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THE PRESIDENCY AND POLICY FORMULATION: THE JOHNSON TASK FORCES*

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Every modern President since Franklin D. Roosevelt has made important contributions to the Presidency and Lyndon B. Johnson is no exception. The purpose of this paper is to examine a set of significant changes which occured in the process of formulating presidential legislative programs in domestic policy areas singled out by President Johnson for special emphasis and attention. While not revolutionary, the changes constitute a substantial departure from past practices. They involve the extensive use of White House task forces as a formal means of policy formulation. We will analyze the nature of these changes and some of their consequences for national domestic policy-making, focusing on the policy areas of education and housing. We have based our findings on data obtained through interviews with participants in the policy process in those areas.[1]

The Pre-Johnson Pattern

Almost every student of American government is familiar with the pre-Johnson pattern of presidential policy formulation and especially with the development of the President's legislative program. This pattern normally involved the formulation of the legislative program almost exclusively on the basis of proposals developed by the departments and agencies and submitted to the President through the Bureau of the Budget.[2] The Bureau and the White House staff then analyzed these proposals and from their analysis the legislative program emerged. The departments and

agencies carried most of the burden of policy innovation.[3] Presumably the experience and expertise which they possessed in their special areas along with a steady input from their clientele groups would insure an adequate flow of new ideas. Although a few scholars have expressed uneasiness about the dependence of the President, the White House staff and the Bureau of the Budget on the agencies for ideas and information,[4] most political scientists have paid little attention to the operational consequences of this pattern. Some participants in the policy process within the Executive Office of the President have contended, however, that this traditional pattern has resulted in the adulteration of new ideas by internal bureaucratic considerations and clientele pressures exerted through the agencies. The result they argue, has been a tendency to repeat proposals until they eventually are adopted or until the rationale for them has long disappeared. This they have concluded, has meant a dearth of imagination in agency-oriented proposals which tend to be remedial and incremental rather than broadly innovative. As Phillip S. Hughes of the Bureau of the Budget summarized this point of view:

> ....The routine way to develop a legislative program has been to ask the departments to generate proposals. Each agency sends its ideas through channels, which means that the ideas are limited by the imagination of the old-line agencies. They tend to be repetitive--the same proposals year after year. When the ideas of the different agencies reach the departmental level, all kinds of objections are raised, especially objections that new notions may somehow infringe on the rights of some other agency in the department. By the time a legislative proposal from a department reaches the President, its a pretty well-compromised product.[5]

A partial departure from the pattern of dependence on the bureaucracy for new legislative proposals occured in the Kennedy Administration. Upon returning his party to office after eight years of Republican rule, President Kennedy moved quickly to establish a legislative program. By the time he was inaugurated, Kennedy had commissioned 29 task forces in various areas of foreign and domestic policy and 24 of them had reported back to him.[6] The task force reports served to collate for the new Administration some of the nation's best thinking on the critical problems confronting it. They also aided the new President in formulating his program. Subsequent publication of the reports enabled them to provide a ready reference for policy proposals for individuals and groups inside and outside of the government. While most of Kennedy's legislative proposals were scaled down from the broad scope of the task force recommendations, the thrust and direction of the reports survived.

Although the pre-inaugural task forces were an important innovation, they were not to be repeated. Kennedy did experiment with other variations of the task force, however. The pre-inaugural task forces composed largely of outside experts gave way to intra-governmental groups which Kennedy used to deal with foreign policy crises and domestic problems on an ad hoc basis.

The Johnson Pattern

Soon after President Johnson assumed office, he faced the necessity of developing a legislative program which could be identified as "his own." There apparently was a feeling within

the White House and in the Bureau of the Budget which the President adopted, that such a program was not likely to be developed on the basis of proposals submitted by the departments and agencies. The need to obtain outside advice and suggestions was especially critical in an Administration where most key personnel and the basic values and goals remained unchanged from those of its predecessor.

Early in 1964, a number of President Johnson's close advisers including Budget Director Kermit Gordon, presidential assistants Bill Moyers and Richard Goodwin and Chairman Walter Heller of the Council of Economic Advisers, all of whom were familiar with the pre-inaugural Kennedy task forces, suggested that the President commission a series of task forces to study specific policy areas. In order to avoid the pitfalls encountered in the Kennedy task force operation, e.g., charges of overrepresentation of intellectuals in their membership and of a consequent lack of realism in their proposals which forced the Administration to defend their reports even before they had become the basis for action, the Johnson task forces operated under a cloak of secrecy. The members agreed not to reveal their assignments to the press or to professional associates and not to disclose the substance of their deliberations or reports. The Administration promised to reciprocate.[7]

The 1964 experience with task force operations was deemed successful and was refined and developed in the following years.

Under the direction of Special Assistant Joseph A. Califano, the White House staff assumed the paramount role in setting the framework for legislative and administrative policy-making. As we have observed, policy planning prior to the Johnson Administration was primarily a function of the departments and agencies with review by the White House staff and the Bureau of the Budget. President Johnson brought that function more effectively under his control through the integration of the task force operation with legislative submissions and budget review and the creation of a small policy-planning staff under one of his key assistants.[8] The impact of the departments and agencies in the development of the presidential legislative program may still have been considerable, but it tended to come more through the participation of their policy-level personnel in White House meetings where task force reports were evaluated. A high-ranking official in the United States Office of Education (USOE) acknowledged that in the past few years "much policy development in education has moved from here to the White House." Similarly, a career official in the Bureau of the Budget observed that "at the stage of developing the presidential legislative program, the task force reports play a more significant role than any documents or proposals emanating from the agencies."

The agencies proposed a substantial amount of technical legislation which corrected defects and filled gaps in existing

statutes but many of the most important substantive contributions came from elsewhere. "The task forces presented us with meaty propositions to which we could react," recalled a former Budget Bureau official, "not the nuts and bolts stuff which we usually got from the agencies." The agencies also made major contributions to public policy in the course of drafting bills and implementing programs, but their participation in the formulative stages was somewhat reduced during the Johnson Administration.[9] Perhaps the distinction which should be made is that task forces and key presidential advisers operated at a much more general level than all but a few top-ranking agency personnel. Department and agency personnel took what were often vague task force ideas and fashioned specific legislative proposals from them. As an HEW official explained, "we had to come up with the conception of the idea in legislation, not task force rhetoric."

The processes of policy formulation in the Executive Office of the President varied widely in the period from 1964 through 1968, but a general pattern appears to have emerged in the cycle of the task force operation as it developed under Califano and his staff.[10] Each year in late spring, Califano and his assistants visited a number of major university centers throughout the country in order to glean ideas for new programs. At the same

time, the White House canvassed the Administration for new ideas. Various officials who were regarded as "idea men" were invited to submit proposals on any subject directly to the White House. This permitted them to by-pass normal bureaucratic channels and departmental and agency hierarchies. For example, according to a White House staff member, former Secretary of Defense McNamara submitted over 50 proposals on various domestic problems in one year.

After receiving them, Califano's assistants prepared written one-page descriptions of all the ideas. These "write-ups" included a "proposal" section which briefly explained the idea, a description of the problem and its relationship to on-going programs and a recommendation for action. Next, these papers were categorized and a high-level group within the institutionalized Presidency reviewed them. This group also reviewed the reports of previous task forces, presidential commissions and other advisory bodies which were filed during the course of the previous year. In 1967 this group included Califano, Budget Director Charles Schultze, his deputy Phillip S. Hughes, Chairman Gardner Ackley of the Council of Economic Advisers, Special Counsel to the President Harry McPherson and Califano's staff. Following the review, Califano and his assistants compiled a loose leaf book in which the remaining ideas were grouped by substantive policy areas. The screening

group then reconvened for a second examination after which it sent the book to the President with a cover letter indicating the areas which it felt required further study. The President and Califano then reviewed the proposals deciding either to abandon them, study them further or mark them for additional study if time and staff were available.

Further development of the ideas which were not abandoned occured through referral to individual consultants or formal advisory councils, study by departments and agencies, or examination by task forces. Reports of individual consultants are not often made public and their impact is difficult to assess. Advisory council reports usually are public documents. Their influence appears to vary with the reputations of their members, the quality of their content, and the current political significance of the subject matter. Agency studies also vary greatly in impact, but generally they can be regarded as contributing to internal bureaucratic thinking and policy development.

The assignment of a task force to examine an idea or a set of related ideas signified that the President and his top advisors regarded the problem as one of considerable significance. Although task forces did not routinely operate in all of the Great Society areas, they did function fairly frequently. In 1967 a total of 50 separate task forces were operating in various domestic policy areas. Task force assignments, which varied in

scope and purpose, determined whether their members would be drawn from people outside or inside the government or from both groups.

Outside task forces were the primary means of securing new ideas for the development of policy. According to participants on various task forces in education and housing, they received broad directives which accorded them maximum freedom to come forth with ideas. "The President," observed a high-ranking presidential staff member," wants their judgment on substance--not political feasibility."

There was some adjustment in the functions of outside task forces after 1964. In the words of one participant, the 1964 task forces were "happenings." President Johnson used the 1964 task forces as ad hoc devices to develop proposals which almost immediately became part of his legislative program. By 1966 the task forces were a normal and rather elaborate aspect of the operations of the Presidency. The President began to use them to take a long-range view of major policy areas and problems as well as to develop some immediate legislative proposals. He and his staff took steps to institutionalize the task force operation by integrating it with the highly structured and formal budget review process.

As compared to outside task forces, inside, or interagency task forces functioned more to coordinate agency approaches and to obtain some measure of interagency agreement in areas of dispute. Inside task forces also provided agencies with a

vehicle for a broad review of the reports of outside task forces. While interagency groups may have generated some new proposals, their major purpose was to provide the President with a coordinated overview of functional problems that cut across departmental and agency lines and to suggest alternative solutions to them. An important aspect of this coordinating function of the interagency task forces was to conduct a "detailed pricing out of all proposals." Members of inside task forces usually included representatives of the Bureau of the Budget and Califano's staff and agency heads or departmental assistant secretaries.

Task forces did not displace that older and more familiar advisory mechanism, the public study commission, some of which are actually authorized by Congress (e.g., the Douglas Commission in housing). President Johnson employed a number of public commissions including the Kaiser Committee, the Heineman Commission on income maintenance, the Crime Commission, and the Kerner Commission. Public commissions can, as cynics have suggested, give the illusion that something is being done to attack a problem. Establishing a commission is a safe response--it is action yet at the same time it disturbs none of the very real political opposition which would emerge if substantive action were attempted.[11] The impact of the report of a public commission is likely to be through its educational effect on public opinion rather than through direct translation into the Administration's policy proposals. Occasionally when the President has complete confidence in the commission chairman and stays in close contact with him,

the report may have a direct impact on Administration policy. This was the case with the Kaiser Committee (President's Committee on Urban Housing) in 1967-1968.

Public commissions can also function to develop support for the Administration. By establishing representative groups and then exposing their deliberations and their reports to public attention, it is possible to develop support for the recommendations. The consensus-building functions of public commissions are no doubt advantageous, but the problem associated with their use is that reports and recommendations which are at all innovative tend to be "controversial" and hence an embarrassment to the White House.[12] The noncommital response of President Johnson to the report of the Kerner Commission (President's Commission on Civil Disorders) in March, 1968 and the open criticism of the report by Vice President Humphrey and Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare Cohen illustrate the risks involved in creating public commissions--they may file reports and make recommendations which place the Administration in a less than favorable light. Nor are public commissions likely to serve as sources of information or new ideas. According to one of our respondents, "the basic ideas in the Kerner report came to us at least two years ago in various task force reports." Furthermore, most task force reports are likely to undergo more intensive scrutiny than that accorded the reports of public commissions.

Once the task forces had written their reports, they submitted them to the President and deposited them with the Bureau of the

Budget. Usually, outside task forces reported during the fall.[13] The Bureau of the Budget and the relevant departments and agencies (if the latter were consulted as they frequently but not always were) forwarded their comments directly to the White House.

Following the initial evaluation, the White House staff, under Califano's direction, took the lead in winnowing down task force proposals. (If, in the case of an outside task force report, it appeared that an interagency task force should be created, that decision was made by Califano, the Budget Director, the Chairman of the Council of Economic Advisers and the appropriate department and agency heads). In a series of White House meetings, department and agency heads and their top assistants, representatives of the Bureau of the Budget's examining divisions and of the Council of Economic Advisers and members of Califano's staff examined all task force reports. The purpose of these meetings was to secure agreement on major areas of concern and proposed courses of action. The participants received continuous direction from the President as to his priorities. After much discussion and bargaining, they developed a proposed legislative program which was presented to the President who then made final decisions on it.

The process of developing presidential legislative programs in domestic policy areas established under the Johnson Administration occured in a more or less orderly temporal sequence. (See Figure 1). It can best be described as an irregular but definite pattern which was fairly well systematized.

Figure 1

Sequence of Events in Preparing the Legislative Program:

The Johnson Administration

Idea Gathering: Visits to universities; contacts with outside experts and "idea men" in government	Internal discussions of ideas gathered	Appointment of outside task forces	Receipt and review of task force reports Agency submissions	White House meetings Final Presidential decisions on the program	Preparation of messages Introduction of bills
April/May/June	July	August	Sept/Oct/Nov	December	Jan/Feb/Mar

Task Force Operations

In order to provide a more detailed picture of the task force operation, we have analyzed some of those which have operated in the areas of education and housing. We have been able to examine carefully certain aspects of the task forces including the selection of members, the methods of operation, staffing and the evaluation of task force reports. We studied the major task forces and public commissions in housing and education from 1964 through mid-1968. These included:

In education:

1964 Gardner* Task Force
1966 Early Childhood Task Force
1967 Friday Task Force
1967 Interagency Task Force

*By popular convention, outside task forces and public commissions are usually refered to by the name of the chairman.

And, in housing;

1964 Wood Task Force
1965 Wood Task Force
1966 Klvisaker Task Force
1967 Interagency Task Force
1967-68 Kaiser Committee

Membership Selection.

The President and his top policy advisers usually selected the members of outside task forces. The selection process operated quite informally. The White House staff, the Bureau of the Budget, the Council of Economic Advisers in the case of housing, and the Office of Science and Technology in the case of education, and in some cases the concerned department or agency, suggested prospective members. The White House staff, principally Califano and his assistants, took the lead in screening the initial nominations. Then the President approved the final choices, sometimes adding names and perhaps deleting others. In 1965, for example, President Johnson added the names of Senator Abraham Ribicoff and Edgar Kaiser to the Wood task force. The acceptance rate for invitations to serve was high, especially among academics. According to one White House staff member, "only three or four out of some 250 [academics] have refused to serve. In reality, academics are anxious to be able to report privately to the President their views in critical policy areas and to do so with no holds barred."

The criteria employed in selecting members of outside task forces tended to vary with the mission of the task force. Many of our respondents emphasized the importance of independence of

viewpoint. In language resembling that which Neustadt uses in Presidential Power,[14] a White House staff member commented that "the President has to have advice from someone who knows the right answers and who has no political axe to grind." On the other hand, persons known to hold supposedly "radical" points of view were not likely to be included. A participant in the selection of members for some of the housing task forces recalled that "the names were selected on the basis of a kind of common sense soundness. We would not have picked a Michael Harrington, for example. We looked for people who had written with perspective and reasonable freshness and who haven't been in the Government for several years."

The membership of outside task forces was not as carefully balanced as that of public commissions tends to be.[15] (See Table 1) However, since task forces contributed to policy formulation and the President wanted politically saleable policies, their representativeness became a factor in selecting members, espcially when the objective was to survey a policy area and come up quickly with new legislative proposals. If a task force report was unanimous, a supporting coalition representing most of the major elements in American society would already have been constructed. Thus, the housing task forces in 1964 and 1965 were more or less representative of interests in that area. Also, some of the traditional clientele groups in the education "establishment", the Council of Chief State School Officers and the American Association of School Administrators, were represented on the 1964 and 1967 task forces. However, that representation was more apparent than real since the task force members belonging to those groups tended to be quite independent of the "establishment."

Table 1.

Representation on Outside Task Forces

Education

	State and Local Officials	College Administrators	College Professors	Business	Foundation Officials	Other
1964	3	3	2	2	2	1
1967	2	6	3	0	1	1

Housing

	State and Local Officials	College Administrators & Professors	Business	Labor	Civil Rights Groups	Interest Groups in Housing	Other
1964	1	6	0	0	0	1	3
1965	2	2	1	1	1	0	2
1967	2	5	0	1	1	0	1
1967*	1	1	10	3	1	2	0

*Kaiser Committee

Not infrequently Federal officials served on an outside task force. In 1964 the Commissioner of Education, Francis Keppel, was an ex officio member of the Gardner task force and in 1965 Budget Director Kermit Gordon and Senator Ribicoff served on the housing task force. In 1967, Secretary Gardner, Commissioner Howe and a few other HEW officials sat with the Friday task force on a number of occasions. Perhaps what is most striking about the outside task force is the extent to which academically based persons were overrepresented in their memberships. This is particularly apparent when the housing task forces are compared with the Kaiser Committee.

In selecting members of outside task forces a conscious attempt was made to avoid overrepresentation of traditional clientele groups such as the National Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials, the National Education Association and the American Council on Education. These groups had traditionally worked with and through the departments and agencies in formulating and developing policy. Once the agency role in initiating policy began to decline as a consequence of the task force operation, the access of the clientele groups to the central policy-makers also began to fall. These groups responded to their loss of effective access by criticizing the task forces:

> The task forces represent the worst form of intellectual and educational elitism. They are based on the implicit assumption that the education associations are incapable of any sort of creative or innovative thought.
>
> A representative of a higher education association.

The education task forces included non-loyalist representatives of the so-called "establishment" such as a chief state school officer and a big-city school superintendent, but they were weighted in favor of academicians. Given their fundamental purpose, to generate new ideas, this was not surprising. Education is a policy area in which there is wide agreement that serious problems exist, but great uncertainty and disagreement over appropriate solutions to them. In housing, however, task forces

tended to be more representative of the various interests involved. Unlike education, housing is an area in which the number of possible solutions is limited and disagreements are usually over matters of technique rather than fundamental differences of philosophy.

Representative task forces and particularly the public commissions also have the added benefit, for the Administration, of co-opting relatively powerful but essentially conservative elements of society for social problem-solving. As a key presidential adviser volunteered:

> We try to bring some of these elements in to, in effect, co-opt them. We rub their noses in the problem and bring them along with the solutions. Hell, some of them have never seen slums before. We take them to the ghettos and they are amazed that such things can exist. It's surprising how radical some of them become.

Procedures and Staffing.

The operating procedures of the outside task forces in education and housing followed a similar pattern. Generally, the task forces commenced with from one to three meetings[16] at which the members, in the course of reacting to one or two broad position papers, ranged over the entire subject. During the opening sessions, the task forces identified areas for future study and commissioned additional position papers. The significance of the papers is that they provided the basis for initial discussions at task force sessions. After a few more meetings, either the staff or a task force member, usually the chairman,

prepared tentative drafts of various sections of the task force reports. Further discussions focused on these drafts and the task forces began to move toward a consensus regarding their recommendations and reports.

The task forces do not appear to have used formal votes to reach their decisions, but rather the mode of decision was to bargain back and forth until they reached agreement. When members raised strong objections, efforts were made to satisfy them. According to one participant, the prevailing decisional norm established was one of acquiescence--"if the rest of you agree, then I won't make a fuss." In some cases, however, dissident members refused to yield as when Whitney Young of the Urban League opposed shifting community action programs from the Office of Economic Opportunity to HUD in 1965, because the Negro community was suspicious of HUD. As this example suggests, the members do represent their institutional affiliations during task force or commission deliberations. Indeed, a staff member of one task force commented, "The members not only actually do speak in terms of the interests of that sector of society from which they are appointed, but in many cases, they perceive their role on the task force as doing exactly that."

The secrecy of the task force operation was perhaps one of its most manifest characteristics. One task force staff member told us:

> Our task force was a C.I.A.-type operation. I felt very odd about it. We were not sure about what should be said and what shouldn't be said. There

> was no name on our door for the task force. The task force staff director simply had his own name on the door. Papers were put under lock and key every evening.

These remarks were not atypical of comments made by people who were intimately involved in the task force operation. In the eyes of the President and his staff secrecy was the raison d'etre for the task force operation. Without secrecy, they felt, the task forces would merely have become a series of public commissions and study groups and have been subject to the problems associated with that form of advisory organization.[17] Secrecy also meant that precise representational balancing of task force membership was not required. The President could appoint members to maximize the range of available experts rather than to balance interests. Or, he would "stack" the membership so as to produce a predetermined result. Secrecy also enabled the President to ignore those task force reports which did not fall within the limits of what he considered possible to accomplish. Recommendations could be adopted or rejected without having to expend energy and political resources defending the choices that were made. The range of options was not only maximized, it was kept open for a longer period of time and at very little political cost. Thus, the secrecy of the reports prevented opposition from developing to task force proposals until a much later stage in the policy process.

Perhaps the principal differences between task forces in their operations lie in the roles played by their staffs. We

found almost unanimous agreement that a competent staff is essential to a successful task force operation. Generally they were staffed with personnel from the Executive Office of the President, from various agencies, or from outside government. The Bureau of the Budget had primary responsibility for staffing the 1964 housing and the three education task forces. The education task forces also had staff assistance from the Office of Science and Technology, the National Science Foundation, the Office of Education, the Office of Economic Opportunity and the National Institutes of Health. Usually the executive director of the task force devoted full time to staff work and other individuals were "borrowed" on a part-time basis. The executive directors of the education task forces and the first housing task force were Budget Bureau officials. They assumed responsibility for recruiting other staff members who came from within the Executive Office and the agencies.

Starting in 1965, housing task forces operated with professional staffs more responsible to the White House. The exclusion of the Budget Bureau from a major staffing role in this area was apparently a consequence of the feeling in the White House that financial conservatism on the part of the staff of the 1964 task force was responsible for an overly cautious and somewhat unimaginative report. In contrast, the Budget Bureau officials who served as staff directors for education task forces tended to prod them to be more venturesome and innovative than they might have been otherwise.

The White House assigned a staff member to act as liaison to every task force. This liaison man played a major role if legislative proposals were expected from the task force. This occured when Richard Goodwin sat with the 1964 education task force and in 1965 when Harry McPherson was a vigorous participant in the deliberations of the Wood task force. The function of the liaison man with subsequent task forces, however, was mainly to represent the task force to the President and to convey his wishes to it through Special Assistant Califano. The Bureau of the Budget also maintained liaison with the task forces, primarily to keep them advised of the existence and nature ofongoing Federal programs. When a Budget Bureau official served as a staff director, he automatically provided this liaison. Moreover, Budget Bureau liaison men assumed an important role in the operations of outside task forces. This occured in 1967 when the task forces were asked to make projections at alternative budgetary levels, thus assigning priorities to their proposals.

The departments and agencies, HUD and its predecessor the Housing and Home Finance Agency (HHFA) and HEW and USOE played an ambiguous role in the operations of outside task forces. Since the manifest intent of outside task forces was to bypass the departments and agencies as major instruments of policy formulation, their officials tended to distrust task forces and to denigrate their significance. Thus, a HUD official disdainfully observed, "I think the task forces have done an

editing job that hasn't been done elsewhere and little more," while an HEW executive remarked that "the reports are kept so secret that they don't really pollinate anything."

In 1964, HHFA through Morton Schussheim was actively involved in the work of the outside task force. In spite of this liaison, however, the agency reacted negatively to many portions of the task force report. Apparently this was not appreciated at the White House, for afterward the agency was almost completely excluded from the activities of outside task forces. By mid-1966 outside task forces in housing operated within the framework of the Executive Office, but beyond the scope of direct bureaucratic influence. In interagency task forces, however, the department was likely to dominate the proceedings. One participant in the work of the 1967 housing interagency task force remarked, "interagency task forces often reflect the lead agency's legislative program. Last fall HUD did all the staff work and /Secretary/ Weaver chaired. The report would have been about the same had it simply come out of HUD without the participation of other agencies."

In education, the situation was somewhat different. Francis Keppel participated actively in the Gardner task force which largely approved his ideas and he supported its recommendations. Since he was the head of the agency, no one down the line in the U.S. Office of Education could officially react negatively to the report. There were some USOE officials, however, who informally opposed the Elementary and Secondary Education Act and the main recommendations of the task force. This apparently is what caused a former Budget Bureau official to remark that "the old-line OE bureaucrats tried to sabotage the Gardner Task Force report." HEW and USOE officials continued, however, to sit with subsequent task forces and Commissioner Howe was the key figure in the work of the 1967 interagency task force.

The evaluation of the reports of outside task forces was a flexible and somewhat unstructured process. After being sent to the President and deposited with the Budget Bureau's Office of Legislative Reference, the reports went to the Bureau's examining divisions, other units in the Executive Office and the agencies for comment. The role of the agencies in evaluation was minor, however, when compared with that of the Bureau of the Budget and the White House staff. Significantly, the same personnel from the Bureau and the White House who served on task force staffs and sat with them as liaison men were usually involved in evaluating the reports. One Budget Bureau official recalled that while "I leaned overbackward to be fair, I did feel like I was meeting myself coming back."

This dual role of the Bureau of the Budget and the White House staff produced a measure of governmental, but non-agency, input to the task forces. It meant that their reports had an Executive Office bias which was not openly acknowledged. One departmental official charged that "there is an incestuous relationship between the task forces on the one hand and the Budget Bureau and the White House on the other." (Presumably the reports are the offspring of the incestuous unions!) The Bureau was aware of the duality of its role and the problems inherent in it. As one of its officials said, "We are involved at the Bureau with task forces as participants and as critics. We have to be a force for sifting out the most workable proposals." But the dual role was perplexing and frustrating for those outside the decisional process in the Executive Office who were affected by its actions.

The extent of the evaluation accorded the reports depended, at least in part, on the closeness with which the White House

and the Bureau of the Budget followed the proceedings of the task force and the confidence which the President had in its members. The report of the 1965 Wood task force, for example, underwent relatively little review. In most cases, however, there was extensive review of the reports followed by a series of White House meetings.

When an outside task force report was found to be of little immediate value, the White House sometimes commissioned an interagency task force to develop legislative proposals. This apparently happened in 1967 when the Friday and Ylvisaker reports were followed by the creation of interagency task forces in education and housing, both of which had a major impact on the development of 1968 legislation in those areas.

Agency Reactions.

We have already observed that the reaction of many departmental and agency officials to the role of outside task forces in policy formulation was substantially negative. The principal objection was to the secrecy which surrounded the work of the task forces and the substance of their reports. While most officials recognized the rationale for secrecy, they felt that it had consequences which were adverse to their interests. One frequent complaint was that the reports tended to become standards for presidential evaluation of program performance, but that program administrators lacked access to them. According to a USOE program official:

> The task force reports are textual exegeses used by those who have access to them. It is assumed in the higher echelons that the task force position is correct. The problem for us is that our performance is evaluated in terms of the objectives set in the reports, but we do not have adequate access to them.

There is little question that the independent expert advice and suggestions obtained from the task forces proved highly valuable to the Johnson Administration in charting its general policy courses. But the Administration also recognized, apparently, that there are limits to the degree to which the President can and should insulate himself from agency influence in policy formulation. The expanded use after 1964 of interagency task forces as vehicles for legislative program development represented an effort to involve the agencies more effectively in Executive Office policy development, to ease agency resentments toward the use of outside task forces, and to promote interagency cooperation in complex policy areas like housing and education. This form of participation enabled the Administration to secure agency support and commitment to its proposals without having to yield to agency domination of their substance.

Impact on Policy.

It is, of course, impossible to measure directly the impact which task force reports have had on public policy. Our research suggests, however, that in many cases the basic concepts of President Johnson's legislative program were in large part shaped by task force recommendations. It does not appear to be mere coincidence that a sizeable number of task force proposals ultimately became a part of the Administration's program and were enacted, with amendments, by Congress. Specifically, the rent supplement