In early May 1977, twenty-two persons who had served in President Truman's administration as members of his cabinet, members of the White House staff, or senior officials in Executive Office agencies gathered in Kansas City, at the invitation of the Harry S. Truman Library Institute for National and International Affairs, to discuss the operations of the presidential office from 1945 to 1953.

The Harry S. Truman Library Institute was formed to lend support to the Truman Library and to promote its interests. The Library itself is, of course, maintained and operated by the National Archives with federal funds. But these funds are not available for the promotion of research and the development of the Library as a major research center. It was President Truman's wish at all times that the library that bears his name and houses his papers should serve scholarly inquiry, and he encouraged the creation of the Institute as a means to channel private support to the advancement of the Library's use by scholars and students. Throughout his life he took an active part in the affairs of the Institute; routinely, he donated to the Institute whatever fees he received for lecturing and speaking engagements. Following his example, a number of his friends and associates have made generous gifts to the Institute, and over five thousand persons, from all walks of life and all parts of the country, contribute annually to the Institute through its Honorary Fellows Program.

Since the Library opened its doors for research in 1959, the Institute has given over 250 grants to scholars working in the Truman period. In addition, it undertook two special research projects of its own. Every other year the Institute recognizes an outstanding book on the Truman period by the award of the David D. Lloyd Book Prize. Its conferences, held on the average of every other year, have generally been designed to focus attention on the potential of the Truman period as a research field and of the Truman Library as the major resource center for such research.

During the course of the Institute's 1975 conference on the Korean
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War, Professor Richard W. Leopold suggested the need for an administrative history of the Truman presidency.¹ The suggestion was promptly seconded by others, and shortly thereafter the board of directors of the Institute agreed that the administrative operation of the White House during the Truman years should be the subject of the Institute's next conference. Plans for the conference were entrusted to a committee consisting of Charles S. Murphy and myself, both vice-presidents of the Institute, and Dr. Benedict K. Zobrist, secretary of the Institute and director of the Harry S. Truman Library.

Invitations to attend the conference were extended to forty persons. Regrettably, ill health compelled a number of them to decline. Several others, including Clark Clifford, George Elsey, John Steelman, and James Webb, were unable to clear their calendars of previous commitments or demands of supervening importance. But twenty-two former Truman associates spent two stimulating days together, reliving what they all agreed were among the most satisfying years of their lives.

To provide a frame of reference for the discussions, the organizing committee had provided each of the participants with a copy of Stephen Hess's book, Organizing the Presidency.² In addition, a list of fifteen questions was circulated in advance, with an invitation to the participants to prepare a statement in response to these questions. To his credit, the late Justice Tom Clark was the only one to take us at our word and to respond to each question with a one- or two-sentence statement. From other participants we received a widely varying array of responses, some reflections set down in an earlier day, some written in anticipation of the opportunity to review with colleagues the years of their White House experience.

A number of these statements about the Truman White House appear here in four groups, followed in each instance by a section captioned "Discussion." It should be understood, however, that these were not discussions of the preceding statements. The plan of the conference was to focus in each of the four sessions on one particular group ("The Cabinet," "The White House Staff: Early Period," "The White House Staff: Later Period," and "The Executive Office Agencies"). The statements in each section were written by the principal discussants for the respective session; the statements, however, had not been circulated in advance. Discussions usually centered on much the same topics as the papers, but there was no deliberate intent to relate one to the other.

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The discussions were lead by four distinguished students of the presidency and executive organization: Dean E. H. Hobbs of Auburn University, Professor Dorothy Buckton James of Virginia Polytechnic and State University, Professor Louis W. Koenig of New York University, and Professor C. A. Newland of the University of Southern California. The conduct of the discussions was left to each moderator's discretion. The organizing committee is deeply indebted to these four outstanding scholars for the skillful manner in which they discharged their tasks.

As program coordinator for the conference and editor of the resultant volume, I wish to record my gratitude to the staff of the Harry S. Truman Library and especially to John Curry who rendered yeoman assistance throughout. To the secretarial staff of the School of Law of the University of Kansas I owe thanks for the efficient typing of the manuscript. Charles S. Murphy deserves credit not only for his initiative in the organizing phases of the venture but for generous support throughout. Last but by no means least, my thanks to Ben Zobrist, a comrade-in-arms in many ways.

Francis H. Heller

June 1978
Lawrence, Kansas
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