I shall confine myself to two small episodes. The first has no great, general significance but may conceivably indicate something about how Truman operated during his first months in office; the other illustrates the distance between the president—and indeed the top White House staff—on the one hand and the working levels of the government on the other.

The first episode concerns the firing of one of the most courageous public officials I have known. William H. Davis was chairman of the War Labor Board during most of World War II and became the economic stabilization director a month before Truman became president. In September 1945, President Truman announced at a press conference that he was reorganizing the Office of War Mobilization and Reconversion and that as a part of that reorganization the Office of Economic Stabilization, then outside of OWMR, would be converted into the Economic Stabilization Administration within OWMR. As I recall the story, a reporter asked the president, “What happens to the chairman [sic] of the OES?” President Truman answered, “Well, he won’t have anything to do. John Snyder will take his job.” At that moment Davis was attending a meeting in the East Wing of the White House; a reporter dashed over there from the press conference to report this interchange and to get Davis’s reaction. He was stunned; he had not been told in advance. The first hint we in his office had of Truman’s action came when the office driver, who had driven Davis to the White House meeting in the office car, returned without him. Davis’s secretary asked, “Herbert, where’s Mr. Davis?” Herbert answered, “He said he wanted to walk. It kinda looked like he had something on his mind.”

President Truman apparently fired Davis because of an erroneous report of something Davis had said about wage policy a few days before, and he later apologized to Davis. But the president’s decision to fire Davis was impulsive, and his casual announcement to the press before
telling Davis himself was brutal. However, both the impulsiveness of the action and the subsequent apology appear to have been characteristic. Underlying the free rein Truman gave to his impulses is the question of whether there was some suspicion or even animus that affected his attitude toward officials with whom he had no prior close personal relations. As Davis's successor, it will be recalled, Mr. Truman appointed U.S. District Court Judge J. Caskie Collet, who had no experience in stabilization matters but whom the president knew from Kansas City.

My second observation relates to the origins of the Point Four Program. As someone who is interested in this bit of history because I had something to do with it (although I do not know how much), I can testify that there are a number of partial accounts. Of the five that I have read, all but two are so different that nobody could recognize that they are about the same program if it were not identified by name, substance, or the occasion of its announcement. According to the Truman memoirs, the idea of the Point Four Program came from Truman himself; he had had it in mind for several years. According to Dean Acheson, "Technical help for developing countries had for some time been a feature of the Good Neighbor policy in the western hemisphere. The idea of expounding it on a worldwide basis originated with Clark Clifford." According to Clifford, however, he, the president, and other members of the White House were looking for some fresh and provocative ideas for the president's inaugural address when Clifford remembered what he called "a State Department memorandum that had crossed my desk a few weeks or a few months earlier which advanced the idea of technical assistance to the less developed countries." Clifford's reference to a "State Department memorandum" certainly suggests that the program had been proposed officially by the department. The memorandum Clifford must have had in mind came from a State Department official and was probably on the department's letterhead. But the writer, Benjamin F. Hardy, Jr., had smuggled it into the White House (through George Elsey) because his proposal that a worldwide technical assistance program be made part of U.S. foreign policy had twice been rejected by the department when Hardy had made it through channels.

So far, then, we have four "originators" or sources of the idea: Truman himself; Clifford; the State Department, officially; and Hardy, personally.

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1 Present at the Creation, p. 265.
2 Quoted by Cabell Phillips, The Truman Presidency, p. 272, from his interview with Clifford.
The Executive Office Agencies

Hardy's idea was clearly confined to technical assistance, and this came to be the accepted view of the Point Four Program. The question of whether a program intended to promote economic development should include any substantial amount of capital appears, from the published accounts, to have received little attention from any of these sources. In the inaugural address, however, after saying that "we should make available to peaceloving peoples the benefits of our store of technical knowledge," the president went on to say, "and in co-operation with other nations we should foster capital investment in areas needing development." There is nothing explicit here to indicate that the plan was intended to be primarily a technical assistance program or even that it emphasized technical assistance over the export of capital, although the words implied, without saying so explicitly, that the capital export to be encouraged was private capital. Nevertheless, the financial aspect of the aid was generally ignored, so that the Point Four Program came to be regarded as one of technical assistance only.

In December 1948, in a conversation with David Lloyd at a small social gathering, I had said that I thought we ought to be giving aid to less developed countries on a continuing basis and that such aid should be elevated to a major role in our foreign policy. Besides promoting the development of those countries, which was desirable for a variety of reasons, I said that aid to these countries for capital development could be of substantial help to Western Europe. Lloyd appeared greatly interested, and we arranged to discuss it further at the office. (We were both housed in the Executive Office Building.) In elaborating the idea to him at our second discussion, I explained that we needed to think ahead about the situation of Western Europe in a few years. The countries there would probably not yet be in a position to finance needed imports when direct aid through the Marshall Plan ended, and we would not want to continue direct aid. However, the export of capital from the United States to less developed countries would permit them to finance increased imports. Western Europe would be in a position to compete in these expanded markets if, as appeared likely, its capacity to produce such goods had revived sufficiently by then. Obviously, this approach emphasized the capital aspect of aid.

Lloyd said that he was interested in this idea for possible use in "a major speech by a top official" and that it had the same general thrust and was consistent with, although not the same as, an idea that had come to the White House through another channel. He mentioned that this other memorandum concerned only technical assistance. I believe I expressed the opinion that such assistance would not have much impact if it was not accompanied by an increased flow of capital, and it would
certainly contribute nothing to Western Europe's "dollar problem," as it was then called. He asked me to get a memorandum to him by the end of that day. Later, he told me that he had presented the idea to Clark Clifford—in what form I do not know—and that some combination of these ideas was being favorably considered.

One reason I never knew—and still do not know—whether I also belong on the list of "originators" of the Point Four Program is that I never knew—and still do not know—what the White House had in mind as the role of capital in this program. Was there a difference of opinion about this question in the White House? Did it even come up as an explicit issue? Was government money excluded because it was desirable for political reasons to introduce a program that would have, among its virtues, only modest budgetary requirements? Did the White House intend to confine the program to technical assistance, or did it envisage, as I did, giving expansion of the flow of capital an equal role? In the process of putting the program into legislative form was that aspect squeezed out by the State Department which was entirely unprepared for the policy statement contained in the inaugural address?

There are several points that I find of general interest in this whole episode. First, it is not easy to find out how an idea becomes government policy. As I have already said, different accounts have attributed the idea to different sources. Historians, each relying on only one account, would get entirely different impressions. Yet not one of these accounts appears to be positively incorrect; they are all merely incomplete, reflecting what the particular source happened to know. For ideas that come to the top of the government's structure, the sources at the top are not reliable: Top-level officials rarely can know with whom an idea originated. On the origin of the Point Four Program, Truman's memoirs appear to me of dubious reliability.4

This is probably true of all presidential memoirs, even those that are not rationalizing or justifying policies and actions. It is not a question of faulty memory; a president is not likely ever to have known the origin

4On the specific issue of the role of capital in relation to technical assistance, the Memoirs abound in inconsistency. In Years of Trial and Hope (volume 2), Truman refers to the Marshall Plan, one of financial aid, as having "hinted a new concept" (p. 230). He then calls the Point Four Program one of technical assistance (p. 230); says by way of background, "I knew from my study of American history that this country was developed by the investment of foreign capital"; and refers to his hope that stabilized governments would encourage "the investment of capital from the United States" (p. 231). And then he says, "We had both the capital and the technical 'know-how'. I did not see how we could follow any other course but to put these two great assets to work in the underdeveloped areas" (p. 232, my emphasis).
The Executive Office Agencies

of an idea passed on to him by his immediate staff. To get a true view, the historian must consult many sources each of whom have seen events from a different vantage point.

My second general observation is that it is quite difficult for the White House, eager for fresh policy ideas, to get them from the bureaucratic machinery. There is nothing new about this, perhaps, but it should be noted that in the case of the technical assistance proposal the difficulty did not reflect any lack of creative ideas. According to the account in War on Hunger, the first State Department rejection of Hardy's idea was based on the objection that the department's budget had already been submitted. In short, an important policy initiative, which the White House apparently was eagerly seeking, was first blocked in official channels by a relatively trivial administrative consideration. The second time, the proposal got further in the department but was rejected on the grounds that it was not timely. The first rejection shows that something was wrong about the communication of policy ideas within the department; the second suggests that something was wrong with the communication of the administration's desires to the department or with the department's receptivity.

The third general observation—not covered by this illustration—is the problem of how the White House can ensure that a program is carried out according to the president's intentions rather than being altered by the department that develops and administers it.