

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*FAIR is a non-profit public  
interest organization working to  
end illegal immigration and set  
reasonable levels of legal  
immigration.*

316 1/2 East Mitchell Street  
Suite #4  
Petoskey, MI 49770  
616-347-1171

December 2, 1987

Mr. Warren E. Buffett  
1440 Kiewit Plaza  
Omaha, Nebraska 68131

Dear Warren:

These must be hectic times for you, but I thought you might be interested in the enclosed several pages on FAIR's work in the courts, through our legal arm called the Immigration and Reform Law Institute (IRLI).

The Simpson/Rodino Bill has been under constant siege since its passage. We have so far fought back attempts to:

1. Give special treatment to illegals not available to citizens and resident aliens in employment questions (the Pasadena, Texas case at No. III in the enclosed).
  2. Stop the U.S. Attorney in San Francisco from investigating vote fraud by illegal aliens (No. IV).
  3. Expand entitlement program to cover illegal aliens (No. V).
- Also, we:
4. Proposed and supported AIDS testing for people applying for amnesty and legal immigration.
  5. Backed attempts to delay the effect of employer sanctions.
  6. Helped pass the supplemental INS appropriations bill needed for border enforcement and employer sanctions.

7. Helped to defeat a proposed tax amnesty for illegal aliens.

8. Helped the INS hold the line on its contention that spouses and children of persons applying for amnesty must qualify on their own merits.

Mr. Warren E. Buffett  
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9. Helped to delay the passage of extended voluntary departure for Salvadorans and Nicaraguans as a group (rather than on a case-by-case basis).

10. Helped start the debate on new rules of legal immigration.

The list goes on. FAIR has not lost its way or verve in the wake of passage of the Simpson/Rodino Bill. The organization, will--perhaps unfortunately--be required for a good many years to come.

I wish this work didn't all sound so negative, but some group must argue this side of the question if we're to get a balanced result.

I hope we can count on your support again early in 1988, parallel to what you gave us in 1987.

Cordially,

John H. Tanton, M.D.  
President

JHT/nlc

Enclosures



316 1/2 East Mitchell Street  
Suite #4  
Petoskey, MI 49770  
616-347-1171

March 8, 1989

Mr. Warren E. Buffett  
The Buffett Foundation  
1440 Kiewit Plaza  
Omaha, Nebraska 68131

Dear Warren:

Mary Lou and I have been watching the "Ethics in America" series on public television, and enjoyed seeing you in the one on "Ethics in Business." We both wished you had had a bit more time to delineate your views on such things as the primacy of stockholder interests over those of management, and on the taxation of short-term, speculative capital gains. So far the series does not seem to focus much on the ethical problems confronting the proverbial "man in the street" who must make up most of the viewing audience.

Given the opportunity to make some headway in this session of Congress in the debate over legal immigration policy, I'm going to focus my attentions there for the next two years. With the 1990 Census coming along in this same time period, we will have another chance to discuss U.S. population policy. Enclosed are two articles making the connection between these two events.

We very much appreciate your recent contribution to FAIR's efforts. This will go a long way toward keeping us in this debate and helping to see that Congress and the country get a full exploration of the intertwined population and immigration questions.

Cordially,

John H. Tanton, M.D.

JHT/nlc  
Enclosures

cc: A. Greenberg