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Folder List

<u>Box Number</u>	<u>Folder Number</u>	<u>Document Date</u>	<u>Document Type</u>	<u>Document Description</u>
32	40	n.d.	Report	Continuation of Thomas and Wolman's report, "The Presidency and Policy Formulation: The Johnson Task Forces," 12 pgs.
32	40	12/04/1968	Memo	From Haldeman to Harlow, re: Task Force Reports, 2 pgs.

program authorized by Congress in 1965 was the major recommendation of the 1964 Wood task force; and, the model cities program enacted in 1966 was the major proposal of the 1965 Wood task force. One of the major innovative programs authorized in the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, Title III, clearly originated with the 1964 Gardner task force;<sup>18</sup> and, most of the recommendations of the 1966 Early Childhood task force were adopted, although at lower funding levels than those the task force recommended.

Not all task force reports, however, automatically became part of the President's legislative program. For example, only a few recommendations of the 1967 Friday task force, principally the Networks for Knowledge and the Partnership for Learning and Earning proposals, appeared in President Johnson's 1968 education message or the Administration's 1968 education bills. The muted impact of the Friday task force report can be explained in part by its focus on long-range rather than immediate problems and by the constraints which the Vietnam war imposed on the political and budgetary situations. The 1966 Ylvisaker task force also had little direct impact on policy because its recommendations were "too radical" and because its predecessors had been quite productive in terms of legislative accomplishments. As one White House staff member remarked:

The Ylvisaker report had little policy impact, partly because it was the third in a row and the first two had set policy. Actually it served as a basis for the Kerner Commission report in that it changed the framework from urbanism to racism. But,

I admit, that observation is mostly hindsight. We didn't see the report as terribly important when it came in.

Task force reports can also have a major impact through administrative actions as well as through incorporation in the President's legislative program. For example, the 1966 Early Childhood task force recommended changes in Federal welfare regulations which were subsequently adopted by the agencies involved. In addition, the possibility of task force recommendations becoming Administration policy is enhanced if a key task force participant becomes a member of the Administration. ~~E~~ This, of course, occurred in the cases of John Gardner who became Secretary of HEW and Robert Wood, who served as Undersecretary of HUD.

As one agency official observed:

Because they wrote the reports they are more likely to take up the cudgels for the task force proposals than someone else would be. What they can't get through legislation, they are likely to push for through administrative changes.

#### Appraisal and Prospects

Through the employment of secret White House task forces, the Johnson Administration developed a substantially altered pattern of policy formulation and legislative program development. The extensive, though selective, use of groups of outside experts to identify problems and issues and generate new ideas and approaches coupled with the frequent use of inter-agency task forces to temper the recommendations of the outsiders with pragmatic considerations were the basic changes. Through them the Administration sought to expand the process of policy

formulation beyond traditional reliance on the bureaucracy to develop most new policy proposals. The changes may constitute another phase in the institutionalization of the Presidency,<sup>19</sup> but they were not so highly routinized that they became permanent White House routines. Given the still highly personalized nature of the Presidency, it is by no means certain that processes within the framework of presidential activity that involve policy formulation can be quickly and indelibly institutionalized. Rather, institutionalization is a continuous and gradual process.

*criticism*  
While manifesting distinctly identifiable patterns, the operations of the task forces were highly flexible and adaptable to presidential requirements. There are signs, however, that the flexibility and adaptability of the task forces, at least in housing and education, had begun to decline as their operations became increasingly systematized and that they were tending to become elaborate instruments of incremental adjustment rather than catalytic agents of change. The problem is that a leadership technique--and that is what the task force operation is--designed to produce policy innovation worked so well initially that overuse may have rendered it counterproductive. After all, the scope for creative policy leadership is limited by circumstantial factors and even the most effective techniques can work successfully only part of the time.

It also appears to us that although the task forces were an important procedural innovation, the substantive innovations<sup>20</sup> in policy for which they have been responsible are considerably less than their advocates in the Johnson Administration have claimed. As a Budget Bureau official acknowledged, "task forces fail as innovators...All they do is

pull together existing things instead of coming up with new ideas." A staff member of a housing task force agreed: "We didn't really come up with any innovations, nor were we particularly creative." It does seem that the task forces which had the greatest immediate impact on legislation recommended programs which could more <sup>appropriately</sup> / be characterized as <sup>political</sup> / intellectual breakthroughs. For example, the rent supplement idea had been circulating for several years, the HHFA was experimenting with major elements of the model cities approach before the task force proposed it, <sup>at least</sup> and three of the five substantive titles of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, including the all-important Title I providing for massive aid to disadvantaged children, were primarily the products of other forces in the education policy system.

Furthermore, to the extent that task forces were made representative through their membership, tendencies toward innovation may have been mitigated. This appears likely since consensus was the fundamental decision-making rule and final agreement tended to represent compromise rather than creative thinking. As one high-ranking official in the Executive Office admitted, "it is true that with so many interests involved the result is, in some sense, the lowest common denominator."

However, because task forces may not have been quite as innovative (in the sense that no one had thought of their recommendations before) as their proponents claimed does not mean that essentially the same courses of action would have

been followed had they not been used. The ideas which they promoted may not have been entirely new, but they were not yet embodied in presidential policies nor, in most cases were they supported by the bureaucracy. Without outside task forces it is not likely that the supplementary educational centers and regional education laboratories or the rent supplements and model cities programs would have been pushed by the Administration and authorized by Congress at the time and form that they were. But more important than the immediate legislative consequences are the long-range effects of the task force process. They provide a means of maintaining a steady input of ideas new to the thought processes of high-level policy-makers. Unfortunately the consequences of this phenomenon cannot be measured, but its significance is manifest.

On balance, we believe that the task force operation was a significant contribution to presidential policy leadership. Many Johnson Administrative officials who served in the Executive Office of the President view the task force operation as a major institutional contribution. Whether it will survive is an open question. Much depends on future Presidents; their personalities, their attitudes toward the necessity for policy innovation and the extent to which they employ secrecy and surprise as elements of their leadership styles. The task force operation was peculiarly suited to the leadership style of Lyndon B. Johnson. It fitted

nicely with his often repeated emphasis on the need for a partnership between the public and private sectors, his life-long instinct for decision-making on the basis of consensus, and his preoccupation with secrecy.<sup>21</sup> Viewed in another way, it was a good example of what Theodore Lowi has called "interest group liberalism," a phenomenon which Lowi feels has come increasingly to characterize American politics in the 1960's.<sup>22</sup> Interest group liberalism is a philosophy which specifies that leading societal interests should all be represented in the interior processes of policy formulation.

Future Presidents are likely to utilize those features of the task force operation which they find compatible with their own styles and are appropriate to their policy objectives. ~~An innovation-minded President would find secret outside task forces to be most useful for purposes of broad policy planning. In this context, he could employ them to identify problems, pinpoint issues and suggest alternative solutions to them. It is likely that these task forces would develop some new ideas independently, but more importantly they would function to collate and bring to the attention of the President and other top policy-makers innovative and creative thinking done elsewhere. On the other hand, such a President could not expect them regularly to develop the specifics of proposed legislation. He could more appropriately assign that function to interagency task forces working in conjunction with policy planners in the departments and agencies. The President would also find that outside task forces are more suitable than~~

public commissions for reaching out and acquiring fresh ideas and approaches. They do not tend to be as concerned with the balancing of societal interests as commissions, by their very nature, must be. Correspondingly, however, commissions are more appropriate for developing a consensus behind a set of policy recommendations.

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In determining whether to employ outside task forces in the processes of policy formulation, the President who is intent on innovation must assess the costs and gains associated with their use. In addition to being a most promising means of generating new ideas, outside task forces will afford him a maximum range of options which can be kept open over a long period of time with a minimum of energy required to defend his choices. The principal costs are the resentments which the task forces engender in the bureaucracy and among powerful clientele groups. These costs can be reduced somewhat by balancing interests in selecting task force members, thus rendering them somewhat more like public commissions, and by reliance on interagency task forces to review outside task force recommendations and to take the lead in developing specific legislative proposals. To the extent that the President takes these counter-measures, however, he risks losing some of the potential gains to be derived from the use of outside task forces. Unfortunately, our information is not sufficient and measuring instruments lack the precision to permit a more definitive assessment of such costs and gains. Whatever the goals of future Presidents, it is certainly expected that they will examine carefully



the uses of presidential task forces during the Johnson Presidency and that some elements of the task force operation will become permanently institutionalized.

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## Footnotes

<sup>1</sup>We obtained our data in the course of conducting more comprehensive studies of the Federal policy-making processes in the areas of housing and education. We selected those areas because, as major sectors of President's Johnson's Great Society, substantial redistributive policies have been enacted within them since 1965. (The distinction between regulatory, distributive and redistributive policies is Theodore J. Lowi's. See "American Business, Public Policy, Case-Studies and Political Theory," World Politics, 16 (1964). Redistributive policies have broad impact, produce considerable conflict and tension and can result in altered relationships between the Presidency, the bureaucracy and clientele groups.

A comparison of our initial findings suggested further examination of the process of formulating the President's legislative program and of President Johnson's use of task forces.

Our respondents, for this phase of the study, included five members of the White House staff, seven Bureau of the Budget officials, and 32 department and agency officials and task force participants.

<sup>2</sup>The best description of this process and its development to the point of almost total dependence on agency submission of proposals by the early years of the Eisenhower Administration is Richard E. Neustadt, "The Presidency and Legislation: Planning the President's Program," American Political Science Review, 49 (1955) pp. 980-1018. See also Neustadt's "The Presidency and Legislation: The Growth of Central Clearance," Ibid., 48 (1954) pp. 641-670.

The classic studies of the Presidency have not examined in any detail the process of presidential policy formulation. See, for example, Edward S. Corwin, The President: Office and Powers, 4th ed., (New York: New York University Press, 1957) Chapter VII; and, E. Pendleton Herring, Presidential Leadership (New York: Farrar and Rinehart, Inc., 1940). However, more recent institutional analyses have begun to do so. See Joseph E. Kallenbach, The American Chief Executive (New York: Harper and Row, 1966) pp. 341-344; and, Louis W. Koenig, The Chief Executive (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1964) pp. 166-183.

<sup>3</sup>See <sup>Leiper</sup>J. Lipeer-Freeman, "The Bureaucracy in Pressure Politics," The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, Vol. 319 (1958) pp. 11-19.

<sup>4</sup>Arthur W. Maas, "In Accord with the Program of the President," in Carl J. Friedrich, ed., Public Policy, Vol. 4 (1953) pp. 79-93. Maas stated that the President needed staff in addition to the Bureau of the Budget "to meet the 'need for positive origination at the center of broad . . . objectives' and policies so that adequate 'leadership and direction' are given to the development of his program."

<sup>5</sup>Quoted in William E. Leuchtenberg, "The Genesis of the Great Society," The Reporter, April 21, 1966, pp. 36-39.

<sup>6</sup>See Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., A Thousand Days: John F. Kennedy in the White House (New York: Fawcett World Library, 1967) pp. 148-154. Texts of the reports appear in New Frontiers of the Kennedy Administration (Washington: Public Affairs Press, 1961).

<sup>7</sup>For an account of the establishment of the task forces in 1964 and their role in developing the legislative program of the Great Society, see W. E. Leuchtenberg, op. cit.

<sup>8</sup>A sharp differentiation of the functions of policy-planning and legislative liaison has occurred on the White House staff with the policy-planners enjoying greater influence and status. See Thomas E. Cronin, "The Presidency and Education," Phi Delta Kappan, February, 1968, pp. 295-299.

<sup>9</sup>Louis Koenig's prediction, made in 1964 at the outset of the Johnson Presidency, that the White House staff would play a reduced and the old-line departments a greater role in policy-formulation has not proved correct. The reverse has occurred. Op. cit., pp. 182-183.

<sup>10</sup>This description is based on our interviews. See also the description of the preparation of the 1968 State of the Union message in "Formulating Presidential Program is Long Process," Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report, January 26, 1968, pp. 111-114.

<sup>11</sup>See Elizabeth Brenner Drew, "On Giving Oneself a Hotfoot: Government by Commission," Atlantic, Vol. 221, May, 1968, pp. 45-49. In her barbed though highly perceptive article, she lists several uses of public commissions including: to postpone action yet be justified in insisting that you are at work on the problem; to act as a lightning rod, drawing political heat away from the White House; and to investigate, lay to rest, rumors and convince the public of the validity of a particular set of facts.

A highly placed official on the White House staff commented that "there's a hell of a lot of truth to some of the things in Drew's article. However, in some cases we do expect new and important things to come out of public commissions."

<sup>12</sup>Cf. Daniel Bell, "Government by Commission," The Public Interest, No. 3 (1966) pp. 3-9.

<sup>13</sup>We say usually because the entire process of policy formulation is flexible and somewhat unstructured. What happens in any given case may be and often is dependent on ideosyncratic personal and situational variables. There is a great temptation for the political analyst to impose a more rational order on the patterns of the governmental process than may be empirically justified. See James M. Burns, Presidential Government (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1966) p. 143. Burns cites the highly relevant comments of Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., based on his experiences in the White House during the Kennedy Administration: "Nothing in my recent experience has been more chastening than the attempt to penetrate into the process of decision. I shudder a little when I think how confidently I have analyzed decisions in the ages of Jackson and Roosevelt, traced influences, assigned motives, evaluated roles, allocated responsibilities and, in short, transformed a dis-dishevelled and murky evolution into a tidy and ordered transaction. The sad fact is that, in many cases, the basic evidence for the historian's reconstruction of the really hard cases does not exist--and the evidence that it does is often incomplete, misleading or erroneous." From "The Historian and History," Foreign Affairs, Vol. 41 (April, 1963) pp. 491-497.

<sup>14</sup>R. E. Neustadt, Presidential Power (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1960, passim).

<sup>15</sup>Drew criticizes the balancing of interests on public commissions on the ground that it tends to immobilize them. Op. cit., p. 47. Bell is more sympathetic toward the representational aspects of commissions, op. cit., p. 7.

<sup>16</sup>These meetings, which usually lasted for one or two days, were held on a monthly or bimonthly basis.

<sup>17</sup>See Drew, op. cit.

<sup>18</sup>There was a considerable difference of opinion among our respondents regarding the impact of the Gardner task force on the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. Those individuals who commented from the perspective of the bureaucracy--USOE-HEW--asserted that aside from Title III, the task force functioned only to crystalize ideas that had been circulating for some time and to legitimize policy planning done elsewhere in the educational policy-making system. On the other hand, observers in the Executive Office of the President claimed that Title IV, and to a considerable extent Title I, owed their existence to the task force. While it is not possible to measure the amount of variance in policy for which the task force accounted, it seems clear that it was a variable of considerable significance. See Stephen K. Bailey and Edith K. Mosher, ESEA: The Office of Education Administers a Law (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1968) pp. 39-42.

On the difficulty of tracing the origins of new policies, see Adam Karmolinsky, "Ideas into Programs," The Public Interest No. 2 (1966) pp. 70-77.

<sup>19</sup>Cf. Lester G. Seligman, "Presidential Leadership: The Inner Circle and Institutionalization," Journal of Politics, Vol. 18 (1956), pp. 410-426.

<sup>20</sup>The problem of defining innovation is a familiar one which does not lend itself to any easy solution. As we view it, policy innovation includes the conception of ideas as well as giving substance and form to them. Cf. Victor A. Thompson, "Bureaucracy and Innovation," Administrative Science Quarterly, Vol. 10, (June, 1965) pp. 1-20. Thompson defines innovation as "the generation, acceptance, and implementation of new ideas, products or services."

<sup>21</sup>See Rowland Evans and Robert Novak, Lyndon B. Johnson: The Exercise of Power (New York: New American Library, 1966).

<sup>22</sup>T. J. Lowi, "The Public Philosophy: Interest-Group Liberalism," American Political Science Review, Vol. 61 (1967) pp. 5-24.

MEMORANDUM

December 4, 1968

TO: BRYCE HARLOW  
FROM: BOB HALDEMAN  
RE: TASK FORCE REPORTS

Based on the general discussion at this morning's meeting, I would strongly suggest that we go ahead with plans for each task force, or group of task forces, to be prepared to have its progress report meeting here at the Pierre Hotel. We should start with the first one as soon as possible after December 10th.

In each individual case I would suggest that the task force submit its report in writing to your review committee, or to the President, via your review committee, and that the entire group plan to meet here at the Pierre approximately four days after the written report is in hand. The first part of the meeting would be with the full review committee and concerned cabinet officers as well as concerned members of Congress. This would be a private, closed meeting, but the fact that it was being held would be announced. The chairman of the task force would then come upstairs, meet briefly with the President, and then escort the President down to the group meeting where he, RN, would have an opportunity briefly to thank the members of the group for their fine work and possibly to discuss a particular point or two of the report with them.

The press would be permitted to come in at this time, for pictures only. Following this session, the chairman of the task force should be made available to the press to answer questions regarding the general content of the report.

It would be understood, of course, that the task force continue with its work, perhaps with some modification of membership, and that it would be used as Dr. Burns suggested, to review questions as they arise in the particular field.

Hopefully, these sessions would be scheduled at fairly frequent intervals, even two or three a day, from December 10th through December 20th. It would be helpful if as many of the reports as possible would be in prior to Christmas. With regard to RN's schedule, it should be noted that from the 21st on, he will be involved in the wedding and Christmas vacation.

Then, shortly after the first of the year, the balance of the reports could be handled in the same fashion. Perhaps around January 10th, with the hope that all the work would be in by that time, the dinner for all task forces and the cabinet officers could be held at the Plaza as was suggested.

It is going to be difficult to get this process in motion and keep it going unless we get started quickly, and I think that if the plan outlined above is not one you want to follow, we should get an alternative plan developed right away, and get something started.