

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

March 13, 1969

TO: John Ehrlichman

FROM: The President



I was impressed at both the Congressional receptions to note the number of good ideas that members of Congress had -- particularly for domestic programs and some foreign ones -- ideas that had imagination and emotion and were not as routine as most of those that seem to come up from our White House and Cabinet teams.

I realize that about 75 percent of these ideas are unworkable, but now and then one of them really has the quality that should be considered. What happens here is that White House staffers and Cabinet members -- not being responsible to any constituency and not getting out to the country or reading any significant amount of mail from the country -- get very much out of touch with the country and become pretty ingrown and incestuous intellectually. I want you to put some very sensitive person on the project of seeing what programs are advocated in the Congress to which we might give some consideration in the Executive branch. I know that many Congressmen and Senators send their bills to the Executive Branch for consideration, and many of them are simply for home consumption with no thought that they might work. On the other hand, Clarence

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Brown has a suggestion for bonds which would give private citizens a chance to participate in the rebuilding of cities, etc., which might have an immense amount of moxie in it. And several others of this type were suggested.

What is needed here is to take this out of the Harlow group who are frankly too busy and who look upon their jobs, properly, simply to respond in a way requiring the least possible action to Congressional pressures -- and put it in some place in the executive group. Perhaps Bud Wilkinson's office is the place to put this project. Some young fellow there, like the young fellow from UCLA, might be a potential candidate, although this will take perhaps more than one and maybe two people to implement on a part-time basis. Follow through and see what you can do. (What I am interested in here now -- I wish to emphasize not to massage the Congressmen and Senators on their pet ideas, many of which are simply too far out to even consider -- but to feed into our own executive organization a little more imagination and ingenuity. I sense that we seem to be pretty short on such ideas due to the very good reason that we are simply too busy fielding the balls that are being knocked our way. Let's correct this.)