

## Review of “Notes for Meeting with Dr. King on March 5th”

Lee White’s memo advises President Lyndon Johnson on how to approach an upcoming meeting with Dr. King on March 5, 1965, mere days before the Selma to Montgomery March. The memo does not state a problem upfront and is instead structured as a set of informative “notes.” However, the problem is embedded in the body of the memo: **Dr. King seeks a constitutional amendment, which the writer believes is unfeasible.**

White, who had gained President Johnson’s respect despite being inherited from the Kennedy administration, was **careful with his phrasing and the tone is deferential**: e.g. “you may wish” and “I presume you will want”. This memo is **written in a high-context style**, with recent events referred to, but not explained: e.g. “The King-Farmer-SNCC Memorandum” and “the order of Judge Thomas.” **Data and factual elements are used to support recommendations**, rather than relying on a narrative. The memo also points to the risks of planned sit-ins, signifying a **strategic approach rather than examining the legitimacy of protester claims**. A sense of urgency is created by focusing on the immediate challenges of passing voting rights legislation and the potential pitfalls of extensive protests.

In this memo, White makes good use of a number of the 6 C’s:

- **Clear**: In part due to being **high-context**, the memo reads to an informed reader as a clear set of talking points, with a number of specific recommendations to approach the meeting with Dr. King.
- **Credible**: The memo achieves **high credibility** by anchoring the talking points in specific events and including qualifiers (“harmful effect”) and quantifiers (“1000 to 2000 sit-ins”).
- **Compelling**: The specificity of the events mentioned **support the compelling case** made by White for his recommended strategy: that “the same well planned and intensive effort that resulted in the 1964 bill will be necessary.”

In our opinion, **White’s memo successfully provides structured advice on a specific issue.**

This memo is focused on political expediency, as seen by the advice to temper civil rights leaders’ actions that could complicate the proposed bill’s passage. While conservative, White informs the President of the intensity of Dr. King’s convictions and his advice in responding and approaching the meeting with Dr. King is clear, credible, and compelling.