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The Academic Origins  
of John F. Kennedy's New Frontier

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A Thesis

in

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of

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**ABSTRACT**

The Academic Origins of John F. Kennedy's New Frontier

Panagiotis Hatzis

This thesis seeks to introduce the reader to the underpinnings on which John F. Kennedy's 1960 Presidential campaign was based. Well before Kennedy declared his candidacy for Democratic Party nomination for President he gathered together a group of academics from in and around the Boston area and formed his own personal think tank in much the same way that Franklin D. Roosevelt did before his Presidential campaign of 1932.

Unlike Roosevelt, Kennedy did not call his group a Brains Trust, instead he chose to call his collection of professors the Academic Advisory Group. This treatise will establish the Academic Advisory Group's existence, flesh out its mandate, identify its creator and map out its evolution from its earliest origins to the interregnum prior to John F. Kennedy's Inauguration.

The aim is to identify some of the key players within the Group and show how they individually and collectively related to the candidate and his campaign. Essentially, this treatise will examine the details surrounding the speech-making process of a Presidential campaign, and answer three distinct questions: who advised Kennedy; what was he told; and did he heed the advice he was offered?

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## Foreword

Behind the scenes of every Presidential election campaign is an army of individuals whose job it is to create the speeches and declarations of a Presidential candidate. Traditionally, the people who have written the speeches have always been assistants to the candidate or perhaps writers by profession who have been hired to help during the campaign. Where a candidate and his speechwriters find the ideas and inspiration to create a political platform to run on has usually been a murky sort of subject. We can read and hear the speeches of a Presidential campaign, but we have not always been able to pin down the origins of a particular speech or policy initiative. Where Presidential candidates get their information and/or inspiration is hardly ever as clear as the fact that they always manage to come up with both of these things when required by circumstances.

In only one case to date have we been able to ascertain the intellectual origins of a Presidential campaign in a thorough manner. Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal was the creation of a group of academics from Columbia University. These men helped draft Roosevelt's election program and later worked in his administration.



He called them his Brains Trust.

Franklin D. Roosevelt's Brains Trust is, one of the best examples to date of the blending of intellectualism with the pursuit of the Presidency. F.D.R. went out of his way to recruit this small band of academics to advise him on policy and to help draft his speeches and declarations as a candidate. Several books have been published on the role that this group of professors had on FDR's candidacy. Rexford G. Tugwell, Raymond Moley, and Adolf A. Berle were all participants in the Brains Trust. Tugwell and Moley<sup>1</sup> both penned volumes on what they recalled of the deliberations of this group and the influence it had on Roosevelt.

The work which this group of academics did for F.D.R. was extensive, so much so that one cannot even begin to talk about the New Deal without mentioning the fact that its origins are to be found in the workings of the Brains Trust. In addition, Moley and Tugwell were both appointed by President Roosevelt to work within his administration. Both of these men worked closely with the President and were publicly seen to be influential; this in spite of the fact that

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<sup>1</sup> Adolf A. Berle never wrote a volume on his time spent with Roosevelt although he did leave his personal papers to the Roosevelt Presidential Library in Hyde Park. His biography has been written by Jordan A. Scharwarz. Liberal, Adolf A. Berle and the Vision of an American Era.

before having met Roosevelt neither of them had had much political experience.

None of these men were directly responsible for any additional votes or influence within the party or the electorate, nor could any of these men be considered politically important, yet they nevertheless played a large role in the creation of the New Deal. Whatever clout they had with the President came from their eloquent and thoughtful discussions with Roosevelt. They were intellectuals in the service of a very partisan politician. Their role in FDR's Presidential campaign has been considered the most well-documented case in American political history<sup>2</sup>.

In late 1959 and early 1960, another Democratic Presidential candidate turned his attention to the academic community, in the hopes of gathering support and some much-needed expertise. John F. Kennedy also developed his own Brains Trust, which he named the Academic Advisory Group. It was made up of professors from in and

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<sup>2</sup> Adlai Stevenson, twice Democratic Party Presidential Nominee, in 1952 and 1956, did make use of some aid offered by a couple of academics, most notably John Kenneth Galbraith and Arthur Schlesinger Jr.. They helped write speeches during his presidential campaigns. No formal organization was put in place by Stevenson before his run for the Presidency to help formulate policy initiatives or educate the candidate to the issues that might confront him as candidate. Stevenson's efforts in this regard pale in comparison to either Roosevelt's or Kennedy's.

around Boston, although there were a few from other regions of the country as well. This group of nearly two dozen men and one woman acted as the candidate's personal think tank. They helped him sift through all manner of policy issues. They drafted many of his speeches and answered his questions on every sort of issue throughout the 1960 Presidential campaign.

Although they have not been linked extensively before, the political campaigns of John F. Kennedy and Franklin D. Roosevelt did have some things in common, the most noteworthy of these being their use of academics during their respective election campaigns and during their administrations.

The second had to do with their popular political profiles. Both men were considered, first and foremost, to be amiable sorts of gentlemen, who just happened to want to become President. Neither man was considered a political or intellectual heavyweight by their contemporaries. Both had strong familial reasons for seeking out the Presidency; FDR was literally following in the footsteps of his cousin Theodore Roosevelt and Kennedy, according to some, was driven by his father's desire for political power and acceptance. Each man's family had had its own taste of political power when both men were

at an impressionable age.

Before becoming President, Roosevelt was thought of by many contemporary commentators of his age to be a unlikely politician. In the opinion of Walter Lippmann,

Franklin D. Roosevelt is no crusader. He is no tribune of the people. He is no enemy of entrenched privilege. He is a pleasant man who, without any important qualifications for the office, would very much like to be President.<sup>3</sup>

To Lippmann, Roosevelt was little more than a “country squire”<sup>4</sup>, and Bernard Baruch, another contemporary commentator, called FDR a “boyscout”<sup>5</sup>. Neither man thought highly of FDR.

In the early 1930's, the Democratic party was split broadly into internationalist and nationalist wings. FDR tried very hard to appeal to both wings of the party. During the run-up to the nomination he tried to span the entire spectrum of the Democratic Party, purposely making his own position murky. Many of his supporters clashed over just where the candidate stood on such issues as tariffs and

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<sup>3</sup> Elliot A. Rosen, Hoover, Roosevelt and the Brains Trust, From Depression to New Deal, New York, NY, Columbia University Press, 1977, pg. 96.

<sup>4</sup> Rosen, pg 96

<sup>5</sup> Rosen, pg. 96

trade. This ambiguity gave Roosevelt a base in both parts of the party.

Kennedy had many of the same qualities ascribed to him during his quest for the Democratic Nomination for President. JFK was also seen as a political dilettante. He had not been a very serious Congressman or Senator. He had, during different parts of his political career, been seen as both a political conservative, and as a liberal. During the primary campaign for the nomination, he was able to attract old-time conservative city bosses along with liberal intellectuals.

Another similarity may be seen in the way that both men handled delicate political problems put before them. For instance, during the period when he was Governor of New York, from 1928 to 1932, Roosevelt was never able to come to grips with Tammany Hall and its influence in New York City politics. Tammany Hall was seen as notoriously corrupt in its operations by many progressives in the Democratic Party. Roosevelt never tried to reform or to correct how Tammany Hall did things while he was Governor. This lack of reforming zeal made him seem suspect to some progressives in the party.

Kennedy, for his part, had also had an opportunity to express himself in favour of the progressive/liberal wing of the Democratic Party. He could easily have voted on the censure of Senator Joseph McCarthy, but he failed to do so. This lack of action hurt his standing among liberals.

Finally, neither man had a clearly defined political program before entering the race for the Democratic nomination. Both sought out the aid of academics to help form a coherent political program to put before the electorate.

Most of the work done by John F. Kennedy's Academic Advisory Group has remained obscure, hardly mentioned in any of the biographies of the man or his administration. There is one particular academic, however, whose role has been well-defined in the Kennedy historiography. Harris Wofford, a Professor at Notre Dame Law School and a well-known supporter of civil rights, left his teaching position in the spring of 1960 to work for JFK as his principal advisor on civil rights and the director of the civil rights research section of Kennedy's Presidential campaign.<sup>6</sup> The candidate

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<sup>6</sup> The description of JFK's reaction to Martin Luther King's imprisonment in October of 1960 has been described in various other memoirs of the time, the most noteworthy being Arthur A. Schlesinger's A Thousand Days: John F. Kennedy in the White House, Theodore Sorensen's Kennedy, and

had actually tried to get Wofford to join his staff almost a year earlier, but the professor felt that he could not easily give up his position at Notre Dame on such short notice.

That did not prevent him from working for JFK in his spare time while still teaching. Wofford was still very involved and supportive of Kennedy in spite of his distance from Washington. It was he who undertook the challenge of editing The Strategy for Peace, a collection of Kennedy's speeches, for the candidate in 1960. Wofford writes that he felt

Goaded by the continuing opposition to the Senator among academics and liberals generally, and especially by those who discounted his ability in world affairs but had never read one of his speeches, I suggested that his foreign policy talks should be collected, edited, and published as a book.<sup>7</sup>

The book was a concerted effort to establish Kennedy as a knowledgeable politician with a strong background in foreign affairs. Its market was to be the "editors, scientists, columnists, educators, reporters, authors, publishers, labour leaders, clergymen, [and] public

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Theodore H. White's The Making of the President 1960. Wofford's description of this episode is by far the most detailed one so far published.

<sup>7</sup>Harris Wofford, Of Kennedys and Kings, Pittsburgh, Pa., University of Pittsburgh Press, 1980,1992, pg. 40.

opinion leaders" all across America.<sup>8</sup> The aim was to help win over the intellectual and liberal establishment, within the Democratic Party and elsewhere, whom Kennedy and his advisors felt he needed in order to obtain the nomination and win the November election.

Once the school year was over, Wofford made his way to Washington to take up his position within the machinery of the campaign. He was formally responsible to Sargent Shriver, Kennedy's brother-in-law and arguably the most liberal member of the Kennedy clan, whose area of responsibility included civil rights, among other things. It was in this advisory capacity that Wofford was to have his greatest impact on the campaign and the candidate. In the last weeks of the Presidential campaign Martin Luther King, Jr. was imprisoned in Atlanta on October 19, 1960, for taking part in a lunch-hour sit-in at the Rich's Department Store lunch counter, which maintained a policy of segregation. Wofford had worked closely with Reverend King in the past, even marched with him in demonstrations. What's more, he considered King a personal friend. Wofford felt strongly that he had to do something. On October 23, 1960 he called Morris Abram, an Atlanta lawyer, and asked him a

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<sup>8</sup> Wofford, pg. 40.



simple question “Why is Martin still in jail?”<sup>9</sup> Abram said he was on his way to meet the mayor of Atlanta and would do what he could to get King out of jail. Wofford reminded Abram that “Kennedy did not know of my call...but would appreciate a satisfactory resolution, with King’s release from jail as soon as possible.”<sup>10</sup>

Unknown to Wofford, the Mayor of Atlanta, William Hartsfield, used the short phone call to Abram as a bargaining tool to get the civil rights leaders to agree to a thirty-day moratorium while the mayor worked with business leaders to desegregate the lunch counters. In the mean time, the arrested protesters, including King, would be released. The simple knowledge that a Presidential candidate was interested in the plight of black men and women in the south had been enough to ease tensions in the struggle for civil rights.

Upon hearing of this in a telephone call from the mayor, Wofford saw that he had a problem on his hands. He had made his phone call without the prior approval of Kennedy or any of the campaign directors. Furthermore, Mayor Hartsfield informed him

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<sup>9</sup> Wofford, pg. 14.

<sup>10</sup> Wofford, pg. 14.

that he was putting out a press release detailing Kennedy's involvement immediately. <sup>11</sup>

Wofford wasted no time in reaching the candidate while he was campaigning. He explained the situation and the need for a statement to be issued in Kennedy's name to back up the Mayor and solidify the agreement. This was done after much argument. No one in the campaign, least of all the candidate, wanted to do anything to upset the southern segregationist Democrats whom Kennedy was counting on for support. <sup>12</sup>

This should have ended the matter for all the participants concerned, but it did not. Unbeknownst to anyone, a southern judge in De Kalb county, Georgia intervened and sentenced King to four months in Reidsville state prison. King had earlier been stopped for a minor traffic infraction<sup>13</sup>, and sentenced to twelve months probation and a \$25.00 fine. The county judge held that King's involvement in the sit-in violated his probation and had reinstated the earlier conviction. The judge further denied King the option of

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<sup>11</sup> Wofford, pg. 14-15.

<sup>12</sup> Wofford, pg. 14-15.

<sup>13</sup> King had been stopped for driving in Georgia without a license. The fact that he had his valid Alabama license with him at the time, did not count.

posting bail, thus insuring his incarceration. These actions complicated matters enormously, intensified the situation for the civil rights movement and made things more dangerous for Dr. King. Coretta Scott King now began to fear for her husband's life.<sup>14</sup>

In the days that followed his incarceration, Wofford, with Kennedy's approval, tried hard to get King released by working with the Democratic Governor of Georgia, Ernest Vandiver. Wofford wanted Kennedy to issue a statement, "that would increase the pressure for King's release and improve Kennedy's standing among Negro voters."<sup>15</sup> Kennedy was not eager to issue any statements. In the end the Governor of Georgia

promised to get "the son of a bitch" released if Kennedy would refrain from any further public statement. "I agreed," Kennedy told [Wofford] me. "What we want most is to get King out, isn't it?"<sup>16</sup>

Wofford agreed with his boss on that point and waited to see when King would be released. In the meantime, a very frustrated and distraught Coretta King phoned Wofford to inquire about what

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<sup>14</sup> Wofford, pg. 15-17.

<sup>15</sup> Wofford, pg. 16.

<sup>16</sup> Wofford, pg. 16.

was being done. Wofford tried to reassure her without mentioning the agreement or Kennedy's involvement, but ended up justifiably frustrated about only being able to tell her "that we were doing everything possible."<sup>17</sup> It was after this call, and after discussing the predicament with an associate in the campaign, that Wofford decided that Kennedy should call Coretta King to express his concern and sympathy for her husband and the situation.

Wofford contacted Sargent Shriver, and suggested that Kennedy call Mrs. King to express his concern and sympathy for her husband's situation and assure her that everything that could be done was being done to help. Shriver agreed to help him do it. He tracked down the candidate, waited until he was alone with him (so no advisor could foil his plan), and asked Kennedy to call Mrs. King. Kennedy agreed on the spot and phoned her immediately.

The effect of that one phone call was enormous. It did nothing to speed up Dr. King's release, but it did, however, have a profound effect on blacks all over the country. All Kennedy did was comfort a justifiably scared woman in a desperate situation, but to black civil rights leaders and influential black Protestant clergymen it was an

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<sup>17</sup> Wofford, pg. 17.

impressive and important gesture of recognition. It showed that he cared.

Throughout this entire episode, the Eisenhower Administration and the Republican nominee, Richard Nixon, were completely silent. At no time did they comment on what was happening in Georgia. Kennedy's small public gesture was in stark contrast to the silence and inaction of the Republicans.

Up until that moment the Black community in America had been very leery of Kennedy's Catholicism. Most blacks in the United States were Protestants and had been lining up to vote for Nixon. They had trouble even imagining a Catholic in the White House. All of that changed after Kennedy's phone call.

The father of Martin Luther King, a Baptist minister himself, who had come out for Nixon a few weeks earlier on religious grounds, now switched. "Because this man, said the Reverend Mr. King, Senior, "was willing to wipe the tears from my daughter[in-law]'s eyes, I've got a suitcase of votes, and I'm going to take them to Mr. Kennedy and dump them in his lap." Across the country scores of Negro leaders, deeply Protestant but even more deeply impressed by Kennedy's action, followed suit.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Theodore H. White, The Making of the President 1960, Atheneum House Inc., New York, New York, pg. 363.

Although not widely published at the time, Kennedy's brother and campaign manager also made a phone call with regards to King's imprisonment. Robert Kennedy went so far as to contact the judge who had incarcerated Dr. King and berate him to let King out on bail. Ethically speaking, such an action by Robert Kennedy was highly questionable. It did not, however, have any long-term negative fallout for the campaign.

Wofford's advice in this case proved to be right on the mark. The election proved to be extraordinarily tight. In the end, Kennedy's plurality over Nixon on election night was 119,450 votes. This one small action moved a solid majority of black electors from voting against Kennedy on religious grounds to voting for him in response to his perceived sense of compassion for the black community in America, as personified in Martin Luther King.<sup>19</sup> Kennedy was viewed, at least symbolically, as a defender of civil rights for the first time, attracting blacks from all over the United States to his cause. The traditional anti-Catholic position of many black Americans was overcome. More than two-thirds of all black

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<sup>19</sup> For a detailed analysis of the 1960 Presidential vote and a breakdown of the Black vote see chapter 14 of Theodore H. White's The Making of the President 1960.

Americans voted for Kennedy on election night. “Moreover, a higher proportion had voted-and had voted Democratic-than in 1956.”<sup>20</sup>

Given the closeness of the election and the decisive manner in which the black vote split, it would be impossible not to see the important roles which civil rights and race relations played in the election of 1960. This particular event along with Harris Wofford’s role in the campaign, has been well-documented in many Kennedy biographies and in the histories of his Administration. We also have Wofford’s own memoir. Unfortunately this is not the case for the many other academics that also chose to aid John Kennedy in his quest for the White House. We know that Kennedy’s administration was filled with academics, who joined him in Washington and helped to staff the *New Frontier*.<sup>21</sup> Up until now we have known little or nothing about how and why Kennedy was able to attract so many of these individuals to serve in his government.

The study of the Academic Advisory Group has provided some

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<sup>20</sup> Wofford, pg. 25.

<sup>21</sup> The *New Frontier* was the name given to the Kennedy campaign for the Presidency. It too was copied from FDR’s New Deal, which itself was derived from Woodrow Wilson’s New Freedom program. It referred to the uncharted decade of the 1960’s and its perception as a *New Frontier* for exploration. It has since that time become synonymous with the Kennedy Administration and was also a creation of the Academic Advisory Group.

interesting challenges with regards to research. No previous history of this Group exists. John F. Kennedy's Group garnered few headlines in the press during its time. The vast majority of the articles which were written only established its existence, not its role within the campaign, so that few people knew anything about the Group during the campaign. Almost all of its work was done behind closed doors, and only a few of the histories of this President even mention the Group's existence, and none of them detail how this Group worked<sup>22</sup>.

This is the story of a Group of academics who chose to become involved in a partisan political struggle to make Kennedy their President. Up until now, their place in the political history of the United States has largely been overlooked. Few people know who these individuals were or what they did for their candidate. This short essay will establish the Academic Advisory Group's existence, flesh out its mandate, identify its creator and map out its evolution from its earliest origins to the interregnum prior to John F. Kennedy's

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<sup>22</sup> Unfortunately, the copies of the group's working papers and various speeches and memoranda have not been carefully preserved over time. The JFK Presidential Library in Boston has, at best, only a portion of the material that was produced by the group. The Chairman of the AAG, Archibald Cox, deposited his papers in the Harvard Law School Library. They too are incomplete. Given these limited resources, the treatise that follows must be considered as an introduction to this area of study. The primary sources cited here are the sum total found by this researcher.



Inauguration. The aim is to identify some of the key players within the Group and show how they individually and collectively related to the candidate and his campaign. Essentially, this treatise will examine the details surrounding the speech-making process of a Presidential campaign, and answer three distinct questions: who advised Kennedy; what was he told; and did he heed the advice he was offered?

In providing a more complete picture of the workings of Kennedy's Academic Advisory Group, it is hoped that the political history of the times will be enriched and that a more complete picture of what occurred during the campaign will be made available.

**List of Abbreviations**

<b>AAG</b>	<b>Academic Advisory Group</b>
<b>AI</b>	<b>Author Interview</b>
<b>FHA</b>	<b>Federal Housing Authority</b>
<b>FOC, Part 1</b>	<b>Freedom of Communication, Final Report of the Committee on Commerce United States Senate, Report 994, Part 1, The Speeches, Remarks, Press Conferences and Statements of Senator John F. Kennedy, August 1, 1960 to November 7, 1960, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C., 1961.</b>
	<b>FOC, Part 3 Freedom of Communication, Final Report of the Committee on Commerce United States Senate, Report 994, Part 3, The Joint Appearances of Senator John F. Kennedy and Vice President Richard M. Nixon and other 1960 Campaign Presentations, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C., 1961.</b>
<b>HLSL</b>	<b>Harvard Law School Library</b>
<b>JFKL</b>	<b>John F. Kennedy Library</b>
<b>OHI</b>	<b>Oral History Interview</b>
<b>PPAC</b>	<b>Private Papers of Archibald Cox</b>
<b>PPP</b>	<b>Pre-Presidential Papers</b>
<b>PTCS</b>	<b>Papers of Theodore C. Sorensen</b>
<b>VA</b>	<b>Veterans Administration</b>

# Chapter One

At the 1956 Democratic convention, John F. Kennedy became a national political figure for the first time. His attempt to become the Democratic Vice-Presidential nominee had catapulted his name to the fore of the party. During that convention, many Democrats recognized qualities in this man which would make him a desirable Presidential candidate. One such Democrat was Professor Abram Chayes of Harvard Law School.

Professor Abram Chayes was the first academic to come out in favour of Kennedy for President. According to Chayes “the day after the election in November(1956) ...Toni (his wife) and I announced for Kennedy for 1960.”<sup>1</sup> In fact, Chayes pointed out that he was practically alone in his support of Kennedy in the early years.

...you hear so much about Kennedy and Harvard in these latter years, but we were very lonely souls in that University in 1956. There was not very much support for Kennedy. Most people were Stevensonians or were looking for some other so-called liberal candidate. People like Schlesinger or Galbraith weren't close to being for Kennedy .<sup>2</sup>

Both Professor John Kenneth Galbraith and Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. of Harvard had been heavily involved in the previous Stevenson

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<sup>1</sup> OHI, Abram Chayes, pg. 35, JFKL.

<sup>2</sup> OHI, Abram Chayes, pg. 36, JFKL.

campaigns for President. They were still very much enamoured of Adlai Stevenson, and neither of them would play any role in the Kennedy candidacy until after the 1960 Democratic convention.

Before 1958, Professor Chayes limited his efforts to the dinner party circuit where he argued and talked in favour of Kennedy. The relationship between the Senator and Chayes was informal and very low key. Chayes placed himself in a “kind of defensive position for two years”<sup>3</sup>, quietly pushing the merits of a Kennedy candidacy on campus. Kennedy, or Theodore Sorensen, his aide, would keep in touch two or three times a year, just to check in on what was going on at Harvard. Even though Kennedy had met Chayes in 1956 at the Democratic convention, not much came of their acquaintance until the beginning of 1958.

In January of 1958, Theodore Sorensen was sent by the Senator up to Boston to begin the long process of forging a relationship between Kennedy and the academic community. This process would begin very casually and take two-years to complete. None of the academics who were contacted during that two year period would be asked to support him until after he declared his

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<sup>3</sup> OHI, Abram Chayes, pg. 36, JFKL.

candidacy in January of 1960. Yet for two years, Kennedy stayed in touch with these people and nurtured a special relationship.

The meetings that took place over the next two years were mainly geared towards getting to know all of the individuals who were involved. Both sides were a little wary of each other. After all, it had been years since Kennedy himself had frequented the halls of Harvard. It might be argued that an up-and-coming politician such as Kennedy could find a more politically important group of people to talk to on a Saturday or Sunday afternoon. The fact was that none of these academics brought any political clout with them. For many of the academics involved it was their first opportunity to get to know, up-close, a major political figure.

Chayes believed that there was a fair degree of scepticism among many of the academics Kennedy first met. According to Chayes;

People of this kind in the academic community who live and vote in and around Boston are very suspicious of the Irish Catholic political leadership, whom they regard with a certain amount of distaste, a certain amount of feeling that they run the state to no good end.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> OHI, Abram Chayes, pg. 37, JFKL.

In other words, Kennedy had quite a bit to overcome. His family had been closely associated with Senator Joseph McCarthy. Robert Kennedy had worked for a short period of time on one of McCarthy's committee's and Joseph Kennedy had contributed money to McCarthy's campaigns. John Kennedy had failed to vote for the censure of Senator McCarthy. Actions such as these made many academics suspicious of Kennedy at first. Perhaps that's why it took two years to bring many of these people on side. He did win over many of them by the time he declared his candidacy in January of 1960, but it was a slow process; it did not happen overnight.

The meetings that were held over that two year period were mostly small intimate affairs organised in the beginning by Abram Chayes. Some engagements were structured around a question and answer session. Conferences were held at various locations like the faculty club or in a professor's home. On a few occasions, the meeting was held after a meal had been served. These occasions were always informal affairs. Kennedy "answered questions, submitted himself openly and freely to questions on anything that

anybody wanted to ask him.”<sup>5</sup>

Not only were these meetings meant to familiarize the participants with each other, they also acted as a medium for the free exchange of ideas. The candidate was not only interested in what these scholars had to say, but also “to discuss his ideas, or comment on his ideas on a no-questions-asked basis.”<sup>6</sup> All of these discussions happened on a off-the-record basis and no detailed records were kept. In fact, no mention of these exchanges was published in the media until 1960.

Nor was this group conceived with strictly Democrats in mind. Chayes points out that “about half of that group were avowed Republicans.”<sup>7</sup> W. Barton Leach, Arthur Sutherland from the Law School and Henry Kissinger<sup>8</sup>, to name but a few, were all participants in the academic group in 1958. Kennedy seems to have cared little for the various political persuasions of these scholars. He cared much more about their ideas and opinions.

Once this group was formed, its membership was fluid. Some

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<sup>5</sup> OHI, Abram Chayes, pg. 37, JFKL.

<sup>6</sup> OHI, Abram Chayes, pg. 41, JFKL.

<sup>7</sup> OHI, Abram Chayes, pg. 41, JFKL.

<sup>8</sup> Henry Kissinger was, during this period, actually working directly for Nelson Rockefeller, while at the same time attending some of the early meetings of Kennedy’s group.



individuals would attend a meeting or two and then drift off. Others might attend as little as one meeting, and still remain in contact with Kennedy on a one to one basis. Sometimes communications would go directly to and from the candidate, yet at other times an inquiry might be made by Theodore Sorensen or another Senate office staffer on behalf of the candidate. Kennedy would often ask an individual Professor for an opinion from within their own area of expertise. At this stage the group had no “political commitment... There was no organization to that group at all.”<sup>9</sup>

Earl Latham, Professor of Government at Amherst College was asked by Kennedy to become the designated chairman of this early incarnation of the group. Latham was spending a half-year at Harvard in 1958 and often commuted back and forth. This left him very little time to organize anything in regards to this group of academics. However, Professor Latham’s loose control over the group seems to have suited the candidate during this particular period as 1958 was a re-election year for the Senator. He did not meet more than two or three times with the group that particular year.

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<sup>9</sup> OHI, Abram Chayes, pg. 42, JFKL.

Earl Latham was not altogether alone in his coordination of the group. He was aided by a young woman named Deirdre Henderson. Ms. Henderson was originally interviewed by Senator Kennedy for one of the speech-writing positions in his Washington office in the spring of 1958. She had recently been a graduate student of Henry Kissinger's and had worked for Kissinger on the Defence Studies programme at Harvard University. She was a graduate of Wells and Smith Colleges and had spent a year studying at Edinburgh University. Her areas of specialisation had been history and political science. Kennedy offered her a position as one of his speech writers, but Ms. Henderson declined his offer. In actual fact, Henderson felt that she was much too young to be one of his speech writers, and was scared to work in Washington, and told him that "I haven't been trained for that."<sup>10</sup> Yet, she still wanted to work for this man, whom she felt would most certainly become the next President, so she asked him if she could become a research assistant for him. Kennedy was taken with this idea and proceeded to tell her about the Academic Advisory Group he already had working for him in Boston. She enthusiastically jumped at the idea of working with this group of

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<sup>10</sup> AI with Deirdre Henderson, 12/3/92.

academics.<sup>11</sup>

Her experiences in the Defence Studies Programme had given her valuable first hand contact with some of the best minds in the country on the subject of defence and national security matters. She was accustomed to an academic working environment and was well-suited to the task that she had taken on. In many ways, the position Deirdre Henderson undertook in Boston was, and still is, quite difficult to define. She was certainly not a secretary, either to the group or its chair. She acted more as an administrative assistant and a research assistant combined. Theodore Sorensen classified Henderson as a “coordinator and expediter,”<sup>12</sup> and by her own admission she also acted as the “legs and arms”<sup>13</sup> of the advisory group. Deirdre Henderson found herself in a unique situation, being the only woman in any position of influence in Kennedy’s campaign<sup>14</sup>. Henderson’s participation and responsibilities during the campaign are quite interesting considering the fact that so few

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<sup>11</sup> AI with Deirdre Henderson, 12/3/92.

<sup>12</sup> AI with Theodore C. Sorensen, 12/16/92.

<sup>13</sup> AI with Deirdre Henderson, 12/3/92.

<sup>14</sup> In point of fact, only seven other women’s papers have been deposited in the JFK Library. Of these seven women, Henderson is the only one who had a close and on-going relationship with his campaign organization.

women later on make up appointments in the Kennedy administration. Finding a woman working with this group of academics is surprising; considering the fact that the academic world of the late fifties and early sixties, not to mention political world of that same period, were even more male dominated than either of those two areas are today.

In 1958, the academic group was quite casual. The professors who participated in the group agreed to provide the Senator with occasional memoranda and speech ideas for his use. These same scholars might also be asked to comment on a particular problem which confronted him. Thus the group sometimes acted as a personal think-tank, while at other times more like a teacher dealing with only one student.

Henderson's role was to make sure that the information flowed freely down to Washington in a coherent fashion. Often she would interview several professors for their opinions on a certain subject in order to get a cross-section of views and then write up a report for the Senator and his staff in Washington. At other times, professors might write up the separate memorandums themselves and give them to Henderson to forward on to the Washington office. In cases

like this, she would attach a covering letter to help summarize and highlight the points that a paper's author might wish to stress to the candidate.

Deirdre Henderson was also important in the recruitment and discovery of untapped talent. Being on campus, and working closely with the large academic community in the Boston area, she was well-placed to spot likely individuals whose expertise might make a valuable contribution to the group and to make them aware of the role that they might be able to play in Kennedy's campaign if they were willing to contribute their ideas. She was an enthusiastic supporter of the Senator's bid to become President and this made her a vocal representative in many a professor's office on behalf of Kennedy's campaign. Her commitment to the campaign not only sent her looking for people and ideas in the Boston area, but sent her as far afield as California to seek aid from certain individuals who worked for the RAND Corporation.

When she was hired, Henderson was given a list of topics with professors' names to match to them. This was a basic list of subjects, one that Earl Latham had worked out with the candidate early on. It was thought to contain many of the likely campaign issues of the

upcoming presidential election. These topics were to become Henderson's first responsibility. She was to make sure that all of the subjects were covered and written up for the Senator. Once this basic list was complete more topics for memoranda were thought up in Washington.

When a new topic or problem needed to be addressed, Henderson might initially consult with Professor Latham as to who might be the best academic to deal with the problem. Then she would arrange a meeting with that person and present the request for a memoranda or a speech, or perhaps she would take down notes on-the-spot and later transcribe and organize them into a report to be sent down to the Washington office. She also took over the responsibility for the organization of meetings between the candidate and his group of advisors.

According to Chayes, the topics of conversation during these get-togethers were quite varied and free-wheeling. There was a lot of give and take and much of Kennedy's style of "self-deprecatory sense of humour"<sup>15</sup>. Kennedy would go on about "how people in Washington needed the advice of and contribution of people (like us)

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<sup>15</sup> OHI, Abram Chayes, pg. 42, JFKL.

in the academic community.<sup>16</sup>” This type of comment was not made off-the-cuff or merely to impress those people gathered around the candidate. Chayes felt that “nobody understood better than he the long route that things have to travel between the scholar and the man who has to do something about it, and the different perspective that each looks at the problem from.”<sup>17</sup>

As for the academics attending these meetings, they were very much aware of their own limitations and expectations from this dialogue. Neither party seems to have been trying to pull the wool over the other’s eyes. No one assumed that what was said during these assemblies would become the word of law tomorrow. Kennedy “had a sound perception of the relation between the scholarly community and the governmental community. And that I think gained him more respect than if he had tried to make more of it than it was.”<sup>18</sup>

This dialogue was basically between equals in all respects but one. Any advice which was given to the candidate, or any policy paper or speech offered, might very well be altered by Kennedy to

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<sup>16</sup> OHI, Abram Chayes, pg. 43, JFKL.

<sup>17</sup> OHI, Abram Chayes, pg. 44, JFKL.

<sup>18</sup> OHI, Abram Chayes, pg. 45, JFKL.

make it more politically viable. What the Senator “asked these people to do was make expert judgments and leave the political discounting to him ... he was going to have to make political judgments about what he did with what we supplied”.<sup>19</sup> This comment is echoed by Kennedy’s closest aide, Theodore Sorensen, who stated that Kennedy “looked to them for substantive expertise and... felt that any question of political shaping or moulding or spinning was his responsibility.”<sup>20</sup>

According to Theodore Sorensen the reason for forming the group in the first place was that;

...we were very thinly staffed. We knew that we needed help on substance, ideas, policies, recommendations. If we were to undertake a major, nationwide effort with the number of speeches and issues that would necessarily involve... As he said to me, “They’re always writing letters to the editor with their ideas and recommendations, why not have them send them here first”.<sup>21</sup>

As to whose idea it was to form the group, Sorensen states quite

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<sup>19</sup> OHI, Abram Chayes, pg. 47, JFKL.

<sup>20</sup> AI with Theodore C. Sorensen, 12/16/92.

<sup>21</sup> AI with Theodore C. Sorensen, 12/16/92.



categorically that it was Senator Kennedy's.<sup>22</sup> There is also no doubt that Kennedy was modelling his Academic Advisory Group on F.D.R.'s Brains Trust. Kennedy even went so far, in some instances, as to call his own group of professors the Brains Trust. As to how similar the two groups of advisors were, it can safely be said that Kennedy's was a far larger, and more complex organization with a great many more academics participating than anything F.D.R. had had working for him. At the same time, the reasons behind the formation of both groups, although similar in nature, do not compare at all in terms of the social and economic times in which they were created. F.D.R. had to deal with a depression, while many of Kennedy's concerns were directed towards foreign policy issues. Indeed, there were many more subtle and sophisticated reasons behind the creation of Kennedy's Academic Advisory Group.

The Senator was definitely trying to fill a gap in his political make-up by creating the Academic Advisory Group. His political image had always been that of a non-intellectual, a *bons vivant* and the conservative son of Joseph Kennedy. His likely opponents for the nomination were Hubert Humphrey and Adlai Stevenson,

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<sup>22</sup> This feeling was echoed by both Deirdre Henderson and Archibald Cox.

both of whom had significant followings among liberal and intellectual groups in which Kennedy had little support. They knew of his poor voting and attendance records in the House and Senate and that he had not even bothered to vote on the censure of Joseph McCarthy, a cause *celebre* for a great many liberals in the party. This failure to act had hurt his chances among the liberals. The censure vote was viewed as a litmus test of liberalism during this period. In short, he had many hurdles to overcome if he was going to gather support among liberals and intellectuals, an important wing of his own party.

Even within this group of academic advisors, the reality that Kennedy did not have any close connections to the liberal wing of his own party, was plainly evident. Abram Chayes summed it up quite well when he stated that

Kennedy knew, I think, quite coldly that as you looked at the range of Democratic candidates--Stevenson, Humphrey, and so on--he was lacking this association in the popular mind and in the academic mind with academics and intellectuals. And so I think an important part of the conscious motivations here was to establish this kind of contact and was to find a way of winning

people of this kind over. <sup>23</sup>

Deirdre Henderson certainly felt that the above reason had a role to play in the creation of the group, although Henderson saw it more as “an ancillary”<sup>24</sup> at the time. Henderson felt that the primary reason Kennedy wanted the aid of academics was because he was “looking for very pragmatic solutions to ongoing problems...literally [looking for] solutions to problems.”<sup>25</sup> Henderson and Sorensen believe quite strongly that Kennedy sought the help of the academic community because he was attracted to their ability to “think and ability to articulate”<sup>26</sup> as well as the fact that Kennedy thought of himself as a thinker. In this way, he perhaps felt a type of kinship with these intellectuals. Beginning in 1957, he started participating as a member of Harvard University’s Board of Overseers, Kennedy was beginning to expose himself to a wider variety of influences and perspectives than had ever before been open to him. He learned very early on that these were the type of people he not only needed to help him win the nomination and the election, but that he wanted

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<sup>23</sup> OHI, Abram Chayes, pg. 48, JFKL.

<sup>24</sup> AI with Deirdre Henderson, 12/3/92.

<sup>25</sup> AI with Deirdre Henderson, 12/3/92.

<sup>26</sup> AI with Theodore C. Sorensen, 12/16/92.

to bring into government with him.

Certain members of the group occasionally received requests directly from Kennedy thereby completely by-passing Henderson and/or the chair. People like John Kenneth Galbraith, Arthur Schlesinger Jr. and McGeorge Bundy had become close, personal friends of the Senator, and thus were readily available to him. Both Galbraith and Schlesinger were well-known liberal commentators who had worked actively for Adlai Stevenson during his two Democratic Presidential campaigns against Eisenhower. Bundy was the Dean of Arts and a one-time Professor of Government at Harvard University and had made Kennedy's acquaintance when the Senator became an Overseer at Harvard. Although registered as a Republican in Massachusetts he was nevertheless seen as a more liberal influence within Republican ranks. Kennedy knew these men well enough to pick up the phone and talk to them directly about a problem he might be having. At other times, a letter would be sent directly to the friend in question, requesting information on a subject. Many of these people would dine in his home and discuss the issues of the day with him, all the time being well aware that he was tapping them for ideas for his campaign.

According to Henderson, Kennedy and his staff could be extremely demanding of the group and critical of what was sometimes offered up to him. Kennedy was searching, in the most pragmatic and practical way possible, for solutions to the problems which he believed America was experiencing. He was conscientiously trying to create a programme which would solve such problems as the economic slow-down of 1959-1960, civil rights, urban development, agricultural overproduction and, of course, defence and foreign policy issues. All of these areas figured prominently both as areas of discussion and as themes in the memoranda and speeches penned by the academics.

In January of 1960, shortly after Senator Kennedy declared his candidacy for the Democratic nomination for President, Theodore Sorensen arrived in Boston to announce to the professors that the academic group, which up until that point had existed only in a peripheral way to the Senator's personal organization, was to be transformed into a "partisan personal piece of machinery"<sup>27</sup> with the goal of making John F. Kennedy the next President of the United States. The time had come for all those connected with the academic

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<sup>27</sup> OHI, Abram Chayes, pg. 53, JFKL.

group to make up their minds as to whether or not they wanted to be connected with such an operation. At the same time, the group was to be given a more formal structure with a new chairman, chosen by Kennedy from among the academics, to help coordinate and funnel information. The person chosen was Professor Archibald Cox of Harvard Law School. Professor Cox specialised in labour law and was well acquainted with the candidate due to the fact that he had worked previously with the Senator on the Landrum-Griffin Bill which was an overhaul of United States labour law. They had had a close relationship while dealing with that particular piece of legislation. He had worked with the Senator on a daily basis and had earned his confidence. No other academic had had such close experience with the candidate, thus he was the ideal choice. Cox's own political perspective was activist and progressive in nature, although he was not publicly perceived in the same sort of way that noteworthy liberals like Schlesinger or Galbraith were. He was a much more pragmatic man than an ideologue, which suited Kennedy just fine.

Both Abram Chayes and Mark DeWolfe Howe of Harvard Law School strongly endorsed Cox to Kennedy, in spite of the fact that

some on Kennedy's staff thought that Howe should head up the organization. Yet Howe himself pointed out that if the Senator really wished to make the best use of his academicians then

...they must be put under the wing of an eagle, not a sparrow. They must of course speak in one sense for themselves, but they should also be brought into some kind of association with the Senator's own spirit and convictions. The one man in this corner of the academic world who seems to me to have not only the essential sort of association with the Senator but to have the intellectual force and standing that would make him an effective leader of an organised group of scholars is Archie Cox.<sup>28</sup>

In a letter dated the eighteenth of January 1960, John Kennedy formally asked Professor Cox to head up his Academic Advisory Group.

I have tried throughout the past year to establish an "Academic Advisory Group" to provide research materials, memoranda, recommendations and position papers for use in my speeches and statements. ... I need a faculty member on the scene who can lead and stimulate the group to make sure we are getting the maximum use of it-- I do not feel we have been up to now. In addition, several faculty members have indicated that they

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<sup>28</sup> Letter to Richard Goodwin from Mark DeWolfe Howe, January 9, 1960, AAG Folder, PTCS, Box 31, JFKL.

would prefer dealing directly with someone whom they know is close to me-- and they suggest you as the one person in the Boston area who can fill this role. <sup>29</sup>

As can be surmised from the letter, Kennedy had already begun to demand more of Cox and the group than they were presently producing. According to Deirdre Henderson, Kennedy was always demanding more and was never easily satisfied by what was produced.

This is not altogether surprising. The popular conception then, as now, is that professors who teach at university are intelligent, thoughtful and thorough experts in their fields. If these professors were asked to comment on the issues of the day, then it was felt that they should be able to provide the kinds of solutions that society was searching for. Kennedy was looking for exactly this when he asked all these academics to help him out. What he discovered along the way was that these people were human and not infallible. They made mistakes. None of these professors could possibly be correct with their advice one hundred percent of the time.

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<sup>29</sup> Letter to Archibald Cox from John F. Kennedy, January 18, 1960, AAG Folder, PTCS, Box 31, JFKL.



Certain academics however, were, in retrospect, able to make a definite impact on the candidate and, later on, on his administration. Willard Cochrane was one such individual. He was Kennedy's chief agricultural adviser and, as will be shown in chapter two, he had a important impact on the campaign and further on into the administration. The contributions and influence of those, such as Ken Galbraith and Arthur Schlesinger, are more difficult to dissect and assess. Both Galbraith and Schlesinger were personal friends of the candidate and generalists in terms of most of the advice they offered Kennedy.

Their friendships undoubtedly coloured the dialogue between them and had an effect on the amount of advice Kennedy was willing to accept from them. It would have been difficult for Kennedy to say no to a friend when he was offered advice on subjects outside his domain of expertise. This would have been much more difficult when one also considers the fact that both Galbraith<sup>30</sup> and Schlesinger were very well-known writers and commentators, whose possible political influences were not lost on the candidate. This is

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<sup>30</sup> Galbraith, for example, submitted a memorandum just shortly after the convention on "Campaign Strategy" (JFKL, PPP, Box 996, Speech Writing Strategy Folder), a subject that was a far cry from his area of expertise.

perhaps why the majority of the communications that went on between these two academics and the candidate were on a direct one-to-one basis. Kennedy sometimes did make himself available to other academics, but this was the exception and not the rule. The vast majority of information that flowed towards Kennedy did so after being carefully filtered and refined by the chairman of the group or by Deirdre Henderson. This was the candidate's preferred way of dealing with any type of information.

What should be kept in mind is that after January 1960 the Academic Advisory Group underwent continued change and expansion. As it became more and more apparent that Kennedy would be the nominee of the party, academics and experts from around the country petitioned to become a part of the effort. This is precisely how Kennedy gained Willard Cochrane as his agricultural adviser. Cochrane had not only originally been a Humphrey supporter, but also his agricultural adviser. When Humphrey dropped out of the race, Cochrane climbed on to the Kennedy bandwagon. Kennedy was more than happy to have him. The Academic Advisory Group was rather thinly staffed in that area and none of the people who were working on agricultural problems had a

strong background in agricultural economics as did Cochrane<sup>31</sup>.

The history of the advisory group from January 1960 right up until the election in November can be broadly split into two distinct periods; pre- and post-convention. When Archibald Cox took over as chairman in January 1960 he formalised its structure in such a way that whenever a document of any sort was requested through him or Deirdre Henderson it had to pass through Cox's hands on the way down to Washington. For the duration of the group's existence in the pre-convention period, Cox made a concerted effort to improve the quality and quantity of material flowing down to Washington. Henderson felt that Cox was "very concerned that Senator Kennedy get the best information from the best minds. He was very sincere, very honest and his follow through was tremendous too."<sup>32</sup> He exercised a firm editorial control over the content of the papers. According to Henderson, his effort in this regard made all the

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<sup>31</sup> Professors Carl Kaysen and Paul Samuelson both contributed papers to Kennedy on agricultural policy, although neither of these men were trained as agricultural economists. Professor John Kenneth Galbraith did receive his first degree in agricultural economics, however he spent most of his academic career dealing with more general economic issues. Furthermore, Galbraith seems to have chosen to spend most of his time advising Kennedy on other matters. Cochrane, on the other hand, was from Minnesota, was an agricultural economist and sat on the Democratic Party's Agricultural Advisory Committee from 1958 to 1960.

<sup>32</sup> AI with Deirdre Henderson, 12/3/92.

difference in the world. She believed that Cox “really was [the] key person if you wanted to pick out one person who really shaped this brain trust.”<sup>33</sup>

During the post-convention period, the Academic Advisory Group still continued to function and provide information for the candidate, yet its operations were soon split between Washington and Boston. After the Democratic convention in July 1960, Archibald Cox was asked by Kennedy to assume the additional responsibility of chief of the speech writing staff in Washington. When Cox left for Washington, Abram Chayes became acting Chairman of the advisory group in Boston. Deirdre Henderson’s position did not change. She stayed in Boston to aid Professor Chayes and continued to act as a coordinator and expediter of information to Washington.

Cox was still able to act as an editor of information by reading and approving all of the material which was to become the basis of many of the Senator’s speeches. Cox was still acting as a conduit for information from academics to the Senator, but now his influence encompassed both the material which came into the campaign office in Washington and the finished speeches which were sent to the

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<sup>33</sup> AI with Deirdre Henderson, 12/3/92.

Senator on the campaign trail. Cox was given total control over the speech-writing operation in Washington. He had complete freedom to hire or fire whomever he wanted.

The manner in which operations were divided after the convention speaks volumes for the influence that Cox had with Kennedy. In a memorandum to the Senator dated June 17, 1960, Cox put forward his ideas on “the organization of the policy-formulation and speech-writing side of your [Kennedy’s] election campaign.”<sup>34</sup> Cox thought that the best way to proceed in regards to this matter was to select an “executive officer for the policy-formulation and speech-writing side of the campaign”<sup>35</sup> whose responsibilities would include organization of the Academic Advisory Group and the speech writers as well as liaison with the chief<sup>36</sup> of the political side of the campaign. Whoever was to be chosen had also to have a close working relationship with the candidate and have his complete trust.

Cox continued to stress the usefulness of the Academic

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<sup>34</sup> Memorandum to Senator Kennedy prepared by Archibald Cox, June 17, 1960, PPP, Box 996, Speech Writing Strategy Folder.

<sup>35</sup> Memorandum to Senator Kennedy prepared by Archibald Cox, June 17, 1960, PPP, Box 996, Speech Writing Strategy Folder.

<sup>36</sup> Many of the memoranda at the JFK Library did have Robert Kennedy’s name on them. He received some copies of material related to the Academic Advisory Group, although he was not privy to all of the material flowing back and fourth between the candidate and his advisors.

Advisory Group to the senator. He emphasised that;

During July and August detailed position papers should be prepared with supporting data upon the entire range of domestic and foreign policy issues. In some instances the authors may have the talent to put papers into a form suitable for a speech but at this stage the emphasis should be on the formulation of positions and the collection of substantive materials. The resulting papers will be useful not only for speeches but also in issuing statements, answering questions, etc..<sup>37</sup>

According to Cox, the best reason for the continued use of the Academic Advisory Group was that it was “important in order to get wide coverage and avoid unwitting commitments to extreme or ill-considered views”<sup>38</sup>. Cox considered this group to be an excellent bell-wether on any manner of issues essential to the conduct of the campaign.

In addition, Cox felt the need to personalize the advising process as much as possible both for the candidate and the advisors. In his memorandum to the Senator, Cox conceived the idea of holding small seminars for Kennedy as a way of briefing him on various

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<sup>37</sup> Memorandum to Senator Kennedy prepared by Archibald Cox, June 17, 1960, PPP, Box 996, Speech Writing Strategy Folder.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

issues and providing both sides in the advisory process with an opportunity to better appraise their relationship. The seminars were to be held during the months of July and August;

I hope that the other demands upon your time during the summer may permit a number of "seminars" upon key problems in which you would participate. For example, if you could spend an afternoon or evening discussing with half a dozen economists ways of increasing our rate of economic growth, or public versus private spending, the background would greatly assist you in press conferences and public discussion during the pressure of the campaign and it would also provide a link between your ideas and the working out of detailed statements by the academicians.<sup>39</sup>

Kennedy was quite taken by the kind of recommendations that Archie, as he was called by the Senator, made. The seminars that Cox talked about in this memorandum did take place. A number of them were held with Kennedy; the most noteworthy of which was held at the Senator's summer home in Hyannisport. Cox brought together a group of economists to discuss economic matters with the candidate.

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<sup>39</sup> Memorandum to Senator Kennedy prepared by Archibald Cox, June 17, 1960, PPP, Box 996, Speech Writing Strategy Folder.

John F. Kennedy was at Hyannisport for a while, and he invited various people there...I forget just what the occasion was one day...I remember Averell Harriman was there (there were others) and [Kennedy] asked me on that occasion to be sure that there was a group of economists...And we'd find a chance after the luncheon was over, to get together in the afternoon, and brief him, as it were, on economic issues. Some of the people who were there [were] Seymour Harris, Ken Galbraith...[and] an economist from MIT, Paul Samuelson, who struck John F. Kennedy as the ablest of the bunch. We actually went, seven or eight of us I guess, went sailing and discussed the world trade balances, and the financial markets, international financial markets, as we sailed... it did a lot to educate the Senator. <sup>40</sup>

The venue for this seminar<sup>41</sup> was, to say the least, very unorthodox, but Cox believed that it was nevertheless useful to Kennedy. Given the fact that Harris and Galbraith eventually worked in the administration and that Samuelson became a constant target for

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<sup>40</sup> AI with Archibald Cox, 11/13/92.

<sup>41</sup> Arthur Schlesinger Jr. in his history of John F. Kennedy, A Thousand Days, John F. Kennedy in the White House, tells us that the members of the group on the boat with Kennedy that day were “[John K.] Galbraith, Seymour Harris, Archibald Cox, Paul Samuelson of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Richard Lester of Princeton” University. pg. 626.



Kennedy's efforts at recruitment<sup>42</sup> during his three years in the Oval Office, it is likely that this group of economists must have had some affect on Kennedy's thinking at the time.

Cox also stressed his desire to get as much of this background information collected during the summer before the election campaign began so as to be able to keep the academicians "on tap for advice and information throughout the autumn as well as any urgent assistance in preparing statements or materials for speeches."<sup>43</sup> In the June memorandum, Cox also expressed the opinion that it was unlikely that any of the academics would be travelling with the Senator. Yet as it turned out, quite a few academics did travel with Kennedy while he was campaigning. The most notable of them was Willard Cochrane, Kennedy's agricultural adviser, who travelled with the candidate through the Midwest.

The Academic Advisory Group was not expressly disbanded after the election, yet the group slowly faded away in the months following. This was mostly due to the fact that the majority of those

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<sup>42</sup> Paul Samuelson, early on during the transition, agreed to become one of Kennedy's outside economic advisors and also to chair an anti-recession task-force during the transition. Nevertheless, Kennedy never quite gave up trying to bring Samuelson into the administration.

<sup>43</sup> Memorandum to Senator Kennedy prepared by Archibald Cox, June 17, 1960, PPP, Box 996, Speech Writing Strategy Folder.

people who participated in the group were asked to join the administration. The group had one last function to fulfil before its demise. Abram Chayes, in a memorandum to President-Elect Kennedy in November of 1960, pointed out that the Academic Advisory Group could still be of use to Kennedy in two important areas during the transition period. They could provide the President-Elect with a review of the task force studies which Kennedy had commissioned on various topics and also offer advice on the selection of presidential appointments.

Kennedy had selected some members of the academic group to write some of these task force reports and this largely precluded the use of the group to analyze critically the recommendations made therein. Some members of the AAG did advise the President-Elect on appointments, they were asked to provide written opinions on the various appointments<sup>44</sup>. Many of the people from the academic

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<sup>44</sup> The appointment of some Republicans to the Cabinet and White House staff did irk some of Kennedy's more liberal supporters, although given the narrowness of his election victory Kennedy undoubtedly felt the need to reassure the more conservative segments of the business community and society of his intentions *vis a vis* the economy. This is precisely why Kennedy consulted Robert A. Lovett on some of his major appointments to the Cabinet. Lovett was a Wall Street Lawyer, and a one-time Washington insider during World War Two. He was considered the Dean of the American Establishment at the time and an influential figure in conservative business circles in New York City.

group who went into the White House with Kennedy did so under the designation of Special Assistant for a specific policy area. In a way, they were merely creating official versions of the roles they had all grown accustomed to.

It must have been very reassuring to Kennedy to place people he was already familiar with in his administration. The fact that Kennedy appointed so many of these people to work in his government is a good indicator of his satisfaction with the way the Academic Advisory Group worked. No President would appoint a person to a position of responsibility in government if in the past they had proven themselves incompetent. The fact that so many of these academics accepted appointments also speaks well of the relationship between the candidate and the advisory group. It is very unlikely that so many of these individuals would have climbed aboard if they had felt that they had been improperly treated or that their advice had fallen on deaf ears.

It is also unlikely that any of these people would have accepted appointments if they had felt that the work they would be asked to do inside the administration might conflict with their own previous recommendations. They knew what to expect. Kennedy's New

*Frontier* would have been quite familiar to these academics by the time the campaign ended. The idea of helping to form the new government must have seemed a perfectly natural one to them since they had played such a significant role in the creation of the *New Frontier*<sup>45</sup>.

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<sup>45</sup> The theme *The New Frontier* was actually coined by Walt Rostow and presented to Kennedy at a cocktail party for the Academic Advisory Group held in Dierdre Henderson's home.

## Chapter Two

Willard W. Cochrane was both John Kennedy's chief agricultural adviser and the liaison person between the Farmers for Kennedy-Johnson group and the candidate. Cochrane was a Professor of agricultural economics from the University of Minnesota and a one-time Humphrey supporter. He was also a late addition to the Academic Advisory Group, joining the campaign effort just before the Democratic Convention. Although a relative new-comer to the organization of academics, his late appearance should not mislead the reader into thinking that Cochrane was a man without influence. In fact, Cochrane had a tremendous impact on the candidate, through his speeches, declarations, and eventually on the Kennedy Administration's agricultural policies.

Cochrane was no stranger to Democratic party politics. He had been a member of the Democratic Party's Agricultural Advisory Committee in 1958-1959 and was committed to the candidacy of Hubert Humphrey in 1960, until Humphrey was defeated in the West Virginia primary. It was at that point that Cochrane decided that Kennedy "was the man, and that I thought he had a chance of winning."<sup>1</sup> He let it be known through Democratic channels that he

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<sup>1</sup> OHI, Dr. Willard W. Cochrane, pg. 1, JFKL.

was available and willing to commit his energies to the Kennedy candidacy.

The first contact Cochrane made with the Kennedy campaign organization was through the candidate's brother-in-law Sargent Shriver. Shriver was visiting the Twin Cities region on campaign business and had contacted Dr. Cochrane, on Kennedy's behalf, for an interview. Their meeting lasted well into the night and Shriver left their encounter with a number of Cochrane's writings on agriculture. This led to a series of telephone conversations between the two men. These telephone calls dealt with various matters on agriculture and marked the beginning of Cochrane's membership on the Kennedy team<sup>2</sup>.

Cochrane felt quite strongly that if he was to be of any aid at all to the Senator, he would have to develop a personal relationship with him. Cochrane told Shriver to have Kennedy contact him directly if he wanted to avail himself of his, Cochrane's, expertise. The Senator contacted Cochrane personally and asked him to become his agricultural adviser. He also asked Cochrane to go to the Democratic Convention in Los Angeles to help draft the agricultural

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<sup>2</sup> OHI, Dr. Willard W. Cochrane, pg. 2, JFKL.

plank in the party's platform.<sup>3</sup>

Cochrane could loosely be considered an interventionist in respect to farm policy; a believer in the concept of the government limiting the marketable supply of a farm commodity in order to create a fair and stable price for the American farmer. Before going to work for John Kennedy he had written two volumes on economics, one dealing with American agriculture and the second dealing with the consumption of commodities within the household.<sup>4</sup> Both books are quite general in outlook and do not offer any specific recommendations with regard to agricultural policy. In an article published in the Journal of Farm Economics in November 1959, however, Cochrane was quite specific in his recommendations in regard to fixing what he believed was wrong with American agriculture. In that article he put forward four precepts that he felt must be put forward to help farmers obtain a reasonable return for their efforts.

Cochrane believed that it was essential that the federal

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<sup>3</sup> OHI, Dr. Willard W. Cochrane, pg. 2, JFKL.

<sup>4</sup> The two volumes are:

Economics of American Agriculture, Prentice-Hall, Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1951  
The Economics of Consumption: Economics of Decision Making in the Household, McGraw-Hill Book Co., New York, 1956.



government “set forth fair, or parity, prices for agriculture.”<sup>5</sup> and that the Department of Agriculture “set [the] national sales quota [for] each agricultural commodity.”<sup>6</sup> Each farmer would then receive a “market share, his pro rata share, of the national sales quota”<sup>7</sup> that he could use as he saw fit since

each marketing certificate would be negotiable. Each farmer would be free to buy or sell marketing certificates as he saw fit.<sup>8</sup>

As will soon become clear these particular points would become the basic foundation on which the New Frontier’s agricultural policies would be built. Kennedy would be bombarding his audiences with the concepts of parity income and marketing quotas and certificates by the end of his campaign for the Presidency.

The actual agricultural plank of the Democratic Platform of 1960 committed the party to an activist management approach of limiting farm production as a way of increasing prices. The agricultural plank of the platform states quite simply that “measures

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<sup>5</sup> Journal of Farm Economics, “Some Further Reflection on Supply Control”, Willard W. Cochrane, November 1959, Volume 41, pg. 699.

<sup>6</sup> Journal of Farm Economics, pg. 699

<sup>7</sup> Journal of Farm Economics, pg. 700

<sup>8</sup> Journal of Farm Economics, pg. 700.

to this end include production quotas and marketing quotas.”<sup>9</sup> This can only be seen as an activist form of involvement by the government in the farming community. This policy was well in keeping with Willard Cochrane’s own feelings on the matter of farm incomes. It was also a sharp departure from the Republican Administration’s policy of no quotas and commodity price supports tied to the market price of the previous season. The Democratic platform promised the American farmer “full parity income”<sup>10</sup> linked to the idea of supply control quotas.

One of the first recorded instances of Kennedy giving a speech as the Democratic nominee after the convention is in regards to agricultural policy. It was at the Kennedy-Johnson Midwest Farm Conference on August 21, 1960 in Des Moines, Iowa. On that day, he spoke in very general terms about his ideas on agricultural problems and his approaches to the challenges facing the American farmer. Near the end of his statement he enumerated his four point approach to help alleviate the plight of the farmer.

First and foremost, was something he called “a positive policy

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<sup>9</sup> 1960 Democratic Party Platform.

<sup>10</sup> 1960 Democratic Party Platform.

of supply management to raise farm prices and incomes to parity levels"<sup>11</sup> ; a phrase well in keeping with the Democratic platform, and as already mentioned, a tenet of Dr. Cochrane's thinking on the matter. This is the first instance of Kennedy actually publicly using the advice he was getting from his agricultural adviser. Although it is not possible to completely rule out other influences, the policy statement which Kennedy made that day was more in keeping with Cochrane than with anyone else. As the campaign wore on, Cochrane's influence became more and more evident and will be examined through the paper-trail which leads from Cochrane straight to Kennedy's speeches.

At the beginning of September in 1960, Dr. Cochrane delivered to the Senator and Archibald Cox a collection of briefing papers which became the basis for the vast majority of the campaign speeches and declarations on agriculture. These briefing papers were filed under the heading Agriculture: The Book On. All of the major agricultural commodities produced by the United States were covered. Fifteen commodity statements were included<sup>12</sup> along with

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<sup>11</sup> FOC, Part 1, pg. 32.

<sup>12</sup> Included were the following: Cotton, Tobacco, Rice, Peanuts, Wheat, Corn, Sugar, Wool, Hogs, Cattle, Eggs, Poultry and Potatoes. JFKL, PPP, Box 991, Folder: Agriculture The Book On.

statements on "tax and anti-trust status of farmers' cooperatives, and a statement indicating the permissive authority open to the Secretary of Agriculture."<sup>13</sup> All of the commodity studies took the form of short memoranda and included: a summary statement, a description and development statement, a description of the present program, the present Secretary of Agriculture's position, the predominant Republican and Democratic positions and finally Senator Kennedy's position on the subject.<sup>14</sup> These documents made a very neat and tidy package which provided a ready reference throughout the campaign.

Cochrane defined his concept of parity income for all commodities in his briefing papers to the Senator as

...the income to the representative producer that will give the producer a return to capital, labour, and management equal to that which could be earned by those resources in non-farm employment. Parity income prices are the prices which will yield a parity income. Actual parity income prices remain to be calculated; they are not now available; but this is a concept of parity that we can defend in urban areas as well as rural areas. And we are certain that parity income prices will

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<sup>13</sup> JFKL, PPP, Box 991, Folder: Agriculture The Book On.

<sup>14</sup> JFKL, PPP, Box 991, Folder: Agriculture The Book On.

exceed 90 percent of parity.<sup>15</sup>

This same definition of parity income was repeated over and over in the briefs. Likewise the concept of parity income manifests itself in Kennedy's speeches and declarations.

Similarly the concept of supply management was the constant refrain of the commodity briefs which Cochrane provided for the campaign. All of his briefs talk about limiting the total marketable supply of commodities by diverse measures in order to raise the revenues of farmers. This too became a hallmark of Kennedy's speeches on agriculture.

Senator Kennedy's own feeling on supply management and farm incomes were in a state of flux when Cochrane began to counsel him.

Senator Kennedy, by the time I met him, I think, had reached the conclusion that farm incomes were bad, that the programs were costly, and that we were faced with a chronic over production of agricultural commodities. The writings I had done during the late 1950's began to make sense to him. At least from my beginning experience with him, he was receptive to the concept of supply

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<sup>15</sup> JFKL, PPP, Box 991, Folder: Agriculture The Book On.

management.<sup>16</sup>

Dr. Cochrane's recollections on Kennedy's evolving understanding of the problems were actually underscored during the televised interview on October 1, 1960. Kennedy was asked about his uncertain stand on farm legislation. He answered the charge by saying:

I originally had thought that some degree of flexibility would help in trying to limit overproduction, but it was obvious after the program worked for 2 years, by the end of 1955, that it really wasn't going to work.<sup>17</sup>

Kennedy was obviously aware that in taking the advice offered by Cochrane he was venturing in a new direction and that he was opening himself up to the charge of being inconsistent.

Kennedy did have other people who also offered him advice on agricultural policy. Kenneth Galbraith and Senator Clinton Anderson, Democrat, New Mexico, were both asked at times to comment on the advice Kennedy was getting from Cochrane. Senator Anderson did not at all like the route that Cochrane had proposed. Cochrane

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<sup>16</sup> OHI, Dr. Willard W. Cochrane, pg. 4, JFKL.

<sup>17</sup> FOC, Part 1, pg. 118.

admits that “on several occasions Clinton Anderson told the President that he was taking the wrong route—that I [Cochrane] was leading him astray.”<sup>18</sup> Yet, in spite of Anderson’s warnings and the fact that Kennedy had, throughout most of the 1950’s, been a devotee of Anderson on agricultural policy, he stuck with Cochrane’s advice on both campaign declarations and policy.

Galbraith’s influence on Kennedy’s agricultural policy was marginal. There is only one speech-draft written by Galbraith on agriculture that can be found in his papers, in the Presidential Library in Boston. Galbraith’s contributions to the campaign tended to be of a more general nature. He offered Kennedy advice on campaign strategy, speech-writing and general economic policies for the campaign. Galbraith’s own stature and fame precluded any limitations on the type of advice Kennedy could accept. Kennedy and his staff were not going to risk alienating Galbraith by not accepting one of his briefs. That does not mean that whatever Galbraith may have written for Kennedy always made it into one of his speeches. One should also remember that any strong and open connection to Galbraith and the liberal community he represented was seen by

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<sup>18</sup> OHI, Dr. Willard W. Cochrane, pg. 5, JFKL.

men like Archibald Cox as a political liability.

...Ken Galbraith who had not been actively working for or contributing anything to Kennedy before the Convention and I think Ken had been for Adlai Stevenson. Indeed there were various reasons during the campaign in public that the candidate never got too close [to] Arthur Schlesinger or Ken Galbraith.<sup>19</sup>

This possible liability was an important consideration for Kennedy and his staff when dealing with Galbraith. Galbraith's own belated decision to join the Kennedy team, also greatly limited his role in advising the candidate on agricultural policy and on most other subjects as well.

This partially explains why Kennedy was willing to take on a new adviser for agricultural policy. Until Cochrane signed on, he had lacked expertise in this particular policy area. If he had been getting what he believed to be concise and useful information and advice on agricultural policy, he would have had no need to bring someone like Cochrane on board. Political campaigns are terribly complicated, messy affairs by their very nature. No candidate would want to overstaff his campaign organization by even one more adviser than

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<sup>19</sup> AI with Archibald Cox, 11/13/92.



is absolutely necessary for fear it would gum up the works.

The best way to link Dr. Cochrane's influence to the candidate and the campaign is through the speeches and declarations that Kennedy either delivered himself or which were released in his name. For example, if one looks at Kennedy's declarations on wheat and compares them with Cochrane's recommendations to Kennedy on the subject one would be able to tell just how influential these briefing papers were. For example on September 22, 1960, Senator Kennedy delivered a speech at an airport rally in Fargo, North Dakota in which he addressed the issue of wheat production in the United States. In this speech Kennedy states:

Under this wheat program, the Secretary of Agriculture would determine the amount of wheat that would be consumed here and abroad at parity income prices. This quota would be distributed among farmers on the basis of the historical record of production, and they would be issued marketing certificates, permitting them to market their share of the national quota...As a condition of receiving a certificate, each farmer would be required to retire a small fixed percentage of his wheat acreage...This is the kind of program which has been endorsed and originally worked out by the National Association of Wheat Growers, and I have endorsed it

fully.<sup>20</sup>

Three weeks before this speech Cochrane counselled Kennedy on his position. He said it should be as follows:

The National Association of Wheat Growers is the sponsor of a program that would establish a national marketing quota for wheat which would limit supplies, and push wheat prices up to parity income level. Assuming an effective quota system, price supports at parity income price would enhance producer acceptance of the program. ...Land removed from production by individual producers as they comply with marketing quotas, would be retired under a soil conservation reserve, and thus, protect feed grain producers from the production of wheat for feeding purposes. Of all the many proposed wheat programs, this one has the most to recommend it, and should be the Kennedy position.<sup>21</sup>

Both of these statements are in complete agreement regarding the solution to the problems of the American wheat farmer. The wording may differ somewhat but the program is the same.

The greatest contribution Cochrane made to Kennedy's campaign was most certainly his concept of marketing quotas for the various commodities produced by the American farmer. It became

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<sup>20</sup> FOC, Part 1, pg. 330.

<sup>21</sup> JFKL, PPP, Box 991, Folder: Agriculture The Book On.

the lynch-pin of Kennedy's entire agricultural policy. Without being able to control the amount of produce being offered for sale, the government could not hope to keep prices high enough, or even stable enough, to help the farmers.

When Kennedy was questioned by a viewer on an open-line national television program on November 7, 1960 about what he planned to do for the American farmer if elected, Kennedy responded by citing the example of American corn producers. He answered by pointing to the enormous amount of surplus corn being produced at rock bottom prices: "As the tremendous surplus hangs over the market, as the market price drops-for example, corn which has been or which was selling for \$1.50 a bushel in 1952, now in markets may go from 85, 90, 95 cents, depending on the area and the type of corn."<sup>22</sup> The kind of help Kennedy offered the corn producers was tied to the concept of bringing into balance "supply and demand so that supply and demand will work for the farmer instead of against him...[and that] the support prices that we have should be tied to parity."<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> FOC, Part 1, pg. 994

<sup>23</sup> FOC, Part 1, pg. 995-946.

Cochrane had proposed the same thing in his briefing on corn to Kennedy:

Develop a general land retirement program for corn and other feed grains, possibly coupled with quotas, to adjust supplies to requirements at higher corn prices.<sup>24</sup>

Further on in the briefing document, Cochrane stressed the need for corn prices to be pegged “at the parity income price.”<sup>25</sup> The phrases may be somewhat different, but once again the concepts are the same.

Cotton farmers were another group of producers that Kennedy believed could be helped by quotas. In a speech on October 10, 1960 at the State House in Columbia, South Carolina, he proposed “a universally enforced program of supply management which will bring supply and demand into balance, while assuring our farmers of full parity income.”<sup>26</sup> In his brief to the candidate, Cochrane counselled Kennedy to “establish a total sales quota (composed of domestic and foreign requirements); support farm incomes at a parity income level for the domestic share of the farmers total quota

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<sup>24</sup> JFKL, PPP, Box 991, Folder: Agriculture The Book On.

<sup>25</sup> JFKL, PPP, Box 991, Folder: Agriculture The Book On.

<sup>26</sup> FOC, Part 1, pg. 1114.

through the use of compensatory payments.”<sup>27</sup> This is another example of the influence that the Cochrane briefing papers had on Kennedy’s speeches.

Not only did that particular brief on cotton have an effect on the candidate’s speeches, it also found its way into the official declarations which were sent out to various organizations in Kennedy’s name. For example, in a letter to the Arkansas, Tennessee and Mississippi Farm Bureau Federations dated October 11, 1960, Kennedy states for the second time in two days that “the income of the cotton farmers must be increased to parity levels so that the cotton-grower has an opportunity to earn returns on his labour, investment, and managerial effort comparable to the returns received by workers and businessmen in other industries.”<sup>28</sup> This statement is very much a composite of the idea of parity income and of Cochrane’s definition and was copied word for word from his briefing document on cotton.

Corn, wheat and cotton were the only three commodities that Kennedy specifically addressed during the campaign. In all three

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<sup>27</sup> JFKL, PPP, Box 991, Folder: Agriculture The Book On.

<sup>28</sup> FOC, Part 1, pg. 1116.

commodities cases there is complete agreement between Willard Cochrane's briefs to the candidate and the actual declarations which came out during the campaign. These examples of policy statements on agriculture were not the only time the Kennedy campaign addressed such issues. Kennedy did, on a couple of other occasions, spell out in much broader terms his general policy on agriculture. It is to these examples that we must turn to more fully discover the influence of Dr. Cochrane on the campaign.

According to Dr. Cochrane, one speech in particular demonstrates his influence and involvement in the Kennedy campaign. The speech in question was delivered by the candidate at the National Plowing Contest in Sioux Falls, South Dakota on September 22, 1960. In the speech, Kennedy set forth his entire agricultural program. The actual speech was somewhat curtailed due to the heavy rains that day, nevertheless it is still the most complete picture of what Kennedy's agricultural policy would look like when he was elected.

According to Kennedy, the first component of his agricultural program would be the concept of "full parity of income."<sup>29</sup> Kennedy

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<sup>29</sup> FOC, Part 1, pg. 321.

went on in the speech to define income parity as “that income which gives average producers a return on their invested capital, labour, and management equal to that which similar or comparable resources earn in non-farm employment.”<sup>30</sup> This is almost word for word the definition that Willard Cochrane used to conclude his fifteen commodities briefs to the candidate. The second tenet of the New Frontier’s agricultural program would be “supply management, the adjustment of supply to demand at parity income prices.”<sup>31</sup> Kennedy then went on to define the kind of measures he was talking about; “marketing quotas, land retirement, with conservation practices, marketing orders and agreements... to be used either together or separately depending upon the needs of the specific commodities and the desire of the producers.”<sup>32</sup> Every one of the mechanisms that Kennedy named can be found in the briefs put forward by Dr. Cochrane.

Due to the rain that day Kennedy was unable to read his entire speech, but he asked that the speech be entered into the record and he admonished “the press to understand that I am supporting all of

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30 FOC, Part 1, pg. 321.

31 FOC, Part 1, pg. 321.

32 FOC, Part 1, pg. 322.

this.”<sup>33</sup> In the text of the speech, Kennedy did describe more fully the type of supply management program he had in mind. The description that is in the advance release text of the speech is the same program that Kennedy announced in the speech he gave in Fargo, South Dakota. As we have already seen it follows the prescription of the Cochrane briefs exactly.

Cochrane admits that the speech that Kennedy gave that day in Fargo was not entirely written by him but he does believe that it is in essence a summing up of his own thinking on the problems of the American farmer.

The exact speech was written in the airplane as we flew from Nashville to Sioux City, Iowa. Dick Goodwin sat by my side, working from my draft, re-phrasing it in political terms. The speech actually took physical form in that airplane ride from Nashville to Sioux City. After it took form he and I discussed it with Ted Sorensen and others <sup>34</sup>

There can be no doubt that in spite of the input of some of Kennedy's competent speech writers, the Fargo speech is essentially Dr. Cochrane's.

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<sup>33</sup> FOC, Part 1, pg. 322.

<sup>34</sup> OHI, Dr. Willard W. Cochrane, pg. 9, JFKL.



On the way to the candidate's next speaking engagement, the professor was asked by the candidate to make himself available to the press to further explain and describe the agricultural program. Cochrane rode in the press plane to Billings, Montana, the next stop in the tour, to answer any questions. This would prove to be this economist's first true trial by fire in the world of presidential politics. As Cochrane himself said: "If any young economist, or middle-aged economist, was ever thrown to the wolves and didn't know it, I was it."<sup>35</sup>

Cochrane was woefully unprepared for what awaited him on the press plane. He had thought that the press would more than likely be interested "in how the program would work, the mechanics of it, its implication to farmers, and the like."<sup>36</sup> Unfortunately for him, the press was not the least bit interested in those kind of things.

If anybody asked me a question about how the program worked in agriculture, I don't remember. There was only one single question that I got impaled on from all sides. 'What would this do to consumer food prices?' .... The whole Press contingent jumped on me as to what our program would do to food prices. I could see the consumer issue coming,

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<sup>35</sup> OHI, Dr. Willard W. Cochrane, pg. 9, JFKL.

<sup>36</sup> OHI, Dr. Willard W. Cochrane, pg. 9, JFKL.

but I didn't know how to deal with it. I hemmed and hawed, and jumped around, and finally made the overall estimate that our program might increase consumer food prices by 10 percent. After the press wrangled that out of me, they lost all interest in me. They had gotten what they wanted and which, much to my sorrow, became big headlines in many papers around the country--urban papers.<sup>37</sup>

Sure enough, the headlines in the major urban papers the next day proclaimed that the Kennedy agricultural program would raise consumer food prices. Nixon was able to boast that the Kennedy program would raise consumer prices by twenty-five percent<sup>38</sup>.

Cochrane was not dismissed or reprimanded by Kennedy for this terrible gaff on the press plane. This is not surprising considering the fact that he had told his academic advisors long before that he wanted their expert advice in their area of specialization and not their political advice on how to get policy messages across. Any political discounting would be done by Kennedy himself. To put Cochrane on the press plane was to give

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<sup>37</sup> OHI, Dr. Willard W. Cochrane, pg. 9-10, JFKL.

<sup>38</sup> Only a short while after Kennedy gave his speech, Nixon, while campaigning in New Jersey "challenged him [Kennedy] to admit to the American people that he plans to raise the food costs by 25 percent." New York Times October 5, 1960, pg. 27 column 1.

him an unfamiliar role, one for which he was unprepared. The error was not in the policy, but in the choice of messenger; it was Kennedy's own mistake. Although the candidate himself never said anything to Cochrane about the incident, many other people did.

No, Senator Kennedy himself never chewed me out on it, but I would have to say that some of his aides, closer aides than I... certainly gave me unmitigated hell! And many politicians that circulated around and rode on the airplane chewed me up one side and down the other with regard to it. <sup>39</sup>

For all the trouble this caused the campaign, little was done to back-track either away from the policy or the adviser who had created it. Kennedy remained loyal to both Cochrane and his program. He continued to talk about it and what it would do for the American farmer. In fact, he expended considerable energy refuting the republican charge that his program would rise consumer prices by twenty-five percent. Kennedy's confidence in his advisor was unshaken by this episode. No better proof of that quality of faithfulness can be found than the fact that Kennedy defended his advisor's declaration on national television.

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<sup>39</sup> OHI, Dr. Willard W. Cochrane, pg. 10, JFKL.

Well, first may I correct a statement which was made before, that under my agricultural program, food prices would go up 25 percent. That's untrue. The farmer who grows wheat gets about 2 1/2 cents out of a 25 cent loaf of bread. Even if you put his income up 10 percent that would be 2 3/4 percent or 3 cents of that 25 cents... But anybody who suggests that program would come to any figure indicated by the Vice President is in error. <sup>40</sup>

The above declaration was actually made in the third debate between Kennedy and Nixon on radio and television stations on October 13, 1960.

This brings us to the last examples where one is able to trace Dr. Cochrane's influence in John F. Kennedy's campaign; the joint appearances of both candidates during the election campaign. Both candidates met four times face to face that fall, to debate the issues on television and radio. They also conducted a series of written debates in various print media during that same period.<sup>41</sup> These were some of the last instances where Kennedy talked about his program for agriculture.

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<sup>40</sup> FOC, Part 1, pg. 217.

<sup>41</sup> In the case of the printed debates, both candidates would supply answers to an identical group of questions. The answers of both candidates would then be published together giving the reader an opportunity to compare the two candidates' positions.

The first debate on September 26, 1960 was devoted to domestic issues. During this debate both candidates had an opportunity to voice their position on agriculture. Kennedy commented that:

...my objection to present farm policy is that there are no effective controls to bring supply and demand into better balance. The dropping of the support price in order to limit production has not worked, and we now have the highest surpluses... I, therefore, suggest that in those basic commodities which are supported, that the Federal Government, after endorsement by the farmers in that commodity, attempt to bring supply and demand into balance <sup>42</sup>

Kennedy's most basic concern for an active and attentive program of limiting supply to meet demand echoes the main thrust of Dr. Cochrane's briefs to the candidate.

One gets a strong sense that after having spent more than two years talking with his academic advisers Kennedy had become aware of the fact that not everything they were telling him was always going to be politically advantageous during the campaign. As in the Cochrane case, he knew that proposing something solely on the basis

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<sup>42</sup> FOC, part 3, pg. 80

of what was best for the American farmer might not endear him to the American consumer. This was without a doubt the biggest problem facing the campaign when it came to the use of the academics. All academics, regardless of area of expertise, were striving to reach a level of objectivity that was not entirely compatible with the realities of the American political process. Their only concern was for their own area of expertise and what they could do to influence the candidate and his speech writers.

After Kennedy's election as President, Dr. Cochrane's work did not end. He continued to work for Kennedy in a somewhat different capacity; advising the candidate on staffing positions in the Department of Agriculture. Interestingly enough, he was detailed to work with Sargent Shriver, the man who had been his first contact with the Kennedy campaign. Shriver had been placed in charge of the *New Frontier's* recruitment effort. Cochrane had a hand in "naming a lot of people who became Assistant Secretaries, Administrators of Services, and that sort of thing."<sup>43</sup> He even played a role in selecting the eventual Secretary of Agriculture, Orville Freeman. Although he downplays his own influence when he states,

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<sup>43</sup> OHI, Dr. Willard W. Cochrane, pg. 12, JFKL.

“I would not like to leave the impression that I was a ‘kingmaker’ in the picking of the Secretary of Agriculture, although, certainly I was always favourable to Governor Freeman.”<sup>44</sup>

Shortly after Freeman’s appointment as Secretary, he contacted Cochrane for some advice on the challenges that were awaiting him in Washington. Cochrane remembers that “we spent one or two evenings going over this, and in the process he asked me to become his Economic Advisor, to recreate the old Bureau of Agricultural Economics.”<sup>45</sup> In accepting the position, Cochrane moved forward from the position of merely advising to a place at the decision-making table. He now had a chance to turn his advice of the previous months into programs and laws that actually would effect the very problems about which he had been trying to educate the candidate and his staff just six months earlier.

The association between Kennedy and Cochrane, shows a definite and lasting relationship of trust; a relationship that allowed the candidate to move away from old ideas and policies. While in the House and the Senate, Kennedy must have felt quite comfortable

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<sup>44</sup> OHI, Dr. Willard W. Cochrane, pg. 12, JFKL.

<sup>45</sup> OHI, Dr. Willard W. Cochrane, pg. 12, JFKL.

simply following the pack in terms of policy. When he struck out on his own as a presidential candidate, he was forced to begin to look at issues from a different perspective, one that was decidedly independent of the party's line. He could not hope to lead his party successfully unless he was willing to embrace new ideas and programs as a way of setting himself apart from the other aspirants to the nomination.

After all, Kennedy's chosen route to the nomination was through the primaries, a route that minimised the influence of party bosses and made him much more independent of the party. In accepting Cochrane's advice, he was also striking a new and independent course in agricultural policy. When Kennedy first started down the road towards the nomination, his own understanding of agricultural problems was minimal. He had been a Representative and Senator from a largely urban state. He had been brought up in a sheltered and protected environment that limited his contact with rural America. His lack of personal knowledge and understanding made him receptive to the advice of a man like Willard Cochrane.



## Chapter Three

Agricultural policy and development were not the only topics of interest to Senator Kennedy and his campaign staff. Other issues and themes were also stressed during the campaign. Although it would be ideal if we were able to delve into each policy area as thoroughly as we have with agriculture, the reality is that no other policy area has been as carefully preserved at the Presidential Library in Boston. In spite of this difficulty, it is still possible to garner a clear picture of some of the other policy areas in which academics provided ideas for the candidate. This chapter will highlight some of these areas and describe the wide variety of topics in which the Academic Advisory Group were involved.

### Urban Affairs

Urban planning and renewal was one such topic. Kennedy received a large amount of aid here from Robert C. Wood, a Professor of Political Science at M.I.T. who specialised in local and state government and their relation to urban problems and affairs. Wood was an active Democrat in both Massachusetts and national party politics. In 1956, he had helped Adlai Stevenson in his bid for the Presidency. As Wood put it, "I had some previous association or

active participation in state politics, enough so that I understand that when Kennedy began to put together a roster of academics, my name was given”<sup>1</sup> .

The first exchange of ideas came in the latter part of 1959. Wood was never an insider within the campaign as were Galbraith, Schlesinger or Cochrane. Wood never travelled with the candidate, and had only met him a few times between 1959 and the Inauguration. He was an advisor on the periphery of the campaign, yet his influence on the candidate is clear. In the fall of 1959, Wood received a letter from Kennedy asking for his views on urban problems and saying that he should expect a visit from Deirdre Henderson to collect any information that the professor would be willing to share with the candidate. Wood believed this sort of intermediary between candidate and advisor worked well, in fact he believed it worked much better than the speechwriting process used in the 1956 Stevenson Presidential campaign.

By sending Miss Henderson, what then Senator Kennedy did was have somebody come and talk to you, collect your papers and views, go away and write a draft herself or himself, and then call you about it and you'd make the changes you wanted and then the

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<sup>1</sup> OHI, Robert C. Wood, pg. 1,JFKL.

speech would come out. And the Senator would send back a note of appreciation, and your investment in time would be reasonably small.<sup>2</sup>

Kennedy's declarations on urban planning and renewal can be divided into two parts. The first speech on urban affairs was given during the primaries and the second, after Kennedy became the nominee of the party. In both of these speeches Wood's influence can be clearly discerned.

Kennedy gave a speech during the primaries which was entirely the creation of Professor Wood. It was given in Madison, Wisconsin on March 22, 1960, during the primary campaign. The Milwaukee Sentinel quoted the candidate as saying that this program would "produce a decent home in a suitable environment for every American family.. [and] step up efforts to clear slums."<sup>3</sup> The candidate stressed four major points during this speech.

His first point dealt with the problem of low-income housing as set forth in the New Deal housing programme, which called for affordable housing for every American family. Kennedy stressed the idea that

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<sup>2</sup> OHI, Robert C. Wood, pg. 2,JFKL.

<sup>3</sup> Milwaukee Sentinel, March 23, 1960, second front page.

the time had come for us [U.S. Government] to use federal mortgage insurance programmes ...to stimulate housing in places where it is appropriate and desirable and to withhold aid from developers seeking further to exploit areas already suffering the pains of excessive growth.<sup>4</sup>

He declared that any granting of “federal credit”<sup>5</sup> for housing should be conditional; based on whether or not a metropolitan region had a master plan for their city’s development. This would place urban renewal on a “metropolitan wide basis.”<sup>6</sup>

The second point dealt with the need for urban renewal in general and the need to simplify the process in order to expedite approval of funding for the various projects. More importantly, Kennedy called for coordinated planning.

More federal money should be made available to communities which have adopted a coordinated metropolitan redevelopment programme than to cities or towns which persist in disregarding their neighbours...[and] that the construction of the new housing precede or parallel the destruction of the old slum. We should make sure that displaced families have somewhere to go.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> OHI, Robert C. Wood, pg. 23, JFKL. In this particular case Kennedy was referring to the VA and FHA as catalysts for housing.

<sup>5</sup> OHI, Robert C. Wood, pg. 23, JFKL.

<sup>6</sup> OHI, Robert C. Wood, pg. 24, JFKL.

<sup>7</sup> OHI, Robert C. Wood, pg. 24-25, JFKL.

The third concerned urban conservation. Kennedy believed that this should be a part of every community's plan and that "cities need--and can have--their own resources if we move quickly to conserve them."<sup>8</sup> As with the other components, he made the acquisition of green space integral to a city's master metropolitan plan.

The fourth and final part of his programme dealt with urban transportation and the need to "review thoroughly the present assumption that...the automobile is for all purposes and for all times America's chosen instrument of urban transportation."<sup>9</sup> Within the confines of a metropolitan area, Kennedy called for the examination of all forms of public transportation: bus, rail and subway, in order to create a cohesive and interconnected transportation system, which would serve an entire region in the most efficient way possible. He also spoke of the use of federal funds for urban transportation, provided that the need for such funding could be justified.

This speech encapsulates John Kennedy's urban affairs programme during the primary campaign. However, this policy plan

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<sup>8</sup> OHI, Robert C. Wood, pg. 25, JFKL.

<sup>9</sup> OHI, Robert C. Wood, pg. 26, JFKL.

did not remain in quite this form throughout the Presidential campaign. Kennedy's urban renewal programme evolved a little bit after he became the Democratic Party's nominee, largely due to circumstances arising out of the Presidential campaign and out of his own party.

After he became the nominee of the party, Kennedy delivered one substantive speech on urban planning and renewal and made seven other passing references to the topic in other more general speeches. This was one of those policy areas that did not rate very high on the list of speech-making topics.

In October of 1960, a group of Democratic Mayors held an Urban Affairs Conference in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania that drew together over 450 mayors from 30 states. The conference had several goals. The first concern was clearly to define the Democratic Party's urban affairs policy. Secondly, this partisan conference hoped to tie Kennedy to a specific program which would then serve as a blueprint for the next Democratic administration, in the event of his election. Their third goal was to buoy Democratic support in the cities in general, and in low income neighbourhoods in particular. The candidate's promises would give the mayors ample reason to

work hard for the ticket in the November elections. The mayors present at the conference wanted to hear exactly what a Kennedy administration would do for their cities and towns.

Kennedy addressed the gathering on October 10, 1960, to deliver what he believed would become the policy of his administration. In his speech, Kennedy talked about a ten-year federal-local programme to “eradicate slums and blight and help solve the problems of explosive metropolitan growth.”<sup>10</sup> This programme would encompass five areas, the first component being urban renewal.

An expanded urban renewal program should be made effective in conserving and restoring older areas, as well as in clearing and rebuilding areas that are beyond conserving. The National Government should give a long-term commitment to urban renewal--in place of the present year-to-year approach--so that cities can make long-term plans with the assurance that aid will not be suddenly cut off.<sup>11</sup>

The second component of the programme dealt with housing, and the need to create more middle-and low-income housing for Americans. Building “homes not only for higher income families but

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<sup>10</sup> FOC, Part 1, pg. 552.

<sup>11</sup> FOC, Part 1, pg. 552.



also for lower income and middle income”<sup>12</sup> families. He stressed the need to improve aid offered to families and enterprises that were displaced by the redevelopment of their area.

Mass transportation was the third component of his urban affairs programme. He attacked the Republicans for giving aid for “highways but none for [to] commuter railroads, bus, and streetcar service.”<sup>13</sup> He called for federal assistance to aid in metropolitan transportation planning and the purchase of facilities. “Unified transportation planning should be a condition and a goal of Federal assistance.”<sup>14</sup>

The fourth part of the Kennedy urban affairs policy dealt with pollution. He called for a “comprehensive conservation plan(s) for all our great interstate river basins”<sup>15</sup> to help aid local authorities in cleaning up the lakes and rivers.

Dovetailed with his concern for the environment was Kennedy’s fifth and final proposition, which dealt with recreational facilities and conservation. He called for every metropolitan plan to

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<sup>12</sup> FOC, Part 1, pg. 552.

<sup>12.</sup> FOC, Part 1, pg. 553.

<sup>14</sup> FOC, Part 1, pg. 553.

<sup>15</sup> FOC, Part 1, pg. 553.

have “parks and recreational”<sup>16</sup> sites in addition to a federal plan for an expansion of the national parks system.

In order to provide leadership and to coordinate this urban affairs program Kennedy called for the creation of an Urban Affairs Department with Cabinet status. As Kennedy put it

The Department of Agriculture was created 98 years ago to serve rural America. It is time the people who live in urban areas receive equal representation.<sup>17</sup>

This last promise of Cabinet status for an Urban Affairs Department, was one of the few new aspects of his Urban Affairs program. The call for a ten-year program to deal with slum clearance and the point dealing specifically with pollution are the only other new proposals Kennedy offered the American people in the campaign.

In essence, the speech he gave in Wisconsin, drafted by Wood, was truly the bedrock on which his position on urban affairs, as nominee of the party, was built. Wood’s influence in this policy area remained stable in spite of the fact that he was not an insider working closely with the candidate, like some other academics. This is another example of Kennedy deciding on a policy position and

<sup>16</sup> FOC, Part 1, pg. 553.

<sup>17</sup> FOC, Part 1, pg. 553.

sticking to it in a consistent fashion throughout the campaign.

It is not possible to ascertain who actually wrote the Pittsburgh speech.<sup>18</sup> However, given the policy content and program no one can discount the fact that Wood's thoughts and advice on urban affairs are the basis for the speech. The important thing to remember in this episode is that Kennedy and his speech writers were unwilling radically to change policy statements once they were issued. They valued the continuity of ideas enough not to make any substantive changes in this area. Once set on a course, the candidate did not like to stray from the thoughtful reasoning of his academic advisors. Many significant parts of Kennedy's *New Frontier* would not have existed at all if it were not for the work of the Academic Advisory Group. The *New Frontier* was the product of their collective thinking much in the same way that Roosevelt's New Deal was a product of his Brains Trust.

It also should be noted that in neither speech did Kennedy comment on the plight of black families in the inner cities. Although by the beginning of the 1960's the innermost cores of many large American cities were overcrowded with black families, this topic was

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<sup>18</sup> No copy of the Pittsburgh speech remains in the Kennedy Library; it only exists in the official record.

never dovetailed into either speech on urban affairs. This was no doubt deliberate on the part of both the speech writer and the candidate. By not mixing the two policy areas, it insured that the one message Kennedy wanted to get out to the media would be picked up in the least unadulterated way. Moreover, the burning issue for black Americans in the period was civil rights and not urban renewal of inner city neighbourhoods. If Kennedy wanted to speak to black Americans about his concern for their quality of life and convince them to vote for him, then the candidate had to make such an important subject centre stage in a speech, and not a passing reference in some other speech on some other topic.

### Defense Policy

Kennedy has always been considered a hard-line Cold Warrior. On the subject of defense policy it is clear from his previous years in both houses of Congress that he was greatly influenced by the Cold War rhetoric and assumptions of his day and age. Kennedy's father had been, at one time, Ambassador to the United Kingdom. The Ambassador's most noteworthy legacies were his cynical assumptions about British resolve during World War Two and his sympathetic disposition towards Hitler's treatment of Jews before

the war. No doubt these two positions on the part of his father must have created in Kennedy a burning desire not to be perceived as timid in the face of an adversary, and must have had some influence on the way he viewed Soviet actions. Add to this the fact that his opponent was to be one of the fiercest Cold Warriors of his generation, Richard Nixon, and it becomes easy to understand why Kennedy took a decidedly hard line on defense in his campaign for the White House.

National defense generally received much more attention than most other issues during the campaign. Kennedy's first speech on national defense, which he delivered to the Senate early on in his campaign for the Presidency, was really a group effort. Many academics had a hand in crafting that particular speech. The defense speech was an attempt by everyone concerned: candidate and his researchers to map out a new direction for the Pentagon in the 1960's. This one speech best encapsulated the program which Kennedy returned to over and over again during the campaign.

In this speech before the Senate on February 29, 1960, Kennedy called for a three-pronged increase in defense expenditures and preparedness. Firstly, he suggested a continuous airborne alert

by SAC “keeping 25 percent of our [the US] nuclear striking force in the air at all times.”<sup>19</sup> Secondly he called for increased funding to “step up production of our Polaris, Minuteman and air-to-ground missile development.”<sup>20</sup> Finally, he wanted an increase in defense funding in order to

augment, modernize and provide increased mobility and versatility for the conventional forces and weapons of the Army and Marine Corps.<sup>21</sup>

The first two points were attempts by Kennedy and his academics to deal with what he believed would become a Missile Gap in favour of the Soviets between the two superpowers in the early 1960's. The third point was his attempt to provide the US with a recourse other than nuclear weapons to deal with small brush fire conflicts around the world. These three points made up the program to which Kennedy became committed during his campaign.

We know with certainty that this particular speech was drafted collectively by Archibald Cox, Walt Rostow, Edward Katzenbach,

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<sup>19</sup> Congressional Record, 86th Congress, Second Session, pg. 3803

<sup>20</sup> Congressional Record, 86th Congress, Second Session, pg. 3803

<sup>21</sup> Congressional Record, 86th Congress, Second Session, pg. 3804

Jerome Wiesner and Paul Nitze.<sup>22</sup> These men each had a say in revising the speech for the candidate. They together and Cox communicated the results of the group's deliberations to both Ted Sorensen and Senator Kennedy.

We also know that they made at least two revisions of the speech. Cox sent three letters to Washington attesting to this; the first dated February 4, 1960 and two more dispatched on February 16, 1960. In these three missives to the candidate he summarized the group's thinking on several of the points which Kennedy would be talking about in the Senate.

In his first letter dated February 4, 1960, the group's input into the matter was quite specific. Cox told Sorensen that "I have tried to eliminate some of the rhetoric and make the two main threads -- the missile gap and the need for conventional armaments -- more explicit."<sup>23</sup> Cox also pointed out some of Walt Rostow's

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<sup>22</sup> The discovery that Paul Nitze was an advisor to Kennedy came as quite a revelation to this researcher, as well it might to many readers given that the remainder of Kennedy's Defense advisors were all academics. Nitze has become, over the last fifty years, the proto-typical Cold Warrior and Defense technocrat. He was politically well connected within the Democratic Party and no doubt was willing to aid Kennedy because it might allow him back into a new Democratic Administration should the candidate win. The 1950's were lean years spent outside of government for Paul Nitze, criticizing the Republican Administration. No doubt Nitze saw in Kennedy his ticket back into government.

<sup>23</sup> HLSL, PPAC, Letter, February 4, 1960 from A. Cox to Theodore C. Sorensen.

concerns about the speech.

Walt Rostow would give two further bits of advice. First, eliminate the classical quotations. Second, he and others would lay stress upon Gates' confusion of Russian intentions. My own reaction is that this rather precious bit of reasoning has been over-emphasized. The layman will not be as impressed as our ex-intelligence officers.<sup>24</sup>

The speech was wholly centred on the idea of the missile gap and American military preparedness, and interestingly enough it did contain only one classical quotation, so we know that Cox and Rostow's advice on the quotations and the general theme of the speech was heeded, at least in part.

A short time later Cox sent a second set of letters to Washington once again dealing with the defense policy speech. One of the letters was addressed to Kennedy directly, and the other to Sorensen. In both letters Cox pointed out a few details to be noted by the candidate and his speechwriter. In the letter to Sorensen, dated February 16, 1960, he emphasized the fact that the academics were divided over the idea of the airborne alert.

Katzenbach takes the view that the Senator

<sup>24</sup> HSL, PPAC, Letter, February 4, 1960 from A. Cox to Theodore C. Sorensen.



should call for a continuous airborne alert. Wiesner is strongly opposed partly on the ground[s] that we would wear out what few planes and personnel that are available today and partly on the ground[s] that the dangers of a human failure are too great and someone might drop a bomb.<sup>25</sup>

Cox, whose job it was to build a consensus in order to get the speech written, came up with a compromise solution, which he had written into the speech. Kennedy

should call for men and planes necessary to give us the capability for maintaining a continuous airborne alert but that he take no position on the military decision whether we would actually order it if it seemed wise.<sup>26</sup>

This, according to Cox, “reserves freedom of decision in the future.”<sup>27</sup> By wording this proposal in such a manner, Cox was trying to do two things; bring two academic points of view into accord and, more importantly, give Kennedy the freedom to make the decision, after he was in the White House, when all the facts would be available to him. In his speech before the Senate, Kennedy did just that by

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<sup>25</sup> HLSL, PPAC, Letter, February 16, 1960 from A. Cox to Theodore C. Sorensen.

<sup>26</sup> HLSL, PPAC, Letter, February 16, 1960 from A. Cox to Theodore C. Sorensen.

<sup>27</sup> HLSL, PPAC, Letter, February 16, 1960 from A. Cox to Theodore C. Sorensen.

stressing that “Congress cannot and should not order such an alert now - only the President has the information and responsibility necessary to make that decision.”<sup>28</sup>

Cox continued on to mention that Nitze thought it was important that the Senator “call for the expenditure of additional funds for the Minuteman”<sup>29</sup> missile program. This was specifically articulated in the speech before the Senate. Cox then went on to counsel Sorensen that all the participants involved in its creation “attach great importance to the precise formulation”<sup>30</sup> of the speech. It is obvious that a lot of hard work was involved in drafting the speech and advising the candidate on defense policy. In spite of the differences that may have surfaced during the drafting process, in the end all of the participants felt that the speech was complete and “one of the few comprehensive surveys of the entire problem.”<sup>31</sup>

In his letter to Kennedy, written the same day as the letter to Sorensen, Cox stressed that the speech “should be given in the grand

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<sup>28</sup> Congressional Record, 86th Congress, Second Session, pg. 3803

<sup>29</sup> HLSL, PPAC, Letter, February 16, 1960 from A. Cox to Theodore C. Sorensen.

<sup>30</sup> HLSL, PPAC, Letter, February 16, 1960 from A. Cox to Theodore C. Sorensen.

<sup>31</sup> HLSL, PPAC, Letter, February 16, 1960 from A. Cox to Theodore C. Sorensen.

manner -- with care, seriousness and a sense of spaciousness.”<sup>32</sup> This was obviously a serious attempt by everyone concerned to deal thoroughly with a critical issue of the campaign. Much has since been made of the fact that there was no missile gap, and that the academics and the candidate were completely wrong in their assumptions. This should not necessarily condemn the effort involved in creating this particular speech, or the policies it put forward. Deirdre Henderson, who was present when these men met to discuss the speech, characterized the whole process as “an honest attempt. I mean nobody guessed that they were making, you know, the wrong assumption.”<sup>33</sup>

After becoming the nominee of the Democratic Party, and during the campaign, Kennedy gave three more speeches with defense policy as their principle theme. On thirteen other occasions he referred to individual defense issues in speeches on other topics. Kennedy also answered questions posed to him by the press or by voters, on his defense policy, five other times during the campaign.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> HSL, PPAC, Letter, February 16, 1960 from A. Cox to Theodore C. Sorensen.

<sup>33</sup> AI Deirdre Henderson pg. 14

<sup>34</sup> This does not include any of his declarations during his debates with Richard Nixon.

In all of these cases Kennedy consistently followed the position on defense that he set forth in the speech he gave in the Senate.

Only one of the three speeches Kennedy delivered as nominee of his party was of the same quality and length as his February speech in the Senate. On August 26, 1960 Kennedy restated his position on national defense before the Veterans of Foreign Wars assembled for their Convention in Detroit, Michigan. In his speech, he told the VFW that his defense position could be broken down into four simple points. They were:

- (1)[For] accelerating the Polaris and Minuteman missile programs.
- (2)Expanding and modernizing our conventional forces.
- (3)Protecting our retaliatory capacity by airborne alert.
- (4)Streamlining our Defense Establishment to give primary attention to our primary needs.<sup>35</sup>

The first three points are exactly what the academics had called for in February of that same year. Point four is new, but sounds like the same old rhetoric that could come out of the mouth of any politician running for office. Every politician, regardless of party, always

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<sup>35</sup> FOC, Part 1, pg. 973.

seems to be against waste and mismanagement. Point four should not really be considered new policy, so much as standard political fare during a campaign.

The other two defense speeches<sup>36</sup> delivered by Kennedy also followed the exact same themes as set forth by the Academic Advisory Group. As has been stated before, the Group's counsel remained remarkably durable over the course of the campaign. Kennedy does not seem to have digressed from their recommendations on defense policies in any significant way.

In the years since the 1960 campaign much has been made of the fact that Kennedy used the Missile Gap during his speeches on Defense. Some historians have contended that Kennedy must have known that by stating that the United States was behind the Soviets in missile production he was lying to the American public.

According to some, he had two opportunities to be informed of the fact that the United States actually was leading the U.S.S.R. in both missile production and deployment. The first such opportunity

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<sup>36</sup> The first of these two speeches was delivered by Kennedy on September 6, 1960 in Seattle, Washington at the Civic Auditorium. In this speech Kennedy talked about all four of the points he mentioned before the VFW. In the last full speech devoted to defense policy, which Kennedy gave in the Ulysses S. Grant Hotel in San Diego, California on September 11, 1960, he omitted point four, but did commit himself to the first three points he had stressed in his earlier speeches.

was early on in his campaign when Jerome Wiesner was brought on board from MIT. Wiesner had been a scientific advisor to Eisenhower and was privy to the fact that the U.S. was firmly in the lead with regard to missiles. The second such opportunity came after Kennedy became the nominee of the Democratic Party, at which time, he was briefed officially by the Eisenhower Administration so as not to say anything that might compromise National Security.

We now know that Wiesner felt duty bound not to reveal anything to the candidate during the campaign<sup>37</sup>. Furthermore, it would have been difficult for Kennedy to have accepted this new information on American missile capacity at that time in any case, even if he had been told. Kennedy was being advised by many other academics at the same time who all believed in the Missile Gap. In order for the candidate to ignore the gap as an issue, he would have had to override the recommendations of his expert advisors, all

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<sup>37</sup> "Wiesner at the time justified his unwillingness to correct Kennedy's claims as the result of a concern that he not disclose the secrets of Project Corona", Counsels of War Gregg Herken (Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1985), pg 140. If one adds to this the fact that Wiesner had actually served as the Staff Director of the Gaither Study, which was the original instigator of the entire Missile Gap controversy, one begins to see that by refuting the gap to Kennedy Wiesner's ability to advise the candidate would have become more and more tenuous. Wiesner, who had built up part of his reputation based on his work with the Gaither Study, could not easily, all on his own, contradict the Group's very public stance. Where Science and Politics Meet, Jerome Wiesner (McGraw Hill, New York 1961), pg 174.

without the possibility of telling them why. It would have meant that Kennedy had to go against the prevailing understanding of the vast majority of the members of his own party.

That Wiesner did not tell Kennedy was undoubtedly the correct thing to do, for it meant that National Security was preserved. No doubt, this was something the security-conscience Eisenhower Administration would have appreciated.

By the time that Kennedy became the nominee of the party it had become too late for him to change his public stance on the Missile Gap. As already noted, Kennedy did not like to change a policy declaration once it had been made. Changing his position on the missiles in the fall of 1960 would have been impossible, it would have made him look weak and indecisive, something he could not afford to do when facing a man like Richard Nixon. If in fact Kennedy was told about the comparative missile strength of the U.S.S.R. and the United States, then he would have been just as much caught by circumstances as Richard Nixon.<sup>38</sup> In the fall of 1960

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<sup>38</sup> Up until now no researcher has actually be able to get their hands on the actual briefing documents used to brief Kennedy after he became nominee of the party. Until these papers are declassified, it is impossible to know exactly what Kennedy was told.

Stephen E. Ambrose in Eisenhower Soldier and President, New York, Simon & Schuster, 1990. pg 523, contends that Allen Dulles never mentioned the missile gap at all to Kennedy in his formal briefing. When the candidate

Kennedy could no more change his position than Nixon could publicly disclose the fact that the United States was ahead of the Soviets. Both men had become trapped by the U.S. government's policy of National Security.

At no point in the deliberations did either the candidate or his academic advisors seem to understand that their call for increased funding for the United States' missile programs would exacerbate the arms race with the Soviet Union. In this respect, no one involved was thinking about the long-term repercussions of their policy decisions. In this particular case, the pressing need was to get the candidate elected and to make sure that he was seen to be as tough as, if not tougher than, Richard Nixon.

For Kennedy and his advisors, the Cold War and America's longstanding policy of containing and meeting every Communist challenge, real or imagined, demanded a strong and resilient defense program. The call for increased funding of American missile development was first and foremost a political gambit by the candidate and his academic advisors to help win the election. They accomplished this by portraying Kennedy as Nixon's equal, if not

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asked him specifically about missiles Dulles answered " I replied that the Defense Department was the competent authority on this question"



more. What mattered above all else to this group of people was winning the election.

### Disarmament

At the same time that Cox and the other academics were working on defence, they were also working on other topics. On March 6, 1960, a week after having given his speech on National Defense, Kennedy spoke during his primary campaign at the University of New Hampshire in Durham, on the question of disarmament. This speech's origins can be found in a group of letters and memoranda which circulated between the Senator's office and Archibald Cox. This speech incorporates many ideas which were the creation of the Academic Advisory Group.

On January 26, 1960, Richard Goodwin, a legislative assistant in Senator Kennedy's office, sent a copy of a "bill designed to implement the Democratic Advisory Council's recommendation for a National Peace Agency"<sup>39</sup> to Archibald Cox. In the letter that accompanied the bill, was a request that the Academic Advisory Group evaluate the legislation and "let us know what revisions and suggestions for improvements they have."<sup>40</sup> In January of 1960, the Democratic

<sup>39</sup> HLSL, PPAC, Letter, January 26, 1960 from Richard Goodwin to A. Cox.

<sup>40</sup> HLSL, PPAC, Letter, January 26, 1960 from Richard Goodwin to A. Cox.

Advisory Council proposed the creation of a National Peace Agency. John Kennedy, being a member of this Council, was therefore “fairly well committed to the introduction of this bill in the Senate”<sup>41</sup>, according to Goodwin.

Cox wasted no time in responding to the letter and the legislation, He fired off a letter to Ted Sorensen outlining the Group’s opinion on the matter. The Group was emphatically opposed to the idea. They thought that a new Peace Agency would be a useless endeavour. Their response could not have been any stronger.

It is our unanimous opinion that the bill to create a National Peace Agency is rubbish. One of the group says to tell you that Representative Bennett<sup>42</sup> was an Eagle Scout.<sup>43</sup>

That of course does not mean that the academics were against disarmament. They were receptive to the idea of disarmament, but against the creation of this particular agency. The Academic Advisory Group objected to the creation of such a Peace Agency for three reasons. They felt such an agency would interfere “with the necessary power and responsibility of the President and the State

<sup>41</sup> HSL, PPAC, Letter, January 26, 1960 from Richard Goodwin to A. Cox.

<sup>42</sup> Rep. Bennett, Democrat, Florida, was the original author of the Bill [H.R. 9305] tabled on January 6, 1960.

<sup>43</sup> HSL, PPAC, Letter, January 28, 1960 from Richard Goodwin to A. Cox.

Department.”<sup>44</sup> Their opinion was that too little had been done under the present administration to organize and support any measures to aid the disarmament process or negotiations. They believed that “a high level official should be appointed for this job, either in the State Department or directly under the President”<sup>45</sup> and not as the head of a separate agency.

Cox went on to point out that the creation of a new agency would lead to “wasteful duplication and jurisdictional conflicts.”<sup>46</sup> Any disarmament agency would naturally have to rely on aerial reconnaissance, an area then within the purview of the Air Force. No doubt such an agency would also come into conflict with the Atomic Energy Commission whose position it was to foster nuclear development in all its forms, military and civilian. Finally, the members of the Group argued that the “bill played into the hands of the Soviet propaganda machine because its title implies that none of the rest of the government is concerned with peace.”<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> HLSL, PPAC, Letter, January 28, 1960 from A. Cox to Theodore Sorensen.

<sup>45</sup> HLSL, PPAC, Letter, January 28, 1960 from A. Cox to Theodore Sorensen.

<sup>46</sup> HLSL, PPAC, Letter, January 28, 1960 from A. Cox to Theodore Sorensen.

<sup>47</sup> HLSL, PPAC, Letter, January 28, 1960 from A. Cox to Theodore Sorensen.

The Group was not all negative in its criticism of the proposal, but they felt any action of this type should be undertaken “by executive action”<sup>48</sup> and not by formal legislation. Cox also mentioned that if the Senator felt strongly that some form of “concrete evidence”<sup>49</sup> was required in order “to focus our energies and resources on the objective of peace”<sup>50</sup>, he should propose his own resolution on the subject. Pursuant to that goal, Cox attached a draft resolution for Kennedy to study.

If Kennedy were to decide to propose his own legislation, Cox, speaking for the Group, felt strongly that two points should be stressed above all. Firstly, that “the efforts of the entire government...should be directed toward integrated programs for achieving peace”<sup>51</sup> and that “no new agency can do as much as all segments of the government acting together under the direction of an active President.”<sup>52</sup> Secondly, that the person charged with the

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<sup>48</sup> HLST, PPAC, Letter, January 28, 1960 from A. Cox to Theodore Sorensen.

<sup>49</sup> HLST, PPAC, Letter, January 28, 1960 from A. Cox to Theodore Sorensen.

<sup>50</sup> HLST, PPAC, Letter, January 28, 1960 from A. Cox to Theodore Sorensen.

<sup>51</sup> HLST, PPAC, Letter, January 28, 1960 from A. Cox to Theodore Sorensen.

<sup>52</sup> HLST, PPAC, Letter, January 28, 1960 from A. Cox to Theodore Sorensen.

task of formulating a United States policy on disarmament should be appointed “either in the office of the President or in the State Department as an Under-Secretary, together with a small staff.”<sup>53</sup> Furthermore that this official should have “the authority to map out the programs and issue the directives to other government agencies necessary to develop and carry”<sup>54</sup> out any disarmament program that the President saw fit to establish.

Kennedy’s first attempt to deal with the problem of disarmament met with few approving comments from his academics. None of the men advising Kennedy felt a pressing need to create any new agency to deal with the issue. In hand-written notes on the subject Cox called the idea of an agency “half-baked” and just an attempt to get “votes for peace”<sup>55</sup>, not a particularly flattering description of the proposed agency. None of these people wanted to see Kennedy closely involved in the Bennett proposal.

If Kennedy really was committed to the idea of disarmament, the academics felt strongly that he should distinguish his program

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<sup>53</sup> HLSL, PPAC, Letter, January 28, 1960 from A. Cox to Theodore Sorensen.

<sup>54</sup> HLSL, PPAC, Letter, January 28, 1960 from A. Cox to Theodore Sorensen.

<sup>55</sup> HLSL, PPAC, Hand written notes on the Peace Agency.

from any other then under consideration. By counselling Kennedy to propose something new, the academics were forcing him to set himself apart from his colleagues in the House and Senate. They wanted to give Kennedy what they felt was the best possible alternative to what they thought of as an inferior piece of legislation.

A short time later, Cox received another letter dated February 16, 1960 from Richard Goodwin. Once again he asked Cox and the other academics to comment on the latest draft of the Peace Agency. Now re-named the Arms Control Research Institute. Goodwin reminded Cox that "I think it is fair to say that the Senator is committed to introducing something along this line."<sup>56</sup>

Cox replied on behalf of the Group in a letter dated February 18, 1960. The academics were still not completely enthusiastic about the creation of any such new organization, but tried to be more positive in their criticism. The Group was aware that Kennedy would be proposing something and it was up to them to make an effort to help him in this endeavour. Towards this end, in a four page letter, they fleshed out how Kennedy's new Arms Control Research Institute should operate and integrate itself into the machinery of

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<sup>56</sup> HLSL, PPAC, Letter, February 16, 1960 from Richard Goodwin to A. Cox.

government.

Professors Jerome Wiesner, Walt Rostow, Max Millikan, Archibald Cox and Dierdre Henderson met to discuss and confer on the issue and to reply to Kennedy's request for advice on the proposed agency. They began their analysis by pointing out some of the weaknesses in Kennedy's proposal. They were all agreed that the institute idea that Kennedy envisioned was "inadequate"<sup>57</sup> to the task. The academics' position could best be summed up in the following way.

When asked specifically whether they would suggest any changes in the functions of the proposed Institute, assuming that the Senator were determined to recommend them, Professors Wiesner, Rostow and Millikan replied that the details of the Institute were of no importance whatever.<sup>58</sup>

In essence, their concern was not with form and structure so much as with function and mandate. Cox's letter then went on for three pages to revise Kennedy's idea for an Arms Control Institute by dealing with the merits of such a proposal in terms of how it would operate within government, and not on its configuration.

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<sup>57</sup> HLSL, PPAC, Letter, February 18, 1960 from A. Cox to Richard Goodwin pg. 1.

<sup>58</sup> HLSL, PPAC, Letter, February 18, 1960 from A. Cox to Richard Goodwin pg. 1.

The Group began by acknowledging the place that disarmament should have in any political campaign.

We recognize the enormous importance of this field both in term of practical politics and, more important, for human civilization. The Senator should plan to develop it as a major issue.<sup>59</sup>

The academics concluded that the United States must do better than it had in the past regarding disarmament. The government “must develop active peace programs, do research and development necessary for arms control, and make the results an integral part of its diplomatic and defense policies.”<sup>60</sup> They thought that the problem facing any new administration was primarily organizational. They believed that one top level official, supported by a small staff, should be made responsible for all disarmament programs within the government. The leader, along with his staff, “must have the power to issue effective directives to the Atomic Energy Commission, the State Department and the Department of Defense. Therefore, the

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<sup>59</sup> HSL, PPAC, Letter, February 18, 1960 from A. Cox to Richard Goodwin pg. 2.

<sup>60</sup> HSL, PPAC, Letter, February 18, 1960 from A. Cox to Richard Goodwin pg. 2.



function belongs in the White House.”<sup>61</sup> By making one person responsible they hoped that that person’s accountability would insure that programs would be developed and implemented in a timely and consistent fashion.

The Group cited the example of the Eisenhower Administration’s Open Skies proposal and the fact that “no one had done the research necessary to check its feasibility, such as making the airplane flights necessary to learn whether missile launching bases can be distinguished from mine shafts.”<sup>62</sup> No one person at the time was responsible for insuring that the details of the Eisenhower proposal were actually viable. Accountability was key, according to the academics, in creating any disarmament program and disseminating it to the necessary branches of government.

They stated strongly that “no one short of a personal assistant to the President with Cabinet rank or its equivalent would have the power to control the other government agencies.”<sup>63</sup> State and Defense Department interests might also resist efforts in the area of

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<sup>61</sup> HLSL, PPAC, Letter, February 18, 1960 from A. Cox to Richard Goodwin pg. 2.

<sup>62</sup> HLSL, PPAC, Letter, February 18, 1960 from A. Cox to Richard Goodwin pg. 2.

<sup>63</sup> HLSL, PPAC, Letter, February 18, 1960 from A. Cox to Richard Goodwin pg. 2.

disarmament. Therefore they believed, only a Special Assistant, located in the White House and with the backing of the President, would be able to move government in the direction of disarmament.

The Academic Advisory Group envisioned disarmament programs as becoming integral parts of United States foreign policy. The State Department would still be responsible for negotiating any government disarmament proposals with the Soviets. They also believed that this would require, according to the Group, the creation of a special unit under the supervision of a high-ranking official within the State Department. Likewise, the Defense Department should be responsible “for the technical operations of arms control.”<sup>64</sup>

White House backing would also be key to getting basic research and development done by agencies, like the Atomic Energy Commission, which might be better suited to doing nuclear research. Forcing the military or the AEC to do basic research in disarmament technology, the academics maintained, would take the support of the President.

Kennedy’s advisors also saw the problem of arms control and disarmament in more human terms as well. There were

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<sup>64</sup> HLSL, PPAC, Letter, February 18, 1960 from A. Cox to Richard Goodwin pg. 3.

“psychological or moral”<sup>65</sup> components to the question, along with the need to educate, inform and convince the country of the necessity for arms control.

It is always easier to think and act aggressively than it is to work out accommodations. Finding peaceful solutions is a greater challenge to our creativity. It appeals to higher instincts.<sup>66</sup>

The cold war had created an ingrained sense of conflict in everything the United States did in relation to the Soviet Union. The Soviets were seen as aggressive, determined opponents, whose every move must be counteracted and checked by the United States. This kind of entrenched thinking on the part of the government and the general public could not just be swept away overnight. The Group believed that the President would have to deal with these notions, in order to create any meaningful atmosphere for a future arms control agenda.

Cox closed the letter by offering a couple of personal comments regarding some of the political aspects of what Kennedy was

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<sup>65</sup> HLSL, PPAC, Letter, February 18, 1960 from A. Cox to Richard Goodwin pg. 3.

<sup>66</sup> HLSL, PPAC, Letter, February 18, 1960 from A. Cox to Richard Goodwin pg. 3.

proposing by embracing disarmament. He was careful to preface his personal comments with the statement that the Group did not discuss any of the political aspects of what Kennedy wanted to do because “I wished our conclusions to rest upon the merits.”<sup>67</sup> To Cox the whole idea of a new agency devoted to peace sounded like “Madison Avenue gimmicks, of which we have had so many during the past seven years, without any substance behind them.”<sup>68</sup> He mentioned his perception that this might just be an “effort to outbid the opposition in seeking votes for peace.”<sup>69</sup> Cox did not want Kennedy associated with either of these gambits. Cox’s efforts had always run along very different lines. If he and the other academics had spent a lot of their time and energy in advising Kennedy, it was in order to propose something quite new and different, which would be of service to the man they all believed would someday be President. They even prefaced all of their recommendations, as a Group, with the statement that;

We hope that he [Kennedy] will also give

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<sup>67</sup> HLSL, PPAC, Letter, February 18, 1960 from A. Cox to Richard Goodwin pg. 3.

<sup>68</sup> HLSL, PPAC, Letter, February 18, 1960 from A. Cox to Richard Goodwin pg. 4.

<sup>69</sup> HLSL, PPAC, Letter, February 18, 1960 from A. Cox to Richard Goodwin pg. 4.

thought to it [disarmament] in preparing himself for being President.<sup>70</sup>

Cox then ended his letter by reminding the candidate that;

As President, the Senator would want the kind of organization outlined above. He should never forget that he may be President.<sup>71</sup>

The underlining is Cox's way of reminding Kennedy that he should remember that what may be politically advantageous to a candidate might not be so useful to a President, and warning him that he should be wary of committing himself too quickly to any idea foisted upon him as a candidate. Cox, in outlining the Groups' advice to the candidate, was trying his best to steer Kennedy away from such ill-advised forays into areas which might hamper his future ability to act as President. Cox was trying very hard to get Kennedy to see things in terms of being President, and not just as another candidate for the White House.

When Kennedy did deliver his speech on March 6, 1960, his

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<sup>70</sup> HLSL, PPAC, Letter, February 18, 1960 from A. Cox to Richard Goodwin pg. 2.

<sup>71</sup> HLSL, PPAC, Letter, February 18, 1960 from A. Cox to Richard Goodwin pg. 4.

proposals for disarmament bare a striking resemblance to what the Academic Advisory Group had been telling him in January and February. Kennedy even went so far as to preface his proposal for an Arms Control Research Institute by stating that

I am introducing for appropriate reference a bill to establish an Arms Control Research Institute. Based on a considerably modified version of the bill for a National Peace Agency, earlier introduced by Congressman Bennett.<sup>72</sup>

Kennedy set himself apart by introducing his own resolution, as per the recommendation of the Academic Advisory Group. He was no longer just the point man for the Democratic Party's Advisory Council.

The Arms Control Research Institute that Kennedy finally proposed was to fall wholly under the "immediate direction of the President."<sup>73</sup> Furthermore, the institute would "undertake, coordinate and follow through on the research, development and policy planning needed for a workable disarmament program."<sup>74</sup> At no time during his speech did Kennedy detail how the Institute

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<sup>72</sup> Congressional Record, 86th Congress, Second Session, pg. 4708.

<sup>73</sup> Congressional Record, 86th Congress, Second Session, pg. 4708.

<sup>74</sup> Congressional Record, 86th Congress, Second Session, pg. 4708.

would be staffed or what structure it would take, he says nothing about its form whatsoever. He did, however, detail its function and how it would interface with other government departments. He had obviously taken the words and recommendations of his advisory group thoroughly to heart.

The three branches of government which were the cause of so much discussion and concern for the academics were all mentioned; the Department of Defense, the State Department and the Atomic Energy Commission. The candidate was careful to point out that the new institute “would not infringe upon the prerogatives of any existing agency.”<sup>75</sup> The State Department would still be responsible for negotiating arms control agreements but, in the future, it “would be fully supported by a wealth of scientific information.”<sup>76</sup> Likewise the Defense Department would be free to develop its weapons as it pleased, although the “institute would be available to develop monitoring devices. Finally, the Atomic Energy Commission would be free to continue to promote all the uses of nuclear energy, except that the “institute would test and develop devices to detect improper

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<sup>75</sup> Congressional Record, 86th Congress, Second Session, pg. 4708.

<sup>76</sup> Congressional Record, 86th Congress, Second Session, pg. 4708.

uses.”<sup>77</sup>

All in all, the Institute Kennedy put forward was just the amorphous and unstructured kind of component of government that his advisors were hoping for all along. It was one which would reside in the White House, garnering its influence and authority directly from its proximity to the President, not from its independent status, as Bennett had originally wished.

Kennedy wanted this new Arms Control Research Institute to act as a clearing house for research and development, peace proposals, inspection systems and monitoring devices. He was determined that it would become the coordinating body that would map out the steps required to create viable arms control programs. He reminded his audience that the Institute’s

recommendations must be integrated into our diplomacy and defense at the highest levels. Its work must be both supported and implemented by the State Department, the Defense Department, the AEC, and, above all, by the President himself, for only he can overcome the resistance likely to arise in those agencies. <sup>78</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> Congressional Record, 86th Congress, Second Session, pg. 4708.

<sup>78</sup> Congressional Record, 86th Congress, Second Session, pg. 4709.



This small paragraph near the end of his speech mirrors the Academic Advisory Group's recommendations almost to the letter. It is a clear and persuasive example of the academics' influence on Kennedy.

Once Kennedy became the nominee of his party he continued to talk about disarmament and arms control as issues during the campaign that fall. In total, he made eighteen references to the subject of disarmament throughout his travels across the United States. One speech, however, was entirely devoted to the subject of disarmament. In Milwaukee, Wisconsin on October 23, 1960, Kennedy described his plans for disarmament and his Arms Control Research Institute in detail. Here was the finished product.

After recounting the litany of failures under the Republican Administration, he told his audience of his intention to create an Arms Control Research Institute operating under the President. He stated that the aim of the Institute would be "to conduct the research and make the studies on which our position will be based at future conferences,... on the important subject of disarmament and on the important subject of nuclear test controls."<sup>79</sup> This is exactly what he

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<sup>79</sup> FOC, Part 1, pg. 724.

had been talking about in the speech he gave in March in New Hampshire, and more importantly, it ties in with what his advisors had proposed so early on in his campaign for the Presidency.

Before the exchange of letters between Kennedy and his Academic Advisors, Kennedy was fully prepared to introduce Representative Bennett's Peace Agency bill, but after just a few weeks of correspondence with his advisors in Boston, Kennedy changed his mind about the Peace Agency completely. The Bennett bill became a thing of the past, replaced by something Kennedy could call his own: the Arms Control Research Institute. We now know that Kennedy himself did not create the institute, so much as borrow it, from other men, of whom up until now, no one has ever heard tell.

## Chapter Four

This essay should be considered an introduction to a new area of research, related to the the Kennedy Presidency which has, until now, largely been ignored by scholars. It is a response to a comment made by Theodore H. White in his introduction to The Making of the President 1960 “It was my thought that though later historians would tell the story of the quest for power in 1960 in more precise terms with a greater wealth of established fact, there might, nonetheless, be some value in the effort of a contemporary reporter to catch the mood and strains”<sup>1</sup> of the campaign. In a manner of speaking, this short analysis is an attempt to dissect and to examine the details surrounding Kennedy’s winning campaign. My concern has been with one aspect of the campaign. My questions were threefold. Who advised Kennedy? What was he told? Did Kennedy heed the advice he was offered?

Looking at the candidate’s first major speech to the national media, which was held at the National Press Club in January 1960, we see a man who went into great detail describing the type of President he wanted to be and the style and tempo of the Presidency he wished to create, yet who offered nothing about what sort of

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<sup>1</sup> Theodore H. White, The Making of the President 1960, Atheneum Press, 1961, New York, New York. pg. vii.

program he wanted to put before the American people. At this time Kennedy had little or no political platform to stand on. The *New Frontier* had yet to be created. At this point in the candidacy Kennedy was long on form and style and short on policies and programs. This in spite of the fact that he had supposedly been planning for this moment for years.

Kennedy saw the Presidency as the core of the great machinery called government. According to Sorensen, Kennedy viewed the Presidency as the “centre of action, the mainspring, the wellspring of the American system.”<sup>2</sup> This characterization of the Presidency in profoundly action-oriented terms, meant that Kennedy was eager to use the office of the President in the fullest possible way. Yet, he was reticent about telling the American people what he was going to do with all those powers. Kennedy entered the race for the presidency offering this type of manifesto to the American people.

John Kennedy was not a typical politician when compared to other contemporary political aspirants for the Democratic nomination, such as Hubert Humphrey or Lyndon Johnson. Kennedy’s road toward the nomination of his party and his eventual

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<sup>2</sup> Theodore C. Sorensen, *Kennedy*, Harper & Row, New York, 1965, pg. 95

campaign for the Presidency was, in one respect, an easier one than most, owing largely to the fact that he had nearly limitless funds with which to finance his campaign. This liberated him from many of the fund-raising chores that a politician is usually forced to engage in. Kennedy was free to deal with other areas of the campaign. In the two years prior to declaring his candidacy for President he had crisscrossed the country, speaking at all manner of party functions. In essence, Kennedy was networking, gladly giving speeches most weekends to help local and state Democrats in the hope that when he declared his own candidacy those same Democrats would support him. As has already been noted, he also spent time courting the counsel of various academics in and around his alma-matter, Harvard.

In other respects, his was a more daunting, difficult task. Kennedy was an outsider within his own party. At no time in his Congressional career, either in the Senate or the House, was he ever considered a politician's politician in the way that Lyndon Johnson was. In fact, he had had few supporters in the Senate or House when he declared his candidacy. Also, his first declared opponent for the nomination was Hubert Humphrey, who was well regarded by many

within the party as a thoughtful, liberal democrat in the tradition of FDR and Truman.

Kennedy could claim no major pieces of legislation as his own during his time spent in Congress. He was a man with little or no record to speak of. To begin with, he had no area of expertise nor did he develop one during his 14 years in the House and Senate. He was a political lightweight and he knew it, yet he still wanted to become the President of the United States.

Kennedy did not enter the race for the Presidency in order to right a great wrong, or to propose any great sort of change. Kennedy believed strongly that compared to the other contenders for both the nomination and the Presidency itself, that he was “superior”<sup>3</sup>. This, more than anything, was his deciding concern when he entered the race. He believed that he could take on the opposition and win. He viewed the office of the Presidency, at least initially, as something to be won, and he saw his chances of winning it as excellent compared to the other contenders. It was with this thought in mind that he began to plan and execute his effort to become President.

Nothing about Kennedy’s campaign in 1960 could be considered

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<sup>3</sup> Theodore C. Sorensen, Kennedy, Harper & Row, New York, 1988, pg. 96

conventional, least of all his research and speech writing team. The Academic Advisory Group, which he developed, was not unique, but was definitely an improvement on what Roosevelt had created. Larger and more broadly based, Kennedy's Group was an elegant solution for a politician who was trying very hard to come to grips with the daunting task of getting himself nominated and elected President against the odds. Kennedy had much to overcome; first and foremost intellectually. As a candidate for President he was bombarded with questions by his opponents and the media, all demanding that he enunciate his vision for the America of the 1960's. He was forced to create his own program, in the Democratic tradition of Wilson, Roosevelt and Truman. This was no small task for any man. It must have been even more of a daunting task for Kennedy, considering how little experience he had had in leading the Democratic Party. What seemed to come so naturally to a man like Lyndon Johnson, was an entirely new experience for Kennedy.

If Kennedy had spent his fourteen years in Congress preparing to run for President, then he should have had no need for academic advisors. His program should have been well worked out beforehand, given his financial resources and his length of tenure in



Congress. The fact of the matter is that he was not prepared for the intellectual challenge of running for President.

Kennedy could not have mounted the campaign he did without the aid of his academics. Kennedy knew that if he was going to run he would need expert advice in many areas of policy. He was out of his depth and he knew it. It is admirable that he had the good sense not only to recognize his shortcomings, but also to go out and find people to help him fill in those gaps in his political makeup. Politicians rarely go out of their way to explore the weaker sides of their personalities. Kennedy, at least, made an effort in this respect. By putting together this Academic Advisory Group, Kennedy was conscientiously trying to recreate himself as the complete political persona that he believed he should represent as a presidential candidate. That is: worldly, intelligent, thoughtful, and possessing a vision and a sense of purpose for America in the 1960's.

The most common theme throughout the entire campaign was his desire to get America moving again. According to Sorensen;

Nothing could better sum up his reason for seeking the Presidency than seven words he used constantly in the campaign: 'because I

want to get things done'.<sup>4</sup>

The idea of getting the country moving again was also a constant refrain of Kennedy's early biographers. Given a careful reading of the many speeches of the 1960 campaign, this *motif* is clearly visible. Since then, other themes have encroached on what actually happened during the campaign. Many of these have taken on a life of their own far out of proportion to their actual place in the campaign.

One clear example of this can, upon careful examination, be seen in the speeches delivered by John Kennedy, as the nominee of his party, regarding what has since become known as the missile gap controversy. The popular conception is that Kennedy single-handedly hammered away at his Republican opponents for having let the United States fall behind the Soviet Union in ICBM development. The fact of the matter is that during the period before the convention he was not alone in speaking out on the issue of ICBM production.

Senator Stuart Symington, another contender for the nomination, was an outspoken critic of missile development<sup>5</sup>. He

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<sup>4</sup> Theodore C. Sorensen, Kennedy, Harper & Row, New York, 1988, pg. 96

<sup>5</sup> Symington was also, at one time, Secretary for the Air Force in the Truman Administration and a big supporter of that branch's long-simmering dispute with the CIA over the actual number of Soviet ICBMs. The USAF's

first began talking about a missile gap in 1956. This gap was used by many Democrats in the 1958 Congressional elections to great effect. It was used again in 1960, during the run up to the Democratic convention, to broadside the Eisenhower administration. Democrats were not alone in their demands that something be done about the missile gap. Columnists, like the Alsops, also chimed in.<sup>6</sup>

Although it has become part of the Kennedy legend that he hammered the Republicans constantly about the missile gap, the reality is quite different. Kennedy only talked about the missile gap a handful of times once he became nominee of the party, and in all cases it was as a passing reference to the Republican record in defence spending and development<sup>7</sup>. This is a good example of how exaggerations become known as facts. No one, until now, has taken the time to look at the official record and objectively to establish just what was said, and how often.

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contention was that the Soviets had an overwhelming lead in production and deployment of ICBMs. The CIA contended just the opposite.

<sup>6</sup> David Halberstam, in his book The Fifties, Villard Press, New York, 1993, pg. 704, quotes the Alsops as writing that "At the Pentagon they shudder when they speak of the Gap, which means the years 1960, 1961, 1962 and 1963... They shudder because in those years the American government will flaccidly permit the Kremlin to open an almost unchallenged superiority in the nuclear striking power that was once our superiority."

<sup>7</sup> Kennedy specifically mentioned the missile gap in 5 different speeches which all had something other than the defence of the US as their principle topic. He mentioned the missile gap in four other speeches exclusively on Defence.

This is just one example of some of the misconceptions surrounding the campaign which do not always mesh well with the historical record. Similarly, it has always been assumed that people like Arthur Schlesinger Jr. and John Kenneth Galbraith were close to Kennedy's campaign and contributed all manner of support. In fact, the truth is quite different. Both men helped Kennedy a little, but only once Stevenson's nomination was out of the question and Kennedy's nomination seemed assured. Both men were late arrivals to the Kennedy entourage, having earned a small place within the campaign due to their own stature as commentators, liberals and, less so, as academics. Their inclusion in the scheme of the campaign was a conscientious effort by Kennedy to identify himself with their causes and their liberal followers within the Democratic party. In most respects Schlesinger and Galbraith should be considered as nothing more than ornamental gilt on the periphery of his campaign structure. The Kennedy Administration is deservedly thought of as outwardly academic in its make up, but that conception has very little to do with men like Schlesinger and Galbraith, and much more to do with the sheer number of scholars who eventually took up posts within Kennedy's Administration.

When one compares the input of either of these two men to the amount of influence a man like Cochrane had on the candidate, the fact of the matter is that Cochrane was vastly more influential than Schlesinger or Galbraith<sup>8</sup> ever were. Men like Cox, Chayes, and Cochrane were all rewarded for their hard work during the campaign. Archibald Cox was given the position of Solicitor General of the United States and Abram Chayes became the Legal Adviser to the State Department. Both of these men played significant roles in Kennedy's Academic Advisory Group. Cox was even seriously considered for a vacancy on the Supreme Court in the summer of 1962 when Justice Frankfurter retired. This was high praise indeed.

Dierdre Henderson<sup>9</sup> too, was rewarded for her hard work. She was given a position in the executive office of the White House, where she worked closely with Sargent Shriver and Harris Wofford

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<sup>8</sup> Keep in mind also that neither of these two men took up their duties in the administration until well after Kennedy was installed within the White House. Kennedy was still leery of them both even after he became President. He appointed Galbraith Ambassador to India, halfway around the world, to keep him out of Washington. Schlesinger was given a position (without portfolio) within the White House, so that Kennedy could keep an eye on him, so to speak.

<sup>9</sup> Henderson very nearly became McGeorge Bundy's assistant. She originally asked Kennedy for that particular position when he asked her what she wanted to do in Washington. Kennedy asked Bundy if he would have her and he agreed to consider her for the position. Bundy then asked Henry Kissinger for a reference regarding Ms. Henderson's abilities, which he refused to give, effectively blackballing her in Bundy's opinion. This forced Kennedy to find her another position in the government.

on the creation of the Peace Corps and civil rights matters for the first year of the administration. Later on, she expressed a desire for more challenging work, and was placed in the State Department by the President, where she became Roger Hilsman's personal assistant. This particular position was much more to her liking, and tied in much better with her formal education in political science and defense studies.

Walt Rostow followed Kennedy into the White House as MacGeorge Bundy's deputy, and became Deputy Special Assistant to the President for National Security. Jerome Wiesner also became a Special Assistant to the President, but for Science and Technology. Max Millikan was one of the few exceptions. He did not join the administration, remaining instead in his post as Director of the Centre for International Studies at M.I.T.

Galbraith summed up the mood and feel of the new administration with a telling description of mealtimes in the White House mess after the Kennedys took up residence.

One of the most pleasant things in the White House is the Navy-run mess in the basement. The food is good American, well-served... Conversation is much like that of the Harvard Faculty Club, perhaps because it involves the

same people.<sup>10</sup>

The academic feel and texture of the *New Frontier* was neither a chance occurrence nor an accident. It was a conscientious decision which had its origins deep in the Kennedy campaign, much in the same way that FDR's New Deal had its origins in his own campaign's Brains Trust.

In fact, the overwhelming majority of the members of the Academic Advisory Group followed Kennedy into government service. The conventional thinking has been that Kennedy was able to attract so many Ph.D's due to their strong sense of public duty and patriotism. That could in part be true, but one must not discount the fact that many of these people had also had a long, formal association with Kennedy during his candidature. They did not just walk in off the streets. They were well-acquainted with the concepts that made up the *New Frontier* and surely, they must have wanted to take the blueprint they had helped sketch out and turn it into a new administration.

Only one volume written on the Kennedy Administration

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<sup>10</sup> John Kenneth Galbraith, Ambassador's Journal, Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston, 1969, pg. 31

actually takes the time to examine the role that academics played within that administration. The Best and Brightest, by David Halberstam, gives his readers an impressive survey of what many of the members of the Academic Advisory Group did once they were appointed by the President in regards to the Vietnam War.

The book is almost entirely based on interviews conducted by Halberstam over a period of two-and-a-half years as, unfortunately for the author, the papers of President Kennedy and Johnson were not yet opened for scholars. Halberstam could not, of course, have known then just how much work these academics had done for Kennedy before his election.

Halberstam discusses the gathering of academics by the President-Elect as if they were a gift of the Establishment, bestowed on a new President like a prerogative of his office. Robert Lovett's influence in the selection of many of these academics should be re-examined. The fact that Kennedy's administration had such an academic feel and presence to it was because the candidate himself was convinced of their usefulness, long before he ever met Lovett. It is due to his long association with many of the academics that he appointed so many of them.



Kennedy undoubtedly wished for the blessing of the Establishment as he went about forming his administration. His election had been entirely too close for him to do otherwise, given the overwhelming preponderance of Republicans in that Establishment. If Kennedy sought out Lovett, it was probably much more in order to build a bridge to the centrist Republicans that made up the Establishment; to flatter them and garner their approval. He clearly welcomed Lovett's counsel when it came time to find the Secretaries of Defense, Treasury and State, but apart from those nominees, Lovett provided Kennedy with few others.

If John Kennedy's Administration was well-stocked with academics it was owing to the manner in which he had run his campaign. He had previously relied so heavily on the aid of these same men, that it had become a habit; a habit which he did not break after he became President. Long before Lovett walked into Kennedy's home in Georgetown, the President-Elect had become convinced of their usefulness. The only way to discover just how useful the academics actually were to Kennedy and how influential they were during his Presidential campaign was to look at what they wrote for the candidate and what Kennedy actually said and did

after he and his speechwriters received the letters and memoranda from these scholars.

John Kennedy's *New Frontier* was, at least in part, an elegant illustration of a politician carefully sifting the collected reflections of a diverse group of academics and turning their ideas into a finely tuned political platform which he could then run on, and win with.

## A Note About Sources

The writing of this particular type of treatise has posed some interesting problems with regard to research materials and some unique opportunities, all at the same time. For instance, as no one has written a historical survey of this type since the volumes penned by Moley and Tugwell of their time spent with Roosevelt, there are therefore no secondary sources that can be culled for guidance or material. This meant searching the files held at the John F. Kennedy Library and the Harvard Law School Library for Archibald Cox's papers in Boston. Unfortunately, neither location seems to contain a complete set of documents. This researcher found many, many references to memoranda and speeches that were not contained within the files. There are, in fact, many interesting cover sheets that are sadly lacking the documents that go with them. No doubt some of the members of the Academic Advisory Group retained copies of their work which they may still have. Anyone who might wish to delve further into this subject, and who has the resources to do so, should perhaps contact the surviving members of the Group and/or their families to inquire whether or not they might still retain copies of the work they did for Kennedy. Although the Presidential Library does contain an interesting collection of Oral History Interviews, many of the people involved with the Academic Advisory Group are not included in the collection. Any researcher wishing to do further work on this topic would have to conduct additional interviews with the surviving members of the Group, rather than rely solely on the present collection of interviews.

Some of the material that I was able to find at the Presidential Library was more interesting from the general perspective of American political history, and is worthy of greater scrutiny and investigation by scholars. With respect to the passing of sensitive government information to Kennedy, and the advisory role that members of the Catholic Church may have played in the Kennedy campaign, this is especially true.

Even this short analysis would have been impossible if it were not for the five-volume set, Freedom of Communication, Final Report of the Committee on Commerce United States Senate, which is the only complete verbatim text of a Presidential campaign in existence. Without this document it would have been impossible properly to cite the speeches in any coherent fashion, or even to establish what was actually said by the candidates during the campaign. It is truly a unique primary source.

## **NOTE TO USERS**

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## Bibliography

### Primary Sources

This essay would have been impossible to write if it were not for the collections of primary sources which were consulted and quoted at length. Rather than cite every box and folder in a bibliography such as this, I would refer the reader to the footnotes present on nearly every page of this work. They give the location and source for all quotations cited. All of the primary sources used to create this manuscript can be found in the following locations:

The Pre-Presidential Papers of John F. Kennedy and Oral History Interview Collection, John F. Kennedy Presidential Library, Columbia Point, Massachusetts.

Private Papers of Professor Emeritus Archibald Cox, Harvard Law School Library, Special Collections, Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Freedom of Communication, Final Report of the Committee on Commerce United States Senate, Report 994, Part 1, The Speeches, Remarks, Press Conferences and Statements of Senator John F. Kennedy, August 1, 1960 to November 7, 1960, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C., 1961.

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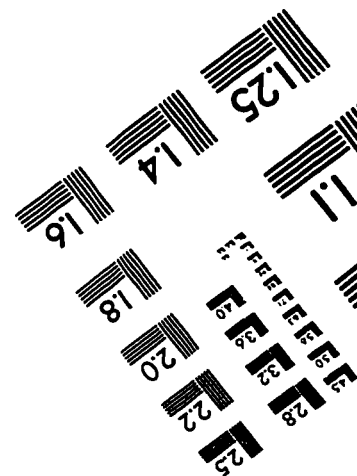
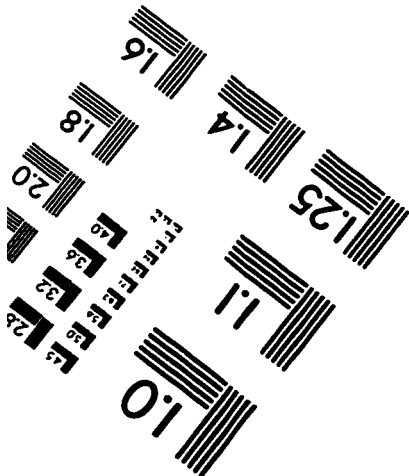
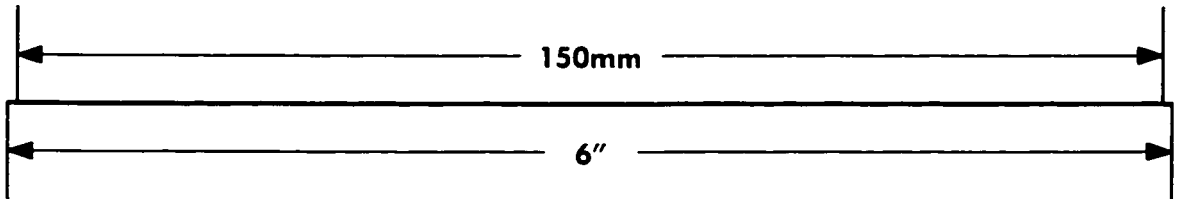
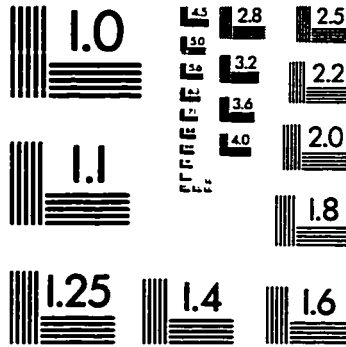
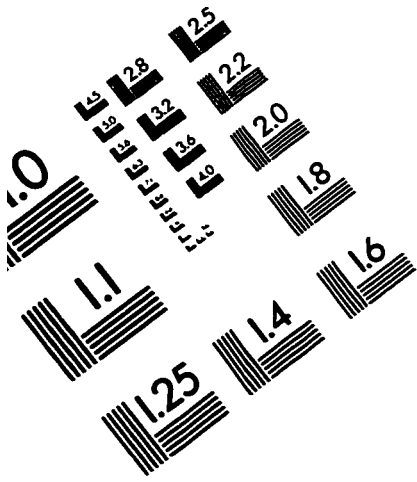
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