

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

July 17, 1969

MEMORANDUM FOR

THE PRESIDENT

At one point in January I had in mind to propose to you as President-elect that in your inaugural address, or on some such occasion, you propose a constitutional convention for the year 1976. Any number of things -- all of which we can discuss if you like -- concerned me but primarily the feeling that the structure of American government has not been working well of late, and that more and more persons have come to see this. It seemed to me that somehow our contemplation of this -- the crisis of confidence, the erosion of authority -- had to be raised to the highest levels of policy concern, and that a constitutional convention was the one way to do it.

There are a few things in the constitution that are offensive. As for example the counting of slaves as three-fifths of a person for purposes of representation. But more importantly, the structure of government conceived for an 18th century agrarian society just doesn't work very well any longer.

On reflection, I concluded that you would probably think me out of my mind. But Teddy White's final chapter and a recent remark by Paul McCracken (who said, in effect, that this country is doing very well in

the production of knowledge, but desperately needs a large affirmation) lead me to think that at least we might discuss the possibility in our planning board.

I have in mind a slow, steady progression. Possibly to take fifteen to twenty-five years. The risks are great. So are the possibilities.



Daniel P. Moynihan