

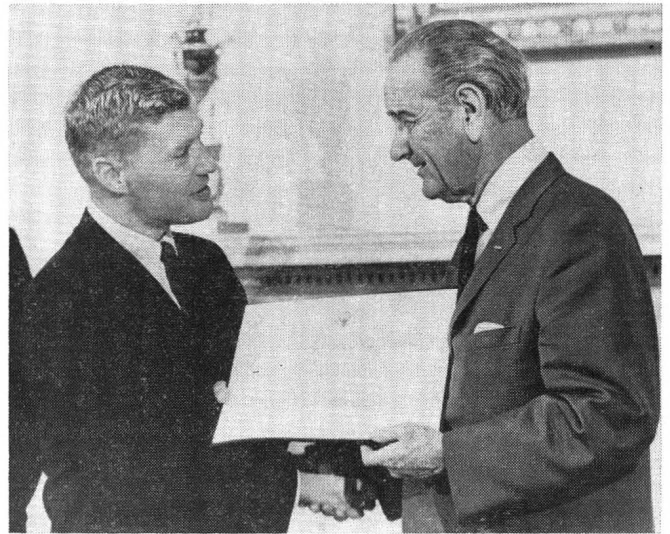
IN THE SHADOWS OF POWER

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Historians will long reflect on the eventful period through which this nation recently passed. It is doubtful that any period in the nation's history has produced, with such prolific regularity, events with the profundity and gravity of those occurring between August 1967 and November 1968. From the burning of Detroit to Richard Nixon's election to the Presidency, this country has experienced the tragedy of assassination, a confrontation with the Poor, the frustration of a Pueblo, brinkmanship in Cyprus and the Middle East, the commitment of troops to streets of our cities, the near collapse of the world's economy, a struggle with both friend and foe in Vietnam, the surprising exits of Lyndon Johnson and George Romney from the Presidential race, the hope of arms control, the brutal display of Soviet insecurity in their invasion of Czechoslovakia, and an unprecedented test of our democratic political processes.

DURING A MAJOR PORTION OF THIS historic period from September 1967 - August 1968, it was my privilege along with fifteen other young men and women to serve as White House Fellows in our nation's capitol. We were the third such group to spend a year in the shadows of power that radiate from the White House. The program was initiated by President Johnson in 1965 with the stated purpose of exposing young potential leaders to the decision-making process at the top level of the federal government. Each Fellow is assigned to a member of the President's Cabinet or to key Presidential advisors in the White House.

Superimposed on this assignment is an extensive educational program consisting of numerous meetings with the President and his major advisors, senators, congressmen, board, bureau and agency heads, governors, mayors, corporate, university and union presidents and officials, ambassadors, columnists, and civil rights leaders. These meetings were supplemented in the past year with two field trips to New York which provided an opportunity to meet with Mayor John Lindsay and his staff, residents of ghettos, some of the young militants of Bedford Stuyvesant, the edi-



tors of the New York Times, David Rockefeller and his associates in the Chase Manhattan Bank and the Urban Coalition, McGeorge Bundy and officials of the Ford Foundation, and Secretary General of the United Nations, U Thant, and several foreign UN ambassadors. Without exception, our discussions were frank and productive and provided each of us with an incomparable exposure to the problems and personalities of our nation and the world.

MY ASSIGNMENT WAS TO THE Secretary of Defense where I was fortunate to serve under two of the nation's most capable men, Robert McNamara and Clark Clifford. Robert McNamara's philosophy of involvement was quickly and clearly spelled out my first day at the Pentagon. Observers had no place in his office; understanding required immersion in the affairs of the department and it was to that end that he urged me to select specific projects and commit myself to a year of action not merely observation. I soon came to find that indeed the Pentagon under Robert McNamara (particularly his immediate staff offices) was a beehive of activity from early morning to well into the evening hours, interrupted only by an occasional half hour trip to the squash courts to maintain the physical and mental edge required to operate under the tremendous pressure that confronts defense officialdom.

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The McNamara record is far too long and the man much too complex to discuss here in depth, but I feel compelled to share several of my observations. Most acknowledge (including his adversaries on Capitol Hill) his brilliant mind, the computer-like precision with which it functions, and his almost infinite capacity for work. Few Americans fully appreciate his deep sensitivity to the social problems of the world and his long-standing personal commitment to their resolution. He consumed valuable "political capital", both with the military and the Congress, in his efforts to correct those social injustices which he felt were properly a concern of the Defense Department.

His move to the presidency of the World Bank might have been anticipated by one who studied his Montreal speech of May 18, 1966, "Security in the Contemporary World", in which he related world security to the economic development of the lesser developed countries in the world. My personal disappointment in his departure from Defense was tempered by the realization that his talents would become focused on this important problem.

Much speculation surrounded this move, but it appeared to me one that was clearly advantageous to both himself and the President. He had served longer than any of his predecessors in this most grueling position during a most turbulent period of our history. He appeared anxious for the shift in emphasis afforded by the bank presidency. The President, while retaining his highly regarded counsel on an informal basis, was clearly in a position to begin to ease the tensions that had developed between his highly principled Secretary of Defense and the House Armed Services Committee in recent years. These differences had contributed to the deterioration in relations between Congress and the White House which jeopardized the needed tax bill and other high priority legislative needs.

His appointment of Clark Clifford proved to be another example of the political genius of Lyndon Johnson. The new Secretary appealed to the hawks and doves alike, as well as the military and the Congress. Taking full advantage of the greater flexibility that a fresh appointee pos-

esses, Secretary Clifford proceeded to resolve skillfully the sharp differences in matters such as the nuclear frigates, authorized by Mendel Rivers', House Armed Services Committee, but never built by the Defense Department. He likewise aided substantially in achieving the spending cuts within the Defense Department necessitated by subsequent tax action in Congress.

Monday morning staff meetings under the latter were a sharp contrast to those under McNamara. Briefing by junior officers were replaced by a frank discussion of timely issues facing the Department. Interaction among senior civilian defense officials and the Joint Chiefs of Staff picked up noticeably as did the enthusiasm of all participating. Decisions were seldom made during these weekly sessions, but the exchange of ideas that took place was invaluable to me in better understanding the attitudes of key participants on important issues before the Department.

THE MAJORITY OF MY EFFORT IN THE Pentagon was devoted to two assignments. The first consumed seven months and involved participation in an all-encompassing study of our Vietnam commitment. My observations and conclusions based on this experience alone could easily comprise a volume. Without undertaking such a task here, let me simply say that our efforts in that corner of the globe were placed in much better perspective by this assignment. I found our motives, if not always our means, to be completely defensible in virtually every instance. Individual decisions by each of four administrations seemed quite reasonable when evaluated in the context of the period in which they were made. However, the decisions of today must not be prejudiced by those of the past; we cannot, regardless of the resources we commit, make the Vietnamese government a viable political entity by our actions alone. This is clearly their responsibility, and our commitments must be made with regard to their ability and willingness to carry out the reforms necessary to win the broad based support of the people. At the same time our pressing needs at home and elsewhere in the world cannot be ignored in such decisions. With these factors in mind, I welcomed the eventual decision by the President to suspend the bombing and hopefully move closer to a negotiated settlement of the bloody conflict that has wearied several generations of Vietnamese people and sharply divided two generations of Americans.

For the final five months of my tenure in the Department, I served as Executive Secretary of the Civil Disturbance Steering Committee, an advisory group established by Secretary Clifford to work with the military in planning and programming the use of military resources for civil disorder control. It provided an excellent exposure to the methodical manner in which the military responds to the chain of command emanating from the White House. Activities in this assignment ranged from formulating the agenda for Steering Committee meetings to attending daily briefing sessions with officials from the District of Columbia, the National Park Service, the Justice Department and the White House throughout the tense period during and following the Poor People's Campaign in the Capitol.

Both assignments provided an excellent opportunity to contribute to the decision-making process. Integration into each of these positions, while awkward at times, proceeded with remarkable ease considering my somewhat unique position in the Department. I was aided considerably by the involvement of my predecessors, a respectable civil service rating in the Department, and the recognition and respect automatically shown for one housed in the Secretary's suite of offices with a White House appointment.

In many ways the White House Fellows served as sort of shadow cabinet. Individually, we became well informed on many of the major issues confronting our respective departments. We communicated frequently with one another, in some cases, on a more regular basis than the senior Cabinet officials to whom we were assigned. We were unencumbered by administrative assistants and the bureaucratic channels, and thus were freer to interact than officialdom itself. The very nature of our role provided us with ready access to many issues, programs, and concerns that were percolating through the system. We had daily contact with people at all levels within each department so that we often saw sides of an issue that were blurred or deleted by the bureaucratic massaging to which most matters are subjected. The process frequently enhanced communications within the departments to which we were assigned, in that we crossed lines of authority and areas of responsibility that full-time employees were unable or were not expected to bridge. In this way, our contributions were frequently difficult to define, only occasionally recognized, and generally best left unclaimed.

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To be certain, we observed the often cited weaknesses of a gigantic bureaucracy groping to deal effectively with mounting problems at home and abroad. At the same time, we observed a remarkable array of talent, laboring with dedication and conviction, to meet the constantly emerging problems of the nation and the world. Without exception, we developed a peculiar sense of loyalty and respect for the man or men under whom we worked. We came to know government as a collection of humans and not an assemblage of buildings and institutions located on the shores of the Potomac. We found it subject to frailties and prejudices of humans just as the corporations, institutions and firms from which we had come. Names became people and pedestals became desks, across which most of us sat at one time or another. The decision makers suddenly appeared as men upon whom unbelievable pressures were constantly imposed and who recognized the limitations and uncertainty which surrounded each decision that flowed from their office. It is indeed difficult for us to take for granted any longer the processes by which the government interacts with its people, with its institutions, or with other nations.

I'm sure that my experiences were shared by my colleagues in their respective departments. To some we were looked upon as intruders or opportunists, somewhat idealistic in our approach to the problems of government. To others we represented a breath of fresh air and hope for the future. To John Gardner we clearly were the manifestation of an idea which he had conceived before joining the President's Cabinet. To the President, we represented a link to the generation with which he has had the most difficulty in communicating. The program was clearly a gamble for him, but one that he took with a great deal of enthusiasm and hope. The 68 of us, who have been fortunate enough to experience the enlightenment of involvement and commitment to the future, believe we have fulfilled his confidence and expectations. As he told Mrs. Johnson, . . . "when Lyn and Lucinda first vote, I hope they will be voting for a member of this Association." To those of us who served in the shadow of the President of the United States, that is the ultimate in compliments.