

THE PRESIDENCY AT MID-CENTURY

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I

There are many ways to look at the American Presidency. It can be done in terms juridical or biographical, political or managerial: the office viewed primarily as a compendium of precedents, a succession of personalities, a fulcrum for party politics, a focus for administrative management. This essay denies the relevance of none of these approaches and makes use, incidentally, of them all, but aims at observation from a rather different point of view. This is an effort to look at the Presidency *operationally*, in working terms, as an instrument of governance in the middle years of the twentieth century; as man-in-office, that is to say, in a time of continuing "cold war," spiralling atomic discovery (and vulnerability), stabilized "big government," and stalemated partisan alignment—the *policy* environment capsuled by Clinton Rossiter as "new economy" and "new internationalism"; the *political* environment billed by Samuel Lubell as "politics of twilight."¹

This calls for an examination of the President at work within the Presidency in a setting bounded on the one hand by the final phases of the last World War and on the other by the unknowns of the next decade—the setting for Harry S. Truman's term in office and for Dwight D. Eisenhower's up to the fall of 1956. Given that contemporary focus, there is less need for emphasis on presidential tasks, per se, than on the means and methods of performance; the theme, here, is less "what" than "how." The modern Presidency's powers and responsibilities—the "what," that is to say—are widely known, however we may differ on their import for our form of government, and anyone in doubt has only to review numerous recent writings in the field. But the "how" is relatively unexplored terrain for which there are no ready references outside the realm of selective particulars in press reports, case studies, memoirs, and the like. Granting the President his modern "roles," how does the work get done? What are his means? How may these be employed? Under what limitations? At what cost? With what effect? In what degree sufficient to the Presidency's purposes?

These are the central questions I should like to pose—to pose, note, not to "answer." The search for answers is a task I am prepared, at this writing, to acknowledge as ambition, not accomplishment.

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¹ These terms are taken from Rossiter's *The American Presidency* (1956) and from Lubell's *The Future of American Politics* (1952).

The emphasis on ways and means suggested by these questions has special pertinence, it would appear, for a symposium prepared in 1956. For 1956 is, after all, the year of cardiology in politics, the year of Great Debate about the on-the-job demands of being President, a debate which revolves around not powers but performance; a matter, in short, of means. Indeed—the Brickerites aside—most of the current arguments over presidential “powers” that agitate observers, both professional and lay, seem to involve at bottom the same sorts of issues; not change the job, but better its doing. Thus, the majority of recent schemes for legal and institutional reform are aimed avowedly (though sometimes disingenuously?) at aiding execution of the Presidency’s mandates, not their alteration. This seems to be the sense of demands for a tightened disability provision, of blueprints for new staffs, new cabinets and the like, of plans to enhance the Vice Presidency (or add another one), even of those perennials on the congressional side, the four-year term, the item veto, the question period, and the right of dissolution. Quite obviously, there is relevance in emphasizing means, in asking “how,” when one engages to survey the Presidency at mid-century!

There is, though, a prerequisite: If one would focus on the doing of the presidential job, one needs a characterization of the job, as such, that lends itself to operational appraisal; a characterization that defines what need be done in terms approaching those in which the doer does it. For working purposes, the President is never “many men,” but one; the Presidency, as an instrument of government, is indivisible; the White House has no separate rooms for the “Chief Legislator,” “Chief of Party,” “Chief Administrator,” *et al.* Observations on the doing of the job must build upon a statement of what exists to be done in terms other than these.

Hence, having stressed an emphasis on means and advertised its claims, I must begin where everyone begins, with a review of presidential powers—a review of the Presidency’s place, that is to say, in the contemporary governmental scene.

II

THE PRESIDENCY IN GOVERNMENT

“His is the vital place of action in the system,” wrote Woodrow Wilson of the President toward the close of TR’s term.² And this, a new discovery for Wilson’s generation, is now, at mid-century, a matter of course. Presidential leadership is now a matter of routine to a degree quite unknown before the Second World War. If the President remains at liberty, in Wilson’s phrase, “to be as big a man as he can,” the obverse holds no longer: he *cannot* be as small as he might choose.

Once, TR daringly assumed the “steward’s” role in the emergency created by the great coal strike of 1902; the Railway Labor Act and the Taft-Hartley Act now make such interventions mandatory upon Presidents. Once, FDR dramatically asserted personal responsibility for gauging and guiding the American economy;

² WOODROW WILSON, CONSTITUTIONAL GOVERNMENT 73 (1908).

now, the Employment Act binds his successors to that task. Wilson and FDR became chief spokesmen, leading actors on a world stage at the height of war; now UN membership, far-flung alliances, the facts of power, prescribe that role continuously in times termed "peace." Through both World Wars, our Presidents grappled experimentally with an emergency-created need to "integrate" foreign and military and domestic policies; the National Security Act now takes that need for granted as a constant of our times. FDR and Truman made themselves responsible for the development and first use of atomic weapons; the Atomic Energy Act now puts a comparable burden on the back of every President. In instance after instance, the one-time personal initiatives, innovations of this century's "strong" Presidents, have now been set by statutes as requirements of office. And what has escaped statutory recognition has mostly been absorbed into presidential "common law," confirmed by custom, no less binding: the unrehearsed press conference, for example, or the personally-presented legislative program.

The "vital place of action" has been rendered permanent; the *forms* of leadership fixed in the cumulative image of *ad hoc* assertions under Wilson and the two Roosevelts; past precedents of personality and crisis absorbed into the Government's continuing routines. For the executive establishment and for the Congress, both, the Presidency has become the regular, accustomed source of all major initiatives: supplier of both general plans and detailed programs; articulator of the forward course in every sphere of policy encompassed by contemporary government. Bold or bland, aggressive or conciliatory, massive or minimal, as the case may be, the lead is his.

Thus, we have made a matter of routine the President's responsibility to take the policy lead. And at the same time, we have institutionalized, in marked degree, the exercise of that responsibility. President and Presidency are synonymous no longer; the office now comprises an officialdom twelve-hundred strong. For almost every phase of policy development, there is now institutional machinery engaged in preparations on the President's behalf: for the financial and administrative work plan of the Government, the Budget Bureau; for the administration's legislative program, the White House counsel and the Budget's clearance organization; for programming in economic and social spheres, the Council of Economic Advisers (and to some degree the cabinet, Eisenhower-style); in foreign and military fields, the National Security Council; in spheres of domestic preparedness, the Office of Defense Mobilization; these pieces of machinery, among others, each built around a program-making task, all lumped together, formally, under the rubric, "The Executive Office of the President," an institutional conception and a statutory entity less than two decades old.

These are significant developments, this rendering routine, this institutionalizing of the initiative. They give the Presidency nowadays a different look than it has worn before, an aspect permanently "positive." But the reality behind that look was not just conjured up by statutes or by staffing. These, rather, are *responses* to

the impacts of external circumstance upon our form of government; not causes but effects.

Actually or potentially, the Presidency has always been—at least since Jackson's time—a unique point of intersection for three lines of leadership responsibility: "executive" and partisan and national. The mandates of our Constitution, the structure of our political parties, the nature of the President's electorate, fused long ago to draw these lines together *at that point and there alone*: the Presidency at once the sole nationally elective office,³ independently responsible to a unique constituency; sole centralizing stake of power, source of control, in each party (as a glance at either party out of power shows); sole organ of foreign relations and military command; sole object of the "take care" clause and of the veto power; and with all this, sole crown-like symbol of the Union.

By Wilson's time, that combination, in the context of world power stakes and status, had brought a fourth line of leadership into play, a line of leadership abroad, its only point of intersection with the other three the White House, once again. Since then, there have been revolutionary changes in the world and in American society and in the character of government's commitments toward both; changes productive of fast-rising expectations and requirements for leadership transmitted toward the Presidency along each line—four streams of action impulses and obligations converging on the President, whoever he may be, their volume and their rate of flow varying with events, a source which never, nowadays, runs dry.

The contemporary President, in short, has *four constituencies*, each with distinctive expectations of him and demands upon him. One of these is his "government" constituency, comprising the great group of public officers—congressional as well as executive—who cannot do their own official jobs without some measure of performance on his part. A second is his "partisan" constituency, comprising at once his own party's congressional delegation, and its organization leaders, workers, even voters, all those whose political fortunes, interests, sentiments, are tied, in some degree, to his performance. A third is his "national" constituency, comprising all those individuals and groups among Americans who look to him, especially when crises come, for an embodiment and an expression of government's relationship to its citizenry, for a response to their needs, purposes, endeavors. And fourth, is his "overseas" constituency, comprising not alone the officers of foreign governments, but the political oppositions, the opinion molders, even the plain citizens to some degree, in every country where our power, policies, or postures have imposed themselves upon domestic politics.

In respect to the first three of these constituencies, membership is not a mutually exclusive matter. A number of American officials—among them cabinet officers and congressmen, are members of all three. And most Americans hold membership in two, as at once partisans and citizens. But whatever its effects on individual or group behavior, multiple membership does not preclude distinctly differ-

³ Discounting the Vice Presidency, which I am prepared to do.

entiated sets of Presidency-oriented expectations and demands, identifiable with each constituency, arising in the circumstances of mid-century from the pervasive needs of each for governmental action.

In these terms, it appears no accident that at a time when stakes of government are high for all the President's constituents, to him has passed, routinely, the continuing initiative in government. That role is both assured him and required of him by the very uniqueness of his place at the only point of intersection, the sole juncture, of those four lines of leadership responsibility and the constituencies they represent.

Yet, the demands and expectations pressing in upon the President propel him not alone toward enunciation, but delivery. Executive officials want decisions, Congressmen want proposals, partisans want power, citizens want substance, friends abroad want steadiness and insight and assistance on their terms—all these as shorthand statements of complex material and psychological desires. These things are wanted *done*; given our Constitution and our politics, that means done by, or through, or with assistance from, or acquiescence of, the President. The very factors that contribute to his unique opportunities—and routinized responsibilities—as an initiator, make him essential also as protector, energizer, implementor, of initiatives once taken. His special place in government requires of him, indeed, thrusts upon him, a unique responsibility—and opportunity—to oversee and assure execution.

But while responsibility for the initiative has now been routinized and even institutionalized, authority to implement the courses set remains fragmented in our system. In most respects and for most purposes, the President lacks any solid base of assured, institutionalized support to carry through the measures he proposes. His four constituencies are capable of constant pressure, but not of reliable response to downward leads. The "executive" is not a unity with a firm command-and-subordination structure, nor is the Government, nor is the political party, in Congress or out, nor is the nation, nor the alliance system overseas. All these are feudalities in power terms; pluralistic structures every one of them. Our Constitution, our political system, our symbolism, and our history make certain that the President alone assumes, in form, the leadership of each; and guarantee, no less, that he will not have systematic, unified, assured support from any. Indeed, precisely the conditions vesting him alone with leadership responsibility for all prevent the rendering of any one of them into tight-welded followings. The constitutional separation of powers—really, of institutions sharing powers—the federal separations of sovereignty, hence politics, the geographic separations of electorates, these and their consequences at once have helped the Presidency to its special place and hindered the creation of a strong supporting base. And, at a time when the executive establishment has grown too vast for personal surveillance, when Congress is controlled in form by narrow, shifting partisan majorities, in fact by factional coalition, weighted against the

President's electorate, the hindrances are bound to be enhanced. Ours is that sort of time.

This does not mean that Presidents are powerless; far from it. Their four-way leadership position gives them vantage points aplenty for exerting strength in Government, in party, in the country, and abroad; collectively, by all odds, an array of strong points quite unmatched by any other single power-holder in our system. It does mean, though, that presidential power must be exercised *ad hoc*, through the employment of whatever sources of support, whatever transient advantages can be found and put together, case by case. It means the President can never choose a policy with certainty that it will be approximated in reality or that he will not have it to unmake or make again. It means he cannot, as he pleases, moderate, adjust or set aside the rival, overlapping, often contradictory claims of his constituencies. *He has no option but to act, at once, as agent of them all, for their conjunction in his person is the keystone of his potency*; none is dispensable, hence the demands of none are automatically disposable at his convenience. Events, not his free choices, regulate their pressures and condition his response.

Dilemmas, consequently, are the Presidency's daily bread. The President must now initiate specific policies and programs for all fields of federal action; he has become the focus for all forward planning in our system; whatever leads the Government and country and his party (and indeed, the opposition, also) are to have, will stem from him. Yet, not his preferences only, but events in an inordinately complex world, not his reasoning alone, but his constituencies' felt requirements, contradictory as they may be, mold his determinations, limit his choices, force his hand. What he initiates he must attempt to implement. He must try so to manage the executive establishment, and Congress, and his party oligarchs, and the other party's also, and "public opinion," and overseas support, that the essential things get done—so far at least as government can do them—to keep administration reasonably competent, the country reasonably prosperous, the cold war reasonably cold, and his party in the White House; objectives which will seem to him synonymous (no President in memory, Mr. Eisenhower naturally not excluded, has ever thought his policies could best be carried forward by the other party's men). Yet, none of these agencies of action, of execution, are subject to his management by fiat; not even those closest to home, his own administration, his own party, are constructed to provide him with assured support. Rarely can he order, mostly must he persuade. And even were his controls taut and sharp, there would remain, of course, those agencies beyond his power to command, events.

No doubt, in times of great emergency, sharp crisis seen and felt as such throughout the country, the Presidency's measure of assured support from public, party, and administration tends to increase dramatically, if temporarily, while "politics as usual" abates, at least until the sharpness wanes; witness the situation circa 1942. But it is characteristic of our circumstances at mid-century—in all the years since

the Second World War—that while our Government’s responsibilities retain a trace of every prior crisis, no comparable sense of national emergency pervades our politics. If this is an “era of permanent crisis,” it is one in which Presidents must manage without benefit of crisis consensus.

Given the underlying situation here described, the balance of this paper is, perforce, a study of dilemmas; dilemmas nurtured by disparities between the Presidency’s obligation to initiate and its capacity to achieve, the one nailed down, the other relatively tenuous, both bound to be so by the nature of our institutional adjustment, up to now, to the complexities of governing this country at mid-century.

What, currently, is the American Presidency? A cat on a hot tin roof.

III

THE PRESIDENT IN THE PRESIDENCY

So far in this discussion, “President” and “Presidency” have been used almost interchangeably; the man and his office equated in an effort at capsule characterization. But since it is our purpose to appraise the man *in* office, the *President* at work, we must now differentiate between the individual and his official tasks, between the work done by the White House occupant and that performed by others in his name.

What does the President, himself, contribute to the conduct of the Presidency? What, in an office now so institutionalized that it encompasses six hundred “professional” aides, has he, himself, to do? What, in a government of vast and complicated undertakings, in a substantive environment demanding every sort of expertise, can there be *left* for him to do? To put the case in current terms, what is there that no “chief of staff” can do without him?

There are two ways to approach answers to these questions. One is to abstract the person of the President from office at a given point in time; the other is to note what occupies his working day when he is on the scene. Both methods, it appears, produce equivalent results, as may be seen by trying them in turn.

The Eisenhower illnesses provide us with illustrations ready-made for speculation on the Presidency *sans* the President, to wit: Three days after his heart attack, Cairo announced its arms deal with the Czechs, thereby upsetting the whole power balance in the Middle East.⁴ By all accounts, this action, far-reaching in implications, did not catch the State Department unawares. For months, American diplomacy had sought to head it off. Once it occurred, however, we confined ourselves for a long period to verbal protests and to indecisive consultations. There were no prompt moves made either to force reversal or to take countermeasures of decisive sort. Some persons outside Government have speculated that had Mr. Truman then been President, the Sixth Fleet might have steamed to the Aegean with orders to

⁴ The President was taken ill on September 24, 1955; the Egyptian-Czech agreement was announced on September 27.

halt shipments of Czech arms by sea or air. One wonders if in office his response would have been so Draconian. One can be sure, however, that had he, like his successor, then been hospitalized, critically ill, under a regimen of absolute quiet, no orders of this sort would have gone to the Navy. (Indeed, in the far starker, more extreme, hence simpler instance of Korea, can one imagine Louis Johnson taking Dean Acheson's view on anybody's say-so but the President's?)

This is not to suggest that Eisenhower, healthy, would have approved—much less been urged to sanction—any forcible reaction to the Czech-Egyptian deal; it seems unlikely on the public record, though one cannot know for certain from outside. Nor is it implied that some such response should have been attempted; policy is not the issue here. What *is* suggested, here, is that the option was not open to our Government because the President himself was not available to choose. It is suggested that the risk of action, the onus of decision, in this case could have been shouldered only by the President, by him or not at all; *the Presidency's functioning dependent on his individual performance as maker of the residual choices no one else will make.*

Turn now to Eisenhower's second illness for a moment. Three weeks after last June's ileitis operation, while he was still recovering at Gettysburg—allowed to work, by press reports, but one hour a day—the House of Representatives rejected the School Construction Assistance bill, thereby seeming to terminate all chances of substantial federal aid to education in the current presidential term.⁵ The bill was lost in circumstances complicated partly by its contact with the segregation issue, partly by its Democratic sponsors' preferences for certain sums and formulae unlike those forwarded from the Republican administration. And on the latter ground, or nearly so, a number of Republicans seem to have justified "nay" votes. But Eisenhower's actions and pronouncements over three years' time had long made it appear he strongly wanted some measure of aid to education by 1956. Indeed, this bill, reportedly, might not have reached the floor save for the Democratic leaders' understanding that he was in earnest and would not let his House Republicans forget it. Yet, when the ultimate test came, he was not there to remind them.

To quote the correspondent of the New York Times:⁶

There is hardly an observer in Washington who doubts that a personal appeal from a healthy Dwight Eisenhower—or even some last-minute personal letters from Gettysburg—would have changed enough Republican votes to make the difference.

Perhaps, of course, the President in full health would have foregone that appeal. We do not know his private views upon the final bill in terms either of substance or of Senate tactics. We do not know what private tallies were run or what was reasoned from them; the problem, after all, was scarcely his alone, for party lines broke sharply on both sides of the aisle. But whatever he might have done, if well,

⁵ Surgery was performed on June 9, 1956. The final House votes on the School Aid Bill (H. R. 7535) came on July 5.

⁶ Anthony Lewis in "The News of the Week in Review," N. Y. Times, July 8, 1956, p. E9.

he *could not* act, one may believe, when ill. Were this conceived a proper matter for the patient and as such worth exclusion of all else, an hour's working day scarcely suffices for the requisite persuasive phone calls to the Hill or for the substitute of letter writing (in the circumstances only done convincingly longhand). And in this case, if Eisenhower could not institute his own appeals, no one could make them for him. The option of a final presidential exhortation is not open to the White House save as the man himself can serve; *the Presidency's functioning dependent on his personal performance as persuader of those otherwise indifferent or unmoved.*

There are numbers of other illness illustrations, but these suffice to make the point: the President's own specialties within the Presidency, the contributions none can make without him, consist of acts of choice and of persuasion; choices not in foreign policy alone, but in all spheres of action and of men as well as measures; persuasion not only of Congressmen, but of administrative officers and politicians, of private interests and "the public" generally, of foreign governments and their publics; choice and persuasion exercised, in short, throughout the range of problems and of persons covered by his four constituencies.

These things are his to do because he is the sole, accountable human embodiment of an office which, in turn, is uniquely the center of responsibility and motive-power in our system. No President, of course, takes to himself more than a fraction of the choices, efforts at persuasion, made on his authority and in his name. But beyond a certain point—a point, of course, that varies case by case—choice-making and persuasion become personalized, of necessity, because his aides and auditors insist that it be so; because no one will accept others' choices, because no one will heed others' persuasions, because no others dare or care to run his risks on their discretion or their risks on his authority. Beyond another point—which may or may not coincide—persuasive acts and choices become ripe for his personal attention as a matter of desirability in his own interest, because his personal perceptions of that interest are ultimately untransferable; because save second-hand, by empathy, not even Harry Hopkins, Sherman Adams, can know fully what it feels like to sit where he sits (endowed with his intelligence, his temperament) at the solitary juncture of his four constituencies, "President of the United States"—hence, no one else can bring to bear precisely his own "feel" for risks to him, to the totality of his unique position, inherent in alternatives of doing and not doing.

If a look at the Presidency without a working President shows choices and persuasion as the man's own occupation, that impression cannot be strengthened by a glance at what takes up his time when on the job. Nowadays, the normal presidential working week revolves around a series of fixed sessions: one set meeting apiece with the National Security Council, and the cabinet, and (when Congress is on hand) the legislative leaders,⁷ and the press, each preceded and followed by appropriate staff briefings, consultations; one set appointment apiece with the Secre-

⁷ With the Senate and House leadership, that is to say, of the President's own party, whether in the majority or not.

tary of State, the Secretary of Defense, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and (an Eisenhower innovation, now suspended) the Chairman of the Council of Economic Advisers. Truman had, besides, a daily morning conference with his principal staff aides to make *ad hoc* assignments and receive routine reports; such sessions Sherman Adams has conducted under Eisenhower.

When one includes the chores of getting ready, cleaning up, these regularly scheduled consultations pre-empt a substantial portion of the President's own working hours, week by week. In the case of a President like Eisenhower, who finds these mechanisms to his taste and uses them to the exclusion of much else, that share of hours occupied mounts high. And what is the object of this outlay of his time? Such sessions serve, in part, as occasions for others to put their concerns, their views before him; partly as occasions for him to impress his personality and attitudes *on* others. Which of these parts has major place will vary with each sort of session, influenced by subject matter, membership, and *his* proclivities. But whatever their variation, the components are the same: one part material for choice-making, the other part the stuff of personal persuasion.

As for the balance of the presidential working week, the bulk of it is turned to comparable account; the documents signed, the persons seen, the places filled, the arguments resolved, the messages sent, the speeches made, the ceremonies held, all these are characteristically acts of choice or efforts at persuasion, often both at once—even the formal ceremonials contributing a portion of his power to persuade, even their performance contingent on his choice.

The preoccupations of the presidential week will vary with the seasons of the presidential year, from budget and message seasons in the fall, through early, middle, and late stages of the legislative season, through the rush of adjournment and enrollments, to that precious period, the post-adjournment lull (if any), season for recovery and repairs, and so to fall again—a round, successively, of planning to decision, campaigning to compromise, recuperating to resumption; a peacetime rhythm set primarily to legislative tasks but liable constantly to interruptions on account of mishaps and emergencies in operating spheres. Inevitably, presidential choices, efforts at persuasion, reflect in their intensities, their objects, and their scope these swings of emphasis throughout the year. And even more may they reflect swings in the cycle of the presidential term, from early groping through a first consolidation and a forward push up to the test at midterm, then regrouping and a second forward effort dwindling toward hiatus in the final year.⁸ But whatever their application in a given context, choice-making and persuasion remain the components of the President's own work; comprising what he does himself, both on the insistence of others and at his own inner promptings.

These are, in short, his means; the means by which he, personally, exercises influence within his office and upon the course of government; the means by which

⁸ The cycle, that is, of first terms in these years. As for second terms, new style, under twenty-second amendment, all is unknown.

he makes his own mark on the tasks of office sketched in part II, above. As such, these "means" are not for him mere instruments employed at will to carry out those tasks. Rather they are the concrete manifestations of the tasks themselves, applying to him personally; the work he has to do, no act of will required. In literary terms, one may say that he sets the tone, provides the lead in government by choosing and persuading. In operating terms, though, one must put it in reverse: that acts of choice and of persuasion cumulated over time produce an ultimate effect of tone and lead which may or may not correspond to any prior blueprint, purpose, or intention. Such is the consequence of disentangling the President from the Presidency.

That ultimate resultant labelled "leadership" will be compounded of two types of actions by the President: those he may reach for in his own discretion and those thrust on him of necessity; the one type, opportunities, the other, compulsions. And, as the compound will be viewed by his constituents and history, more than these enter in; the multifarious things done or left undone by others in his name, or the Government's, and happenings beyond the Government's discretion, plain events.

No President is free to concentrate upon his opportunities at the expense of his compulsions; he can but hope to find room for the things he may do amidst all things he must. Nor is he free to wave away those other actors on the scene; he can but hope to channel and deflect their impacts on his audience. To the extent he wants to make his own will dominate the conduct of his office, his regime, he has no recourse but to choices and persuasion exercised within these narrow limits. The purposeful President, his face set against drift (and any President, these days, will so regard himself), is thus confronted by an operating problem of immense complexity and large proportions, or more precisely by two problems tightly linked: Given those limits and in furtherance of his own purposes, how is he to maximize the efficiency of his choice-making? How maximize the efficacy of his power to persuade?

The proportions and complexities of these two connected problems it now becomes our object to explore.

IV

THE FREEDOM TO CHOOSE

If Presidents were free to choose the matters they made choices on, their problems of choice-making would be relatively simplified; but Presidents are not. The flow of issues they must face cannot be turned off like a water tap; to know that, one has but to note its sources.

Why do men in government and politics (and in the country and the world) bring issues to a President, invoke his act of choice? To amplify the foregoing analysis, it may be said that they do so for one, or another, or all of three reasons. First, there are matters that by law or custom require some sort of personal performance on his part, his signature, his presence or his voice. Second, there are

matters on which others, theoretically competent to act, want the loan of his potency or the cover of his prestige, his impetus behind their preferences, his brand on their performance. Third, there are the matters he himself wants made his own, that on his own initiative he has marked "count me in," matters on which he exercises the discretion we have already discussed. And in the circumstances of mid-century, no President will lack for quantities of matters of each sort.

In the first of these three categories, volume is adjustable, at least to a degree. A President who does not like to sign his name hundreds of times a day, can ease that chore somewhat, by turning over to department heads his formal exercise of statutory powers; so Eisenhower has done in some routine instances. A President who dislikes handshaking *ad infinitum* may find excuses for curtailment of big White House social functions, as FDR did with the war and Truman with repairs and Eisenhower with his heart attack. But such adjustments are mere nibbles at the fringes; they may save time or energy but not the mind and heart. No President can delegate the formal exercise of constitutional prerogatives, and it is from those that the greatest number of tough, touchy signatures derive. No President can be excused from all political speechmaking, disaster visiting, fireside chatting, dignitary dealing, least of all from the big ones, sources of greatest strain.

As for the second category, the most a President seriously can hope to do is slow the rate of flow, shut out the marginal case. He may pound tables at associates, demanding that they mind their business on their own responsibility; he may set obstacle courses for them to run, complete with committees, secretariats and Sherman Adamases—and still there will be persons, plenty of them, spurred by their convictions or their fears, their sense of others' power or of their own insufficiency, who press on him the matters in their bailiwicks, or in their neighbors.' So Secretary Benson took care to get Eisenhower's affirmation (on a partial presentation) of his plan to fire Ladejinsky. So Administrator Stassen took pains, it appears, to gain presidential sanction for the course of action which then put Ladejinsky back to work. And when matters partake in some degree of both these categories—as oftener than not they do—when his distinct prerogatives become involved, however marginally, in choices his associates are loath to make (or to let others make) themselves, the pressure for a presidential take-over can push the White House hard; witness the Dixon-Yates affair or the 1947 tankers case immortalized by Louis Koenig.⁹

There remains the third category, where interventions come at *his* initiative. There, he has the option, theoretically, of moving not at all. But this is fatal; also quite impracticable. No doubt, some Presidents may relish, others shy away from forcing matters into their own hands. No doubt, each will evolve some special preferences according to his particular competences, interests. But every President will find some issues that he wants to seize and ride—Truman on Point

⁹ The reference is to the "Sale of Tankers," a case study included in HAROLD STEIN, *PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND POLICY DEVELOPMENT* (1952).

Four, Eisenhower on Atoms for Peace—and each will find a plenitude he feels *impelled* to take upon himself: so Truman took the fate of Lamar Caudle out of that worthy's hands and the Attorney General's, so Eisenhower acted in the Talbott case. When Mrs. Hobby panicked over polio vaccine, when Secretary Stevens got entangled in his own inanities regarding Zwicker and Peress, when Adam Clayton Powell blasted Public Health and Navy on account of segregation, the President moved in. Had he an option? To sense imperatives, one need but scan the "inside" stories Robert Donovan supplies.¹⁰

Since acts of choice are often negative, there are, of course, more instances of such "enforced" discretion than will appear in current press reports: Eisenhower choosing time and again, as Donovan records, *not* to blast McCarthy; Truman choosing—as he sometimes did—not to leap, guns blazing, into loyalty cases that aroused his ire; so forth, *ad infinitum*. The "I don't know about that" in press conference is deceptive as a guide to presidential doings. In most such cases, this would remain the expedient response, assuming he did know. Yet every President, one may suppose, will now go out of office wishing that in some respects he had pushed further still, discretion *unenforced*, toward taking over at times and in places where contemporary happenings did not push him.

One wonders whether Truman never wished that he had intervened more actively in the affairs of his Attorneys General. One wonders whether Eisenhower may not come to wish that he had done the same regarding some of *his* department heads. No President finds pleasure in waiting upon "messes" for his cue to intervene. But none can be sure, either, that initiatives of others will suffice to flash a warning to him in good time. There is an obverse of the second category named above: those issues men bring to the President out of their fears, uncertainties, are matched by those kept from him out of confidence, or cussedness, or independent power (even ignorance). Surely, Secretary Weeks was guilty of astigmatism, at the very least, in firing Dr. Astin¹¹ as a departmental matter. Or, in an instance of much greater moment, the Wage Board's public members, circa 1952, surely were guilty of too broad a view of their role and too narrow a conception of the Government's, in rendering their famous Steel decision without sounding out the White House. For other illustrations one can point, as always, to the classic record of the Corps of Engineers or to the Pentagon's routines for waging internecine warfare. Far from reducing his discretionary range, a President is bound to end by wishing he could widen it.

But time stands in his way. He cannot afford to do nothing at his own discretion; but neither can he manage to do everything. Priority of place on his choice-making production line belongs of sheer necessity to matters with *deadlines* attached. And in most days of his working week, most seasons of his year, a President has quite enough of these to drain his energy, crowd his attention regard-

¹⁰ The reference is to ROBERT J. DONOVAN, *EISENHOWER: THE INSIDE STORY* (1956).

¹¹ The Chief of the Bureau of Standards in 1953.

less of all else. It is not "policy" but pressure that determines what comes first.

What makes a "deadline"? For one thing, constitutional or statutory obligations: the President must send his annual messages to Congress, must sign or veto its enactments. Or, for another, items on political agendas all across the country: the nomination and election contests over offices, both partisan and public, the distribution of the patronage, the management of national conventions and campaigns. Or, for a third, turns of events in diplomacy or war: the approach to the "summit" spurring a disarmament departure, "open skies"; the outbreak in Korea forcing a new Formosan policy. Or, for a fourth, "outside" events at home: a sharpened economic trend (whether up or down), a dragged-out strike, a natural disaster, a race riot; not necessarily the great things only but the small-with-bite, as when a Texas waitress would not serve the Indian Ambassador. Or, finally, for a fifth, such operational disorders in administration, day by day, as dot the preceding pages—plus, of course, their congressional counterparts. Dates-certain make for deadlines, so does heat; dates generated by our laws, our politics, and our diplomacy; heat generated by events impacting on the needs and expectations of presidential constituents. Singly or together—though most readily inflammable combined—dates and heat start the fires burning underneath the White House.

The President, of course, has influence on deadline-making and unmaking, but only to a limited degree. He sets or evades dates when he voluntarily decides upon a message or a meeting or a speech. He turns heat on when he permits himself to arouse expectations, as Eisenhower did in his press conferences before Geneva. He turns heat aside, if not off, when he finds plausible grounds, proper-looking means for "further study," as was done so notably in 1953. But these are marginal endeavors relative to the totality of dates and heat potentially imposed upon him from outside. And even these are usually reactions or responses to pressures not intrinsically his own. For the most part, even deadlines self-imposed are only nominally self-engendered. Save in rare instances, a mid-century President, however talented, simply has not time to man both ends of the choice-generating process.

The result is to put him in a paradoxical position anent the whole discretionary range of his choice-making. To reach out and take over *before* the dates are nigh or the heat on—publicly at least—can be crucially useful in his interest; yet, he always has to deal first with deadlines already at his desk. As has been said above, he cannot count on the initiatives of others to spur him into interventions timely in *his* terms; yet he is poorly placed to be his own self-starter. He needs to be an actor, yet he is pre-eminently a reactor, forced to be so by the nature of his work and its priorities. Since Eisenhower made Atoms for Peace his response to the heat expressed by cries for "candor" and to the dates required for a UN presentation in 1953, one may suppose he has not been entirely happy with its slowness to get off the ground. One may suppose, besides, that had he arrogated to himself all implementing choices and given them first call upon his time, the matter might have

moved a little faster. Similarly, in the case of Truman and Point Four: had he, not State and Budget, implemented his inaugural's fourth point and made of this his first priority (as it never was for them), the sixteen months after his 1949 inauguration might have produced more results than one meager piece of legislation newly on the books. But whatever these Presidents might have done differently or "better" than they actually did, one thing they could *not* do: accord that hypothetical priority in terms of their own time.

Washington correspondents frequently complain that Eisenhower talks a better line than his administration takes; that he proposes better than his own regime disposes. Complaints of the same sort were made in Truman's time, oftener than not by the same correspondents. And these complaints—along with the realities behind them—symptomize the underlying problem here described. For in a time of routinized responsibility to take the policy lead, a President himself will have few deadlines more compelling than those clustering around the choice of measures to *propose*, of policies to *state*. Except, perhaps, in general war or comparable emergency, these gain and take his time more surely and more regularly than the general run of operating choices bound to follow in their wake. The weight which Robert Donovan's book gives to the *proposing* side of Eisenhower's "story," presumably reflects that skewing of the latter's workaday preoccupations. And if there is an implication that the White House sometimes came to look on messages and speeches as ends in themselves, delivery equated with accomplishment, such is a natural by-product, one not unknown in Truman's time, a point of view, indeed, by no means wholly unrealistic.

Ideally, a President concerned for the efficiency of his own choice-making in furtherance of his own purposes as *he* conceives them, should have free rein in choosing what to choose—and when—within the range of matters subject to his choice at his discretion. In practice, though, that is precisely what he *cannot* have. His discretionary range, while not a sham, is nowhere near as open as the term implies. Only his compulsions are potentially unbounded; his opportunities are always limited. Ideals apart, he is in no position to do more than seek some finite widening of those confines; he has no chance to break them down. But paradoxically, the only practical direction which his search can take—given the conditions here described—is toward some means of putting pressure on himself, of *imposing new deadlines on himself*, to come to grips with those things he would want to make his own if only he had time to contemplate the world about him, interfering at his leisure. And it is ironic that the very measures that a President may take to spare himself for "bigger things" by staffing out the "small," tend to work in the opposite direction. Of this, more later.

The limitations upon "what" and "when" which so restrict freedom of choice are reinforced by certain other limits of a different sort: limits on the substance of alternatives in choices actually made. The President's discretion is restricted by

these limits also; they, too, are features of his landscape subject to some rearrangement but beyond his power to remove. What are these limitations on alternatives? Mainly three: limits of presentation, of substantive complexity, and of effectuation, each term loosely descriptive of a whole array of complications worth a chapter to themselves, though necessarily denied it here.

By "presentation" is meant time, form, and manner in which issues reach a President for his determination. If his desk is where the buck stops, as Truman liked to say, by the same token, it is the *last* stop on the line. Most matters reach him at a late stage of their evolution into issues calling for his choice; and many when they reach him warrant action fast. Wherever they occur, lateness and urgency—singly or combined—are bound to narrow options and to curtail chances for fresh looks or second thoughts. As for the *form* which issues take, the *context* of their presentation to a President, his settling of a budget sum, or phrasing of a speech, or soothing of a legislator, each in its own terms may mean disposal of an issue multi-faceted in terms of but one facet, thereby foreclosing options anent others. There is no counting the occasions on which Presidents have backed themselves—or been backed—into corners by this route. Moreover, those who brief a President, who can appeal to him, who can argue before him, have interests of their own which grow remote from his with every increment of organizational distance, institutional independence. Rarely will they see an issue wholly in his terms; oftener in some hybrid of his and theirs, sometimes in theirs alone. And Presidents are no less vulnerable than others (rather more so, in the circumstances) to the lure of wrong answers rightly put.

A tracing out of many of the illustrations posed above would show the workings of these presentation limits; signs of their presence are, of course, no novelty to readers of the New York Times. Nothing is intrinsically new about them nowadays, nor anything particularly obscure, though they are none the easier for being old and obvious. But when it comes to limits raised by substantive complexity, the case is rather different. Though not by any means a mid-century invention unknown to earlier times, the magnitude (and durability) of complications in the substance of issues with which Presidents must deal, these days, is greater in degree, to some extent in kind, than we have known before.

Take the question of the military budget which has haunted Eisenhower as it haunted Truman. That budget represents more than half the dollars of federal outlay year by year, four-fifths of the persons on all federal payrolls, half the Government's civilian personnel. It represents a mainstay of deterrence and recourse in the cold war, a bed-rock stabilizer in the national economy. Its annual determination raises issues of strategy, of economics, politics, administration, and (emphatically) technology; none of which are really manageable in annual or financial terms (the limit of form, again); none of which are really soluble by reference to anybody's certain knowledge, for nothing is certain save uncertainty in

these spheres. To estimate what the American economy can "stand" is not to answer what Congress and interest groups will "take" (or what would be required to equate the two). To estimate what new weapons may do is not to answer what may be demanded of them, or opposed to them, years hence. To estimate the Russians' *capabilities* is not to answer what are their *intentions*.

Yet, on some sorts of "answers" to these questions must military budgets now be built. And limited in terms of what is knowable, a President has no recourse but to select among the "guesstimates" of others—or to compound a compromise among them—by way of searching for his answer-substitutes. In such a search, the signs most readily discerned are bound to be those rendered most concrete by visibility, or pressure, or personal proclivities, or "common sense." No doubt a President needs better signposts in times of cold war, technological revolution; but given the uncertainties these generate, whence are such signs to come?

Parenthetically, it may be said that whatever the answer to that question, the "experts" are unlikely candidates. For if the real technicians see far more than a President can see, the record up to now suggests that they, least of all, show a capacity to ask themselves, out of their expertise, the questions pertinent to him; to translate their vision (and language) into his terms. Shifting the illustration, one thinks in this connection of an aspect of the thermonuclear "crash-program" controversy during 1949, as rendered by the transcript in the Oppenheimer case: that for weeks AEC's consulting scientists debated what the President should do in terms rendered obsolete, for him, by the mere fact of their debate.

Finally, there is the problem of effectuation, the third of the stated factors limiting alternatives in choice. How is a President to make "no" stick; to translate "yes" into performance, actuality? He is not bound to make each choice dependent on his response to these questions, but in the normal course he cannot fail to ask them and to give the answers weight. When Truman chose intervention in Korea, it happened that the necessary military means lay near at hand across the Sea of Japan; a factor, surely, in his choice. The obverse holds, of course, for our passivity in the last days of Dien Bienphu; the means that *were* at hand were scarcely suited to the circumstance. But to cite instances of capability in military terms is to belittle the complexity of the how-to-do-it factor; in other terms, there are few choices blessed by aspects so nearly absolute or so readily calculable. Mostly the problem for the President is both more tenuous and more complex in character: how far can he hope to carry matters by persuading those whom he cannot command to do those things he lacks capacity to compel?

"I sit here all day," Truman used to remark, "trying to persuade people to do the things they ought to have sense enough to do without my persuading them." And on each posed alternative, in every act of choice, the question becomes whether to that workload he should add one thing more; with what prospect, at what risk. That question asked and answered may suffice to cancel options of all sorts; the President's choice-making ultimately interlocking with his power to persuade.

V

THE POWER TO PERSUADE

Concrete acts of choice engender concrete efforts at persuasion. Persuasion of whom? In general, of the President's constituencies, any or all as the case may be. In particular, of those who do the daily chores of governing this country: administrators, Congressmen, and organization politicians. To these one might add certain foreign notables and private persons prominent at home, on whom the Government depends for something in particular, a boost, a service or a sacrifice; but since such dependence is *ad hoc*, intermittent, their case can be ignored for present purposes.

In the main, day by day, it is the public officers and party politicians whom a President must reach to get his choices rendered into government performance. He may move toward them indirectly through public or interest-group opinion, sometimes his only routes, but they remain his objects because they, not the "public," do the close work; his preferences conditioned on their doing. To influence these men at work, he has at his disposal a quantity of instruments—refined and crude in varying degree—derived from his prerogatives of office as filtered through his personality.

Those instruments of influence, tools of persuasion, are common knowledge, no mystery about them and none pretended here: There is the aura of his office, coupled to the impact of his person and prestige, such as they may be. There are the varied forms of help, concrete and psychological, that Congressmen want from the White House in dealing, as they must, with the executive establishment. There are, in turn, the various assistances desired by executive officialdom in dealing with the Congress. There are also the loyalties, varying in depth, of administrators to their chief, of party members to the boss, of Congressmen (and citizens) to the head of State and Government. In party terms, there are, at once, supplies of federal patronage, such as it is, a presidential record which no party nowadays can shake, the prospect of a renewed candidacy (for first termers, anyway), and—save for Democrats, perhaps—a constantly replenished campaign chest, centrally controlled. These things, among others, are available to Presidents for use, reversibly, as carrots and as sticks in aid of their persuasion.

This listing has a formidable ring. In theory, it deserves it. For if a President could bring to bear that whole array effectively and all at once upon a given point, one may presume he would be irresistible. But practically speaking, such conjunctions are not easily arranged; far from it. Oftener than not, one or another of these tools will turn out ineffective of itself or in the hands of its prospective user, unsuited to use, by him, in any combination of resources he contrives. Why should this be so? What dulls their cutting edge and limits their employment? These questions become our immediate concern. Full answers would run far

beyond the compass of this essay; no more can be attempted here than a suggestion of some factors that seem specially significant in the contemporary setting.

First among these factors—in order of discussion, not importance—is the uncertainty of a President's own hold upon his instruments of influence. They may attach to his office but can slip away from *him*. One doubts that at any time since 1935, or thereabouts, and not often before, have Presidents got half the mileage out of patronage the textbooks advertise. One doubts that Eisenhower can be sure from day to day of his control over the stockpile of administrative actions sought by congressmen. Most of these, certainly, are not under his sole lock and key. Others than he have the arts of persuasion to practice, and keys of their own. The story is told that a powerful House Democrat was traded off the same dam twice; once in Truman's time and once in Eisenhower's. If so, the Budget Bureau ought to be commended for its careful husbanding of presidential trading-stock. But such care is by no means universal in this Government (not even in the Budget). Moreover, a supply of trading-stock may prove insufficient just when the need is greatest. Appetites are insatiable and fears short-lived; a situation summed up in the phrase "What have you done for me lately," as amplified by "or *to me*."

In addition, sources of supplies to aid persuasion on one front may be endangered by the very effort at persuasion on another. A great share of a President's potential trading-stock with Congress is actually in the hands of the executive departments: jobs, expertise, publicity, administrative actions of all sorts. No less a share of his potential leverage with the departments is actually in the hands of his congressional supporters: protection or defense, consideration or support, in every sort of legislative situation. Too many sticks applied too often on the Hill may tend to uproot the supply of carrots growing there for use downtown, and vice versa.

A second factor is the tendency of certain presidential tools to cut in opposite directions, thereby impairing their simultaneous employment. It is not easy for a President to combine partisan approaches with attempts to crystallize support around the symbol of his office. He courts trouble when he tells his party's congressmen that his proposals will help them at the polls and simultaneously exhorts the other party's men to do their patriotic duty by their President. He courts trouble when he tries to draw upon the loyalties of subordinate officials and at the same time offers up their kind as human sacrifices on the altar, say, of adequate appropriations for their work. Such troubles come in infinite varieties; in every instance, they will tend to limit hypothetical effectiveness of each paired instrument. To say this is not to suggest, of course, that all these troubles are escapable. Carrying water on both shoulders—plus, perhaps, in both hands, also strapped around the waist—is frequently imperative for Presidents, a natural resultant of their four-way leadership position. But the complications are no less for often being unavoidable. So Truman found on many memorable occasions and even Eisenhower, now and then, especially in those first years of turmoil over "cleaning out the Communists" and Senator McCarthy.

A third factor complicating the persuasion process can be stated, most simply, as general dissatisfaction with the product to be "sold." It is difficult, in other words, to press a course of action intrinsically lacking much appeal to *any* of the persons whose support is being sought. Instruments of influence, however handled, are poor substitutes for genuine enthusiasm on the part of somebody among the movers and shakers in the case. And if the substitution must be made, as not infrequently occurs, the limits on the efficacy of persuasive tools will tend to be severe. The President's health-reinsurance scheme of 1954 is very much in point. So is the complex struggle over foreign aid in the 1956 session of Congress. There, Eisenhower pitted his own personal prestige, plus other sorts of pressure, against the disappointments, disenchantments, irritations, and forebodings which had penetrated every corner of both Houses. The result was a sharp check to the President—how serious in program terms one cannot know from the outside—a check administered, moreover, by traditional supporters of his course among the Democrats, together with a great proportion of *his* party's membership, election year or no. It is quite conceivable, in all the circumstances, that another President, in another year, might have done worse. But why did this President in this year not do better?

No doubt, his ileitis operation and its aftermath blunted Eisenhower's own persuasive influence at a crucial time.¹² Perhaps there were things poorly done or left undone at other times as well. But however healthy and adroit he might have been last summer, there are no indications—not, anyway of public record—that by then his persuasion could have bettered the result in any *marked* degree. For the great lack, apparently, was not of influence in mechanistic terms, but of program in substantive respects. A sense of changing world relationships pervaded the debates, providing ammunition for old enemies of Mutual Security and worries for old friends. Yet, the administration's program appeared cast from the same mold as all its predecessors back to 1951, when the world wore a very different look. And Eisenhower's troubles in July seem, by hindsight, an inevitable outcome of his choices in December; the efficacy of persuasive instruments conditioned, in their turn, upon the exercise—and limits—of choice-making.

Alongside these three factors there is need to place a fourth, which looms at least as large under mid-century conditions: the factor of too many things at once, as represented, classically, by FDR's fight for reorganization powers amidst controversy over his "court-packing" plan. In that instance, Roosevelt was criticized for moving for his management reform at a time when his influence was mortgaged to another cause. Perhaps he had an option then—though that can be debated—but not so his successors. In 1956, in a relatively quiet time at home and abroad, the Eisenhower influence has been demanded in three closely spaced, competing, legisla-

¹² Eisenhower was hospitalized on June 8, 1956, and did not return to the White House until July 16. In the interim, the Mutual Security authorization went through floor debate in House and Senate, through conference, and on to signature, \$800 million short of his request; the following appropriation, completed after his return to Washington, fell \$300 million shorter still.

tive fights of first importance to his regime—farm, education, foreign aid—to say nothing of those headed off, like tax reduction, or of the many other issues on which White House labels were affixed to controversial aspects: Hells Canyon, highway aid, social security amendments, the civil rights commission, and numbers more. In Truman's time, the list was often longer, the controversial aspects sharper, the presidential temperature higher, and, besides, in many of his years, such legislative struggles were accompanied by operational involvements—military, diplomatic, economic, or administrative—also calling his persuasion into play on a grand scale.

A President's tools of persuasion are put under great strains when used on many projects simultaneously. Look at the tools themselves, and that becomes quite obvious. Yet, such use is the normal practice, nowadays; often mandatory, always wanted. No more as persuaders than as choice-makers are contemporary Presidents at liberty, discretion unconfined, to choose the "what" and "when" of their endeavors to persuade.

Four factors have been named, so far, as limiting the efficacy of persuasive instruments. But there remains a fifth, a factor so important as to dominate the rest, continually affecting the dimensions of all four. This is the element of "setting" in persuasion, a matter not of instruments, as such, but of the *background* against which they are employed. As a rough rule, it may be said that for a fraction of the persons on whom Presidents depend, continuing exposure to the White House and its occupant provides a background favoring—though not, of course, determining—effective exercise of presidential influence upon them. The bigger the "staff system," the smaller the fraction; but even an open door could not enlarge it into a preponderance. For most officials, both public and partisan, a favorable background will be differently derived. Derived from what? To this we may now turn.

In the case of executive officials, all sorts of variables of time, place, situation, substance, tend to affect actual responses to a particular pressure from the President. But there would seem to be one variable always present, always influential: their own instinctive estimate of his prestige with Congress, his potency on Capitol Hill. This may not square with visions conjured up by the tag "Chief Executive"; it is, however, entirely natural. For Congress, day in and day out, means life or death to programs, institutions, personnel. Putting the matter in its crudest terms (and thus rather larger than life): if Presidents can make much difference in these respects, either way, their own officialdom will be well disposed toward their wishes; if not, so much the worse for them; many a bureaucrat, like many a congressman, was there before and will be after.

Of course, such bureaucratic estimates of presidential prowess will vary from time to time. George Kennan once remarked that diplomats must rethink foreign policy each morning; so bureaucrats must reappraise their attitudes toward a President, and so they do, day after day. Such estimates will vary, also, from place to place. The weaker an agency, in terms of institutional entrenchment, program

support, the more its officials will tend to view the President as a resource, no matter what the state of his congressional relations; thus Labor is traditionally a "tame" department. And every agency, however "strong," will make its calculations with reference, mainly, to those elements in Congress and those issues before Congress that affect it the most; even as between Army and Air the President is not appraised alike.

This does not mean that there is any one-to-one relationship between a President's congressional prestige and agency compliance with his wishes—though sometimes, certainly, the correlation is that close—but rather that a favorable background for persuasive efforts at his end of Pennsylvania Avenue is markedly dependent, over time, upon his prestige at the other end, with Congress. And in precisely the same sense—no more, no less—a favorable background for persuasion of the Congress is provided by his prestige with the country. As in the bureaucratic case, Senators and Congressmen differently situated, institutionally and electorally, will not see that matter all alike; place, time, party, and electorate make for differing appraisals, though by no means along strict party lines: witness Republican and Democratic attitudes in the Eighty-fourth Congress. No more than with the bureaucrats are estimates of this sort to be taken as controlling the congressional response in given instances of presidential pressure, but there can be no doubt that they contribute most significantly to the background against which such pressure is applied.

As for a President's own party's politicians outside Congress, they are quite comparably circumstanced, with the important qualification that at certain moments in the cycle of his term, their own enforced commitment to his record and his name may enhance their responsiveness regardless of his momentary popular prestige; a qualification applicable, equally, to certain of their brethren on the Hill.

In short, the President's persuasive power with those who do the daily chores of governing, is influenced by a sort of *progression of prestige*, a sequence culminating in the regard of the "general public," the country-at-large. Woodrow Wilson once wrote, in an academic vein, that a President "may be both the leader of his party and the leader of the nation or he may be one or the other."¹⁸ Whatever the case fifty years ago, no such option is open to him now. He must endeavor to lead "party" (for which read public officers as well), since "nation" does not run the government machine, cannot itself effectuate his choices. But if he is to manage those who make the wheels go 'round, he needs public opinion at his back, must seek consensus as his context for persuasion. And in that dual compulsion lies the *ultimate dilemma* of the presidential operation at mid-century.

How describe this dilemma? One may begin by pointing to the sources of that popular prestige which so affects the President's own power to persuade. His general public—in our terms, national and partisan constituencies combined—

¹⁸ WOODROW WILSON, *op. cit. supra* note 2, at 69.

actually comprises a diversity of presidential publics, their expectations nurtured variously by claims on him as "government," by respect for his office, or by ties to his personality: "interest" publics, "capacity" publics, and "personal" publics, each subdivided many times, all linked by the crisscrossing lines of overlapping membership, collectively encompassing the country, or that part of it which cares about the President.

His national prestige, therefore—which congressmen and politicians watch and weigh—is simply the net balance of favorable response these many groups, in sum, accord their varied images of him (a matter always to be gauged, not scientifically determined, the result influenced, of course, by the affiliation of the gauger). Those images and the responses to them are not static; they can and do vary over time. And what are the determinants of variation? Happenings, mainly, or the appearance of happenings, ascribable—or anyway ascribed—to him: the reward or frustration of a bread-and-butter want, an ethical attitude, a psychological identification; to such as these his publics will react wherever and in whatever degree they see his office or his person as the cause. Inevitably, every concrete choice he makes, both positive and negative, and every effort at persuasion will set off some reactions of the sort, and not all of one kind; if somebody is pleased, then someone else is bound to be offended.

For the President to give offense is to risk blurring his own image in the eyes of those offended, hence to risk lowering their favorable response to him. But on a maximum of such response, as aggregated all across the country, must he depend for the effectuation of his choices. And on choice-making he depends for the impression of his person on the product of his office. But the conduct of office is liable to require policy initiatives in all directions, not as free will, but as constituency pressures and events decree. Hence, acts of choice and of persuasion become mandatory, inescapable. Yet, they are bound to give offense.

This, then, is the ultimate dilemma, the vicious circle Presidents must tread by virtue of their unique placement in our system, the personal equivalent for them, as individuals, of that disparity which haunts their office, routinely responsible for programming without assured support to carry through. No President, of course, is wholly helpless in this situation. He gains from office when he enters it a sizable initial fund of favorable response; if he is fortunate enough to be an Eisenhower, he brings still more *to* office. Once installed, his actions bring him gains as well as losses. Approbation, no less than offense, is bound to follow, from some quarter, everything he does or fails to do. And nobody in government is better placed than he to focus public interest and attention where he wants it, to foster certain images, obscuring others, to make desired happenings occur, to give events a nudge.

These are not insignificant resources. Particularly in a time of sharp emergency—which a preponderance of publics see or can be made to see as such—their use with skill, accompanied by luck, should help a President to break out of that circle

altogether, in a fashion advantageous to his person and his cause; enabling him to gain from what he does far more by way of favorable response than negative reaction. For such a time, a crisis-time, tends to put premiums on affirmative action, to make the very act of doing almost its own reward, not doing almost its own penalty; so Hoover found to his discomfiture and Roosevelt to his taste a quarter-century ago. Of course, if circumstances are precisely opposite and times all peace and quiet, the outcome may be no less advantageous for a President; so Coolidge made a virtue of *not* doing and was well rewarded for it.

But our situation at mid-century fits neither of these models; the years since the Second World War have neither been perceived, widely, as crisis times, nor have they been, in fact, peace-times in any familiar sense. And nowadays, the things that Presidents must do and those they may be called upon to do expose them regularly to the penalties of *both* such times with no assurance that they can gain the rewards of either. These days, both doing and not doing give offense in indeterminate proportion to offsetting approbation; almost all actions now *tend* to produce a negative reaction more concrete than favorable response. Both forms of action are abrasive; from neither can our Presidents now *count* upon a bonus of response. Yet, they are constantly impelled to actions of both sorts and so it has to be, these days, their preferences notwithstanding.

Consider what a President must do in times we now call "peace": keep taxes relatively high, armed forces relatively large, the budget "swollen," the bureaucracy "outsize"; inject himself into labor disputes just when tempers grow highest, into defense of overseas constituents just when they seem, at home, most irritating or unwise. And so the list goes on. Consider, also, what a President now may be called upon to do: intervene with arms in Korea, Indo-China; intervene with counsel in Southern school segregation; back the Benson plan for aid to farmers; endorse the Hobby plan for aid to schools; accept the Rockefeller plan for aid abroad; impose the New York Bar committee plan for personnel security; keep Nixon or take Herter; choose silence on McCarthy or attack; these among others. Such "musts" and "mays," as manifested in his acts of doing or not doing, are bound to outrage some among his publics (and anger may last long), to be accepted grudgingly by many as unpleasant facts of life, to warm the hearts of an uncertain number whose warmth may be short-lived. Whichever way he acts, his penalties may outrun his rewards in prestige terms. And rarely can he calculate with certainty, in advance, the net balance either way. Yet act he must.

By virtue of his unique place in government, a President gains unequalled opportunities to mold the images his publics have of him. But, for these opportunities, he pays a heavy price. Even for Eisenhower, immune, so far, to many of the payments levied on his predecessors, there is now the real price his illnesses exact: the issue of his health in the 1956 campaign; an issue taking its dimensions from the nature of his office at mid-century.

This observation instantly suggests a qualification upon everything that has been said so far: the ultimate dilemma for a President—and with it all the intermediate dilemmas here described—takes shape and form, in actuality, from the particulars of his own personality and of the situations he confronts throughout his term. This paper has presented up to now an outline, in the abstract, of the operating burdens thrust on Presidents, in general. Now, before we can consider what, if anything, ought to be done in consequence, we need note how these burdens, these dilemmas have been manifested in real-life and what the real-life men in office have made of them, each in his way and time. That becomes necessarily a first step toward conclusion.

VI

PERSONALITIES AND SITUATIONS

Two men have held the Presidency at mid-century, Truman and Eisenhower. While Franklin Roosevelt's shadow is upon them and their office, he is not counted of their number because he served in different times, faced different partisan and governmental situations; only from 1938 to 1941 had he a foretaste of the situations scheduled for his final term. For present purposes, Truman and Eisenhower stand alone.

In some respects, their personalities and circumstances are more similar than either might admit. Their likenesses of personality have been canvassed with dash and perceptivity by Richard Rovere in the final essay of his recent book; there is no need to retrace all his ground.¹⁴ Suffice it to say here that both appear to have displayed in office an optimistic faith in progress, a confident, uncynical approach, no less sustaining and heart-warming for being late Victorian. So far, the White House at mid-century has been home to men formed, essentially, before the First World War, the Great Depression. No mid-century man, product of the Second World War and of the Great Prosperity, has yet lived in the place; for that there is, perhaps, some reason to be grateful.

Their situations, too, are much alike in numerous respects, those respects which give unity to times here termed "mid-century." Truman and Eisenhower, both, have had to deal with cold war and a full employment mandate; with inflation and recession, high taxes and high debt; with large armed forces, entangling alliances, atomic power, and "brush" warfare; with a bureaucracy two million strong; with a deeply split congressional party, sometimes in the minority, rarely more than nominally a majority; with notable discrepancies between each party's presidential and congressional electorates; with crises and with politics-as-usual combined.

These similarities of situation are accompanied by certain likenesses in approach, also. Both Presidents have been men rather narrowly acquainted outside their own professions, tending to rely for stimulation, counsel, and advice primarily on their official associates; neither has had anything like FDR's acquaintance, nation-

¹⁴ See RICHARD H. ROVERE, *THE EISENHOWER YEARS* 346-49, 8-10 (1956).

wide. Moreover, both have tended to put special credence in successful products of an idealized career line other than their own: military men in Truman's case; business men in Eisenhower's. To these and others among their subordinates both Presidents have delegated vastly, though in different spheres, and both have seemed to take ideas and issues as they come; to see what reaches them, often with sharpness and great common sense, but not to reach out constantly in restless search; displaying, so it seems, neither the intellectual's disquiet nor FDR's pervasive curiosity.

These similarities, of person, situation, and approach may well appear, historically, no less significant than many of the differences between their Presidencies. But if we are to set their own reactions in the office against our generalized discussion, differences become our main concern. In what do these consist? In respect to personality, of course, the public record is replete with information, not all of it informative, which scarcely needs rephrasing in this paper. It is enough, here, to identify those facets seemingly of special influence upon the styles of these two men as presidential operators: Eisenhower temperamentally a mediator, Truman disposed to put his head down and charge; Truman the politician, professional thick-skinned and relatively acclimated to abuse, save of his family, as against Eisenhower, the Supreme Commander, thin-skinned, apparently, and touchy at barbed questioning of his official conduct. These things, quite clearly, have affected and have differentiated *style*.

Yet, style in the abstract helps us very little; what counts, for present purposes, is application in the situations faced by these two Presidents, as actually experienced and met by each in turn. How differentiate their situations and responses? By focusing upon three crucial, common, interrelated aspects of their Presidencies: initial unpreparedness, pressure of events, and portions of prestige.

First is the matter of unpreparedness. Both men came to office inexperienced but ignorant of different things in differing degrees. Truman had been ten years in Washington, not close to the White House, not part of the executive establishment, but thoroughly accustomed to the search for and the uses of elective office; knowledgeable in the whole milieu of politics and in the power game, at least as played on the Hill; knowledgeable also, in a senatorial way, anent the divisive home-front issues of the past decade bound to project themselves into his Presidency; yet, almost wholly uninformed in the strategic spheres of foreign policy and military operations, his first concerns on taking office. At every point, the Eisenhower contrast is both plain and sharp. And when one notes their early opportunities for learning on the job, contrasts again are clear. Eisenhower, had, at least, the warm-up of campaign and preinaugural; Truman had two hours. Truman, on the other hand, inherited a going concern, albeit not of his contriving; Eisenhower had to build a new regime from scratch out of a party twenty years in opposition to the White House, its legislative oligarchy recently opposed to *him*. Yet, he did fall heir to a relatively stable home economy, a relatively viable position abroad, while Truman

was confronted at the outset by immediate and drastic consequences of the shift from total war to general "peace."

This brings us to the matter of events, their tempo, and their context, not only at the start but throughout all the years of these two Presidents. Waves of inflation and industrial unrest, threats to the welfare-state, Soviet expansionism and intransigence and armament, European weakness, Chinese collapse, the aftermath of Alger Hiss, the outbreak in Korea and its consequences—these, among others, were themes sounded harshly and insistently in Truman's years; evoking a long line of *overt* events, almost all of them intense in pressure for affirmative, abrasive action, many of them thoroughly devisive in their social and political results. In Eisenhower's term, thus far (the early fall of 1956), some of these themes have been submerged, or nearly so; the rest have been productive of a lesser number of such overt events and at longer intervals.

To be sure, Eisenhower's years have not been without incident. The worst of McCarthy, the imminence of Bricker, the fall of farm income, the risks of renewed war in the Far East, the death of the European Defense Community, threats in the Middle East, convulsions in North Africa; these and others and, besides, those steps toward the future: in great power relationships, the coming of "competitive co-existence"; in their defense, the integration of tactical atomic weapons; in social policy at home, the Supreme Court decision on desegregation; and in home industry, the turn toward automation. Yet, unlike Truman's time, there have been virtually no national emergencies as a result of strikes, no spiralling price upswings (and only the mildest of recessions off the farm), no frontal assaults on the Roosevelt revolution, no *new* spy scares, no imminent collapses in Europe, no Americans fighting in Asia, no overt threats or acts of force from Moscow. Stalin, after all, turned ugly in Truman's first year; he died in Eisenhower's. And without these, the din of Truman's time has been muted indeed, for in his day, these made the greatest noise.

This does not mean the one man's problems of choice-making and persuasion were *intrinsically* much "harder" than the other's. That is a judgment the historians will have to render in due course; contemporary evidence appears to cut both ways. When Truman came to office, the New Deal inheritance remained to be secured; by Eisenhower's time, that had been done, the argument pushed to another level, the *Fair Deal* in dispute but the hallmarks of Roosevelt's revolution well entrenched: witness social security. Clearly, this eases Eisenhower's situation relative to Truman's. On the other hand, it seems less difficult, in terms both intellectual and political, to counter Stalin than to coexist with his successors. Building "situations of strength" in the face of intransigence and military threat is bound to be more concrete, more congenial, hence more manageable than using them, renewing them once built; especially when guns and money turn out insufficient, of themselves, as maintenance materials, and when the purpose loses shape, specific or short-run. Korea interrupted Truman's regime in preliminary grapplings with that harder

task, and programs then frozen in a military guise have yet to be thawed out. But long before Eisenhower came to office, it appeared clear that should the Soviets, someday, mellow their manners, if not aims, our Government would be hard put to fashion adequate response.

Still, if one cannot strike a balance of intrinsic hardship in the troubles which events decreed for Truman and for Eisenhower, one can note certain things about the *context* of events which rendered Truman's handling of his troubles relatively harder. On the one hand, it happened in his time, as against Eisenhower's, that a lesser number of events had government and public impacts gradual, postponable, or transient: contrast Korea with Indo-China; the Steel dispute of 1952 with that of 1956, the rise of "neutralism" with the fall of dollar balances. On the other hand, it is distinctly different to respond to events as "Fair Dealer" than as "dynamic conservative"; different in terms of ideological commitment; different in terms of attitude about the Presidency's four constituencies, their diverse and conflicting expectations; differences only of degree, perhaps, but no less definite for that. So many things might Truman not have done, or held himself above, or dissociated himself from, had he been leader of the Eisenhower coalition instead of heir to Roosevelt's (and had he not been Truman, matters might have gone still otherwise; style counts in application).

Obviously there are connecting links between these two aspects of the context of events in Truman's time and in his later years, both are related to another: by June of 1950, this country to all public appearances, was launched upon a period of relative tranquility, assured, it seemed, by nice adjustments between the not-too-heavy burdens of a stabilized world leadership and the growing pleasures of a resurgent, expanding home economy; a period of calm protected, also, by the tranquilizing stand-off between reformism represented at the White House and conservatism dominant in Congress. After two decades of depression, World War, post-war readjustments, there we were, millions of us, savoring another gilded age. Then Korea and its prolongation and its side effects blasted the happy scene, upsetting expectations on every hand. With Eisenhower's advent and Korean truce, the happy prospects were revived; by this he has gained greatly. Meanwhile, in proportion, Truman took the rap.

This raises the whole question of prestige, the third of those situational matters requiring review. Truman, of course, gained what he had to start with from his office, not his person. He suffered always from the prestige handicap of "daring," as an unknown and a commoner, to fill the regal shoes of FDR, a handicap increased, at first, by images of a lost little man, which his own "moon and stars" remarks did nothing to reduce. Those early images were to be overlaid in time, especially in 1948, but the more positive impressions which then took their place were of the sort, mostly, to blur at once with any undesired happenings, and these, perforce, were plentiful for many of his publics. In terms of the uncertainties of public

prestige for a mid-century President as characterized above (part V), the Truman case is classic to the point of caricature. As the enormous variations in his Gallup polls suggest, he sometimes seemed assured a net balance of negative reaction no matter what he did or failed to do.

With Eisenhower, it has all been otherwise; almost the opposite at every point. Throughout his term, his own progression of prestige has culminated, constantly, in an extraordinary popular response. It may be that his images, like Truman's, have been changing over time; that he is now more nearly "grandfather" than a "crusader" to his publics; so Louis Harris suggests.¹⁵ But, if so, there has seemed to be no diminution of response, at least-up to the start of the 1956 campaign. For evidence, one need but note the polls, or trace the *tactics* and the *expressed* views (which is not to say votes) of his congressional opponents on both sides of the aisle as good a rough gauge of his popular prestige as once of Truman's. Eisenhower, therefore, has enjoyed at all times what was rarely Truman's lot: a hospitable climate for the making of those choices that impose the greatest strain upon the power to persuade.

And yet it has been Truman, far more typically than Eisenhower, who made that sort of choice, this past decade, interjecting the divisive issue, imposing the stiff commitment, calling for the drastic action by administration, Congress, party, and the country; Truman with his fluctuating, always limited prestige, which he endangered in the very act of drawing on it; not Eisenhower with his vast supply which has yet to be plumbed, much less drawn down. Truman treated prestige as a weapon to be brandished; Eisenhower treats it as an asset to be preserved. Yet we may not assume that either of them thought he had an option. For Truman seems to have regarded advocacy as *the* obligation of his office; while Eisenhower, seemingly, acts in the conviction that beneficence is its own reward.

No matter what his thoughts, of course, events and their context narrowed Truman's option; this we have seen above. But where he did have leeway, his concept of his role disparaged an interpolation of the prestige factor into choice. In all that he has said and written on the Presidency, his emphasis always is on its constitutional and statutory obligations; the duty to decide, the responsibility to state; the initiative primary, implementation secondary; the *focus* on choice-making, not effectuation. "The President's got to set the sights," he once remarked. "What the country needed in every field . . . was up to me to say . . . and if Congress wouldn't respond, well, I'd have done all I could in a straightforward way."¹⁶ And this seems to have been not posture, but precept, allowing little room for concern over personal prestige. What we have termed his ultimate dilemma never seemed to faze this President; indeed, he never would have granted its existence in our terms. In his own outlook, he resolved it without having to acknowledge it, by ignoring the dimension he could do the least about.

¹⁵ See, Harris, *How Voters Feel About Ike's Health*, Collier's, July 20, 1956, pp. 17 ff.

¹⁶ Interview with former President Truman, Kansas City, Mo., Dec. 27, 1955.

Events in another context have been easier on Eisenhower; to that degree, his option has been greater. But one gains the impression from outside that he attributes much of the eased pressure of events to his prestige, *per se*. To be, becomes then, a great act of doing in itself; to do, or not to do, must be adjudged in its relationship to being, to those images which calm and quiet by the very fact of their existence. Of course, great prestige from the start permits considerable flexibility; this standard—if it is the standard—does not call for frozen immobility, assuming such were feasible these days, which it is not; rather, what seems to be at stake is a fixed attitude that in so far as possible, things others might have done—not all, but many things—should not be done, or done a different way: so with overt approaches to the Congress; hassles in the executive, disputes in the party, wrangles in the country, crises abroad. Save in extremity, the calming images must not be blurred. And up to now, this standard (if it is the standard) must seem practical and workable to its adherents. In 1954, McCarthy hangs himself: in 1955, a Democratic Congress remains reasonable; in 1956, the Congress does no less than usual in an election year, while a steel strike evaporates without emergency; and so it goes. This Presidency, up to now, belies its supposed ultimate dilemma, for where—save in two illnesses by act of God—are the hard enforced acts of doing and not doing which may evoke more negative reaction than favorable response? Apparently, they have been calmed away. To all appearances, indeed, beneficence *is* its own reward.

These observations are by way of a trial balance on the operational approaches of two Presidents. A “trial” is all that can be offered here. History permits of no more now, particularly in Eisenhower’s instance; also, an observership conducted inside one administration, not the other, puts comparison in double jeopardy. Moreover, in a perfectly objective sense, the value of comparison is jeopardized as well by the disparate tenures of Truman and of Eisenhower. The Truman style which we remember now, the Truman staff which is familiar in our recollections, date at the earliest from 1947. In Eisenhower’s case, the comparable date might be, say, January 1954. A good eight months, or more, of Truman’s term in 1948, again in 1952, were lost for forwarding policy endeavors by virtue of election-year uncertainties, preoccupations. A comparable pause in Eisenhower’s term would date from the early spring of 1956. And in the four preceding months, of course, he was either hospitalized or convalescent. We are comparing, then, one man’s activities in office during four and two-thirds years with another’s during twenty months, at most. Even if one assumes that the Eisenhower regime might have tended less than Truman’s to suspend its forward planning long before the election, the ileitis operation helps redress the balance. The shortness of the working term for a new President, discounting both his first year(s) and his last, does not get from our literature the notice it deserves. But note it here we must; for as applied in these two instances, it limits the utility of our comparison.

Still, such as it is, we have run a trial balance. What does it show? It indi-

cates, at first glance, that one of these Presidents worked at his tasks as though they posed no "ultimate dilemma," while the other has managed in a fashion to dissipate it, up to now. These findings do not signify that the dilemma, as abstractly stated, lacks reality, in the concrete. Truman may have ignored it, but it haunted his Presidency none the less and manifested itself, at the last, in Eisenhower's election. As for the latter, history will have the final word about beneficence; the record yet is incomplete. Besides, we have no precedents since Washington, if then, for so remarkable a showing of popular prestige diffused so widely, for so long. National heroes do not come a dime-a-dozen; the hero in our momentary concord of events remains unique, by definition. One may expect the cardinal dilemmas of the Presidency in our time to re-enter the White House upon its next change of occupant, if not, indeed, before.

What then is to be learned from our trial balance? Essentially that every President will meet and measure those dilemmas according to the dictates of his situation, his personality. It is a good and necessary thing that this be so. Had Truman seen his problems in what seem to be his successor's terms, it well might have destroyed him as an integrated individual, the task beyond his powers, in his circumstances, to perform; but had he seen things so he would not have been Truman. And on the other hand, had Eisenhower willingly aroused the sort of criticism taken by his predecessor, one wonders what would have become of him; but had he done so, he would never have been Eisenhower. It follows, therefore, that whatever we conceive to help our Presidents shoulder their burdens at mid-century, we must be wary of diminishing their freedom to define those burdens after their own fashion, in their situations as they see them, each in his turn and time. That freedom is already tightly circumscribed by laws and institutions and constituency expectations. No need for students and observers to make the crowding worse.

VII

PROSPECTS AND PROPOSALS

"Mid-century" will not endure forever. If the cold war holds its present course and if our national economy continues, generally, to climb, we may face six, eight, even ten years, perhaps more, that will bear an affinity, in presidential terms, to the decade just past. Beyond another decade, though, our population, science and resources, our industrial development, urbanization, regional realignments, will have brought us to such a point that even if affairs abroad held constant—which they cannot do—what has been described here may be wholly out of date. Even a decade may turn out too long a period to bracket as a portion of "our times." But there is likelihood, at least, that the next two, perhaps three, presidential terms will have much in common with the three since the Second World War.

How then might the next few Presidents be helped to ease the likely operating problems of the office? The answer, plainly, is that nothing fundamental can be done to help them. Nothing short of really revolutionary party centralization bids

fair to eliminate that basic and dilemma-nurturing disparity between the Presidency's obligation to initiate and its capacity to achieve. Of course, were our parties fully nationalized and centralized, the party oligarchs might well command the capacity and would tend to assume the obligation, relieving the Presidency, as such, both of burdens and of unique place. But it has been six years now since a committee of the American Political Science Association summoned the revolution to commence, and I am prepared to predict that our parties will endure, for one more decade anyway, substantially unnationalized as in the last.

Barring fundamentals, one can try to nibble at the fringes of the Presidency's problems via piecemeal structural reforms. But those a President might find most fun cannot be had, as a practical matter: witness the item veto. And those most certain to affect him for the worse are only too likely to be thrust upon him: as now we have the two-term amendment and still might find ourselves some day with Bricker's or with Mundt's. As for the many proposed statutory changes which fit neither of these two extremes, opinions differ; their proponents, though, would be well advised to reflect upon Rossiter's admonition: "Leave Your Presidency Alone."¹⁷ In my own view, that caution makes great sense and applies equally to all proposals of a structural and statutory sort. For all of them—all, anyway, of which I am aware—incur a common risk: that they will produce *wayward side-effects*, however unintended by their sponsors, which may make matters worse, or at least put new problems in the place of old. Even the twentieth amendment, widely heralded as an essential modernization, made matters difficult for Eisenhower his first year, and scarcely would have aided FDR, and easily might have been ruinous in Lincoln's time, the classic case of grave emergency it is intended to relieve. This is not to suggest we should repeal the "Lame Duck" amendment, or even alter its required starting-dates for the congressional and presidential terms; the point, rather, is that if so logical and seemingly so slight a change produces wayward side-effects, it might be well to avoid others more complex or more obscure.

Some risks, of course, accompany all change; this is no argument for never changing anything. But when one can foresee a wayward consequence, however unintended by proponents, then is the time, it seems to me, to move on their proposals very cautiously indeed. So, in the legislative cabinet scheme, as recently revived by Professors Corwin and Koenig,¹⁸ one is confronted with the prospect, all other things aside, that formal cabinet rank for leading senators would transfer from an Eisenhower to Knowland, say, and Bridges, some part of his privacy, prestige, and nominal authority, without in any way diminishing their independent power base, or guaranteeing him improvement in the quality of counsel and advice they have provided up to now. If there should be a President who wished to try this one-way transfer, he could find means without a statute. The privilege remains his; why then impose a mandate? Of course, if one's concern is less with easing

¹⁷ See ROSSITER, *op. cit. supra* note 1, at 161-62.

¹⁸ See EDWARD S. CORWIN AND LOUIS W. KOENIG, *THE PRESIDENCY TODAY* 90-99 (1956).

operational dilemmas than with checking arbitrary power, the matter wears a wholly different look. But if the Presidency now is dangerously powerful, this essay's premises and argument are all awry.

In terms of easing burdens, hence of strengthening the President, by means externally imposed, there is but one proposal that in all good conscience I could urge without equivocation, a proposal once made (but not patented) by a former Roosevelt aide: to guarantee new Presidents a solid partisan majority in both Houses of Congress, composed of men dependent on the President's own electorate. But in the circumstances of mid-century, this, above all, is never to be guaranteed; indeed it is not even to be hoped for.

Where does this leave us then? It leaves us with the Presidents themselves, with what they might do for themselves in their own self-defense, within the confines and environs of their office.

To make suggestions to them, without knowing them or their specific situations, imposes certain limitations on would-be suggestors, one limit above all: that each suggestion be adaptable for use by an incumbent, whatever his work-habits and his style; that each be usable by men so various in those respects as Eisenhower, Truman, FDR. Truman's White House rather resembled a senatorial establishment, writ large: the staff informal, almost family-like, assignments shifting casually among jacks-of-all-trades, organization plastic, hierarchy slight, and anything liable to be mulled over with the President. Eisenhower, one supposes, could not have abided it. But no more could Truman have abided—much less politically afforded—the military sort of staff system as adapted and on display in Eisenhower's White House. Yet this is the way Eisenhower works and that was the way Truman worked and the next President may want to work like one, or the other, or like neither. There is no point in urging upon any of them a suggestion he could not adopt without foregoing his accustomed way of work.

To illustrate the sort of thing thereby put out of bounds, a number of observers assert that the current regime is a "regency" and urge that Eisenhower should dispense with Sherman Adams. But if this were a regency, then Eisenhower and not Adams must be presumed First Regent. The military have their rules for chiefs of staff, and those who cannot keep them do not long retain the place. There is no evidence that Eisenhower lacks acquaintance with these rules or that his principal assistant has not learned to work within them. If Adams were to vanish overnight, no doubt there would soon appear in his place another such abrasive, intense concentrator. That is the Eisenhower way, and so it was long before 1953. In terms of personal performance, we might as well accept the moral and forbear to debate here whether Eisenhower's system, in the abstract, is a good thing or a bad. Some Presidents will find they cannot stand it, others that they cannot get away with it politically, while others, still, may try to proceed much as he has done.

I have stressed Eisenhower's case because among those of all recent Presidents

his most restricts the range of the suggestible. Our need is for things Presidents might do to help themselves, on their initiative, at their discretion. Suggestions that seem reasonably practicable for a man of military background, entrenched behind the paraphernalia of elaborate staff, are likely to be usable, as well, by those schooled in more fluid, personalized, working-ways of civil government and politics, whence one supposes the next Presidents will come. But having so delimited the field of search, what remains to be found? In such a narrow ground, what is there to discover that may help a President resolve—or live with—his dilemmas? Tentatively, I would hazard the following response.

First, the fewer a President's illusions about the limitations on his power stakes and status in our system, the better his performance on the job. The more nearly he sees his power problem as I have endeavored to describe it here, the greater his chance to master his circumstances or at least hinder them from overwhelming him. Of course, a man wants the illusions that sustain him at his work, and if he needs to look upon the world in terms other than jungle, then so he must. It might help, though, if Presidents who felt impelled to find identification with a forerunner, would look to Lincoln, not as myth or symbol, but as man-in-office. For in their wartime crises, FDR and Wilson seem more removed from our mid-century state than Lincoln does, despite the fact of war. In its operational dilemmas, his was a very modern Presidency, contrasts notwithstanding. And should they seek such parallels, I suggest that the image of his operating burdens and his power problem, rather than, say, Washington's (or Jackson's or a Roosevelt's), be graven on the minds of our next Presidents.

Second, of all the self-perceptions that can help a President, nothing helps so much as an awareness of his absolutely unique place—of his aloneness at the only juncture of his four constituencies—and an alertness, consequently, to the fact that he can count on no one else in Government to sense his interests in precisely his own terms. To stress the "team" and teamwork is a fine thing for morale and useful, too, in binding others to one's cause. But any President who regards the blithe spirit all-for-one-and-one-for-all as a reality which may assume full right-and-title to his interests is assured disenchantment and distortion of his aims.

It follows that he needs to widen, so far as he can, the confines of his own freedom to choose what he himself would think he were well advised to make choices on and undertake persuasion on and when. As we have seen, he cannot hope to widen these confines more than a little; how might even that little be accomplished? On the one hand, I would suggest, by rendering the regular assistance he receives more representative of the totality of his constituencies; on the other hand, by building into government and his own staff the sorts of competitions which will create "deadlines" for him at times and on issues useful in his terms.

Perhaps we do not recognize sufficiently the deep distortions, in constituency terms, of staff assistance now officially available to a President. Without exception,

his department heads and institutional staff aides are tightly linked to, actually are part of, his "government" constituency. The same thing can be said for his legislative leaders and for such White House aides as he may draw from agency or congressional sources to help with liaison in both directions. Many of these people also represent, in varying degree, some portions of his "partisan" constituency; so, of course, does the National Committee Chairman, whose office is more or less part of presidential staff facilities. And all of them can claim to be in some sense representative of "national" constituency as well. But taking them together as a collectivity, their representative character is decidedly different than his own; greatly overweighing the governmental element, especially its executive side, while relatively slighting partisan, underweighing national, and virtually ignoring overseas components. Even in the White House staff, none but the Press Secretary is free of institutionalized routines which pull particularly in the government direction (perhaps explaining why that post becomes so powerful when manned by a superb technician).

To compensate for these distortions, Presidents must break out of their official families and so they do, with ceremonials and visitors, with trips, and tête-à-têtes, with consultations and with confidants, each in his fashion. But I submit that these are frail reliances which need the utmost buttressing by Presidents themselves in conscious, purposeful awareness of official insufficiencies. And not the means but that awareness becomes crucial in this case; if that be strong enough, the man makes his own means. His aides, of course, can help and so they will, provided his insistence is incessant, but their reach is no *substitute* for his, nor their awareness either.

As for the matter of "created" deadlines, this was a specialty with FDR which, suitably adapted, I commend to his successors. Roosevelt is commonly supposed a "poor" administrator; lines of authority confused, the same assignments in the hand of numerous subordinates, doors opening and closing unpredictably, nobody knowing everything of anybody's business and everybody horning in on everything. Yet with all this and *by* it, he kept in his own hands more power of judgment and decision than most Presidents before or since. In the administration of the Presidency, what could be more important? This is not to suggest that future Presidents should try to play by ear, *ad hoc*, in Roosevelt's special way. They cannot if they would—nor could he either, at the end—for government has grown too big, its scope too broad, their own responsibilities too routinized, their office far too institutionalized. What is suggested, rather, is a search for substitutes compatible with their more complex circumstances. The building-in of competition seems to me the key.

Without attempting an exhaustive exploration, let me mention two means by which competitive relations might be fostered: namely appointments and reorganizations. The President who wishes to enhance his prospects for free choices in an area of policy will do well to arrange that opposed attitudes in country or in Con-

gress, or in his own mind are represented among appointees charged institutionally with its consideration *and* administration. By "represented" is meant not in form alone, but in a balance what suffices to force underlying issues on the table, up the line, and in good time, without exhausting institutional support for a decision *either* way. Thus, Eisenhower seems to run tremendous risks of foreclosed freedom in the sphere of foreign aid, when all the posts of massive institutional power are held by men reportedly conservative in view, with "balance" furnished mainly by a brace of White House aides.

One sympathizes with the wish of both Roosevelt's successors to avoid such unseemly public struggles as were carried on from inside his regime. But foreclosed freedom can be harder on a President than struggling subordinates. Indeed, unless they are sufficiently well-matched to carry controversies to the press, he loses one among the early warning signals built-in-competitions can provide. If he is lucky and adroit and granted a respectful opposition, perhaps he can hold down the public outcries though he keep his fighters matched, and can devise internal signals as a substitute. But if, to keep the public peace, he rigs fights overmuch, he pays an exorbitant price, or so it seems to me. Indeed, under the circumstances of mid-century, an outward look of total harmony in a regime might well be taken as itself a warning sign.

As for reorganization, it is obviously useful, often essential, as a supplement to the appointive power in building or in equalizing institutionalized competitions. There is one disability, however: my colleague, Wallace Sayre, has propounded the sound "law" that any benefits of a reorganization are immediate, while disadvantages are cumulative over time. To this I would append the simple corollary that as for a President's own freedom, gains are short-range, risks long-run. And this applies with greater force the closer one approaches his own person. The moral appears plain. It cannot be enough to reorganize, one must keep on with it. In their relations to each other and the President, his official associates need stirring up; not with such frequency that they shrink into immobility, but just enough so that they are never absolutely confident in unchecked judgment of their chief's own judgment, or of their colleagues' either.

With that I would conclude. These several imprecise suggestions of what Presidents might do in their own self-defense are neither very bold nor very new; assuredly, they are neither my own last testament nor anybody's. In that regard, one final word: if we, as citizens, cannot rescue our Presidents from their dilemmas but must leave them to help themselves as best they can, there is one thing that we, as students and observers, might do to render their self-help a little easier. We might take more care in the future than sometimes in the past, lest we foster stereotypes and expectations not within their capacities or even their own interests to fulfill.

In the two decades since the report of the President's Committee on Administrative Management, great numbers of experts, in universities and out, have been

hard at work seeking solutions for the managerial dilemmas of the federal government. And whether the focus be on budgeting, on organization, or on personnel—in order of prevailing fashion, then to now—the outcome tends to be the same: “The President, himself, must take command.”

Faster than perhaps we realize, the frame of reference underlying such investigations, such solutions, becomes popularized (and oversimplified), eventuating in those plain truths nobody learns but everybody knows: “The President, of course! As in business, so in government; the title is the same and so should be the function.” Perhaps it would not be amiss to remind the managerial enthusiasts of Woodrow Wilson’s wise prognosis half a century ago:¹⁹

“. . . as the business of government becomes more and more complex and extended . . . the President is becoming more and more a political and less an executive officer . . . incumbents will come more and more [*to be*] directors of affairs and leaders of the nation—men of counsel and of the sort of action that makes for enlightenment.”

For so it has turned out; these and not management are the great objects of their work and sources of their troubles at mid-century.

¹⁹ WOODROW WILSON, *op. cit. supra* note 2, at 66, 81.