

« The author, who served as counsel for the Rockefeller Committee before becoming General Counsel for the Defense Department, explains the organizational philosophy of all the recent

# *Changes Inside the Pentagon*

*By H. Struve Hensel*

There have been radical changes inside the Pentagon following the report of the Rockefeller Committee, appointed in March 1953 by Secretary of Defense Wilson to study the organization of the Department of Defense, and consisting of Nelson A. Rockefeller (Chairman), General Omar N. Bradley, Arthur S. Flemming, Vannevar Bush, Robert A. Lovett, Milton S. Eisenhower, and David Sarnoff.

The Secretary of Defense under the President is now firmly established as the top boss in fact as well as in theory. The Secretary of Defense, assisted by a carefully selected staff, is for the first time in a position to do an intelligent job of supervising, coordinating, and controlling the entire Department. Operations have been decentralized and delegated downward to the three military departments. Lines of command are being made clearer and simpler. The three military departments and their Secretaries have been raised in prestige, and at last the Secretaries have adequate power to operate and direct their departments. Modern business practices, as distinguished from governmental formalism and bureaucracy, are in the ascendancy.

## **Decentralized Operations**

American business has been most successful in decentralizing operations. Business leaders have known for some time that there is no inconsistency between a concentration of authority and a decentralization of operations. As a matter of fact, intelligent decentralization of operations is possible only under a top authority with sufficient power to delegate downward. Decen-

tralization must come from the top. It can never be passed upward. To the new Department of Defense leaders, these business principles seemed sufficiently tested to merit a trial in the largest executive department in the government — the largest employer of personnel and the largest buying organization in the world.

## **Degree of Complexity**

The Department of Defense, however, differs from business in size, objectives, and controls. It is just as large and complex as it has been pictured. Geographically, its operations sprawl over the world. Politically and economically, it affects, and in turn is affected by, almost every phase of our national day-to-day life. The sums of money spent, the items of materiel purchased, and the numbers of activities supervised are astronomical.

There exists continuously a struggle between new ideas and the dead hands of tradition and habit. Furthermore, the officials must do their work without the customary efficiency controls of a balance sheet and an annual profit and loss statement. The objectives are security for the nation and effective military strength for application when, as, and if needed — rather than economy for its own sake.

The operations of the Department of Defense are as difficult to comprehend as they are to control. The businessman who seeks to understand will therefore need some guidelines. Primarily, it is important to identify the basic concepts or foundation stones without which no effective Department of Defense can be built, and then to see the choices that must be made once these fundamentals have been identified.

The purpose of this article is to explain the

choices made by the Rockefeller Committee in line with the basic principles that it envisaged, and then to take the reader "inside" the Pentagon from 1947 to date. The faults of the first so-called "Unification" of 1947 will be traced through the appeals for more law by the late Secretary Forrestal in 1949 and the effects of the unwillingness of Congress to go all the way with him. Then the 1953 recommendations of the Rockefeller Committee will be briefly laid alongside both the basic concepts and the failures of 1947 and 1949.

## Basic Philosophy

Approaching the problem in this manner requires the appreciation of some starting points. First, there is no organizational structure so bad that men of outstanding genius and loyalty can not make it work with some degree of efficiency. But such a truism should not lead to acceptance of sloppy and ineffective organization. Secondly, sound organization aids men of genius to perform miracles and average men to achieve success. This corollary proposition is even more true. Finding the key to a sound organization is worth all the effort it costs.

The need for a basic organizational philosophy should be obvious. There is a tendency to rush into the middle of a governmental organizational problem and to focus attention on the minor matters which are most noticeable. Too often the squeaking wheels are greased without anyone noticing that in fact the whole chassis is out of line.

The fundamental principles, which must be identified and appreciated before any start can be made on the organization chart, are:

(1) Civilian control may be of two kinds — active or passive — and each kind requires an entirely different type of organizational structure.

(2) Military decisions cannot be separated from civilian decisions.

## Civilian Control

Like "virtue," everyone is in favor of "civilian control." It is traditional, democratic, and basic. Indeed, the principle is so firmly imbedded in our governmental philosophy that any given military organization must be described as subject to civilian control even if the opposite is the case. Yet what does civilian control mean? The

truth is: every man has his own idea as to the proper meaning and hence a different theory about the proper structure for the Department of Defense. For our purposes the many shades of meaning can be grouped under the two headings: (a) the passive concept and (b) the active concept.

So the fundamental question is: Which kind of civilian control do we want? Once that decision is made, the organization chart becomes relatively simple.

### Passive Concept

Under the passive concept, while civilians do hold the highest positions and "influence," the military really control. A few civilians at the top have the *power* to decide; they outrank all military officers and can, if they so desire, take command. But it is deemed irrelevant whether they *actually do decide* as long as the civilian signature is the final word. Since these civilians are more interested to know what has been decided than to have the data needed to make decisions, the fact that all the information they receive comes through a single military channel makes no difference.

Such a system cannot work without a military chief to sit in the center of the web — immediately below the civilians but above all the others. Through this single military commander all information passes up and all orders pass down. The military chief must and does "run" the department. The civilian Secretaries are thus more like a board of directors than top executives.

The late Secretary Patterson believed in, or at least accepted and argued for, the passive concept. Similarly, former Assistant Secretary of War J. J. McCloy, testifying on November 23, 1945, before the Senate Committee on Military Affairs, indicated acceptance of a passive role for the top civilians (although he did show an awareness of the need for "checking the accuracy and the soundness of the judgments based upon" a single source of information):

" . . . The fact that there is a Chief of Staff with full authority in the military sphere gives the Secretary great advantages in his exercise of control. It gives him —

"(a) A single responsible source of information. . . .

"(b) . . . An executive with authority adequate to carry out decisions."

Depending on the force and industry of the top civilians involved, the passive concept produces concentration by the Secretaries on the character and ability of their military executives. Once the Secretaries are satisfied in that respect, they tend to work on the special problems referred to them by their military executives rather than on the over-all day-to-day administrative job. This does not mean that Secretaries operating under the passive theory sign every piece of paper put before them — but the odds are definitely slanted toward their doing so unless the inherent defect is so obvious that it appears on the face of the paper.

The passive concept of civilian control is a workable approach. During World War II the War Department operated substantially in accordance with the passive theory, and no one denies that it operated well. This explains why all the World War II department Secretaries testified in favor of the original Collins plan, which was centered on a single military commander with full authority over all service activities. The civilians, a Secretary and Under-Secretary of National Defense, a few Assistant Secretaries of National Defense for functional purposes, were to be clustered at the top, entirely dependent on the over-all military commander for information and the execution of orders. There were to be no civilian Secretaries in the military departments. Each service was to have a military chief answerable to the top military executive. It was a perfect blueprint of the passive concept.

#### Active Concept

On the other hand, the active concept is that, if they really wish to control, civilians must participate actively in the daily business of the department. They must have not only the power to decide but also the ability to decide *independently and intelligently* — that is, on the basis of thoroughly informed judgment. There is no place under this concept for a single military commander with power to "run" the department. The civilian Secretary does the "running," and any military head is only *one* of several top advisers and consultants.

The late Secretary Forrestal, Patterson's opposite number in the Navy Department, believed in the active concept. Forrestal's organization of the Navy Department in World War II was completely different from that of the War Department. In fact, it was closely akin

to the subsequent proposals of the Rockefeller Committee.

Forrestal "ran" the Navy Department. He was not satisfied with a single source of information — military or civilian. He did not want to be forced to approve any action or make any decision in cases where he did not feel he had full knowledge of the advantages and disadvantages. Forrestal was particularly upset by memoranda which presented only one side. Memoranda which by their inherent bias or by strings of initials indicated that they had been considered by only one group were referred by him to some other staff group for analysis.

Even military estimates of the materiel support of the forces in the field were subjected to civilian scrutiny. To exercise his control over these military estimates of requirements, Forrestal established a Requirements Review Committee of which the chairman was the civilian Assistant Secretary and the other two members were the Vice Chief of Naval Operations and the Chief of Naval Materiel. This committee, assisted by a staff of some 60 reserve officers and civilians, reviewed in great detail the Navy logistical program. They questioned not only purely business matters but also predominantly operational matters, such as requisitions from combat area commanders, training programs, advance-base warehouse capacities, ammunition expenditure rates, and the like.

In short, civilian control meant something active and forceful to Forrestal. He could not have worked under the passive concept. He would have agreed with Gordon Gray, former Secretary of the Army (in the postwar period), who said in a memorandum complaining about the passive civilian control in his department:

"If a Secretary delegates his command authority to his Chief of Staff and relies upon the fact that the Chief of Staff is thus 'responsible' to him, such a Secretary has thereby failed to fulfill his duty to exercise control. . . . It was not intended that this supervision take the form of merely last minute pro forma policy decision already made by subordinate echelons within the department."

Secretary Gray foreshadowed later developments also when he pointed out in the same memorandum:

"In Secretary Root's day the necessary civilian supervision over the small department . . . could doubtless be adequately performed by the Secretary himself (aided by the single Assistant Secre-

tary then available to him). Today it is obvious that the Secretary cannot physically do this. He must be aided by a group of civilian assistants. . . . Uninformed direction is certainly not adequate direction."

Secretary Gray was obviously not satisfied with anything short of active participation in departmental management. Whereas Patterson and McCloy had to have someone else to supervise and direct on a daily basis — the top authority of course being the military Chief of Staff — this was to Secretary Gray a failure "to fulfill his duty to exercise control."

### Rockefeller Committee Choice

It is readily apparent why a choice must be made between these two concepts of civilian control. They are miles apart in philosophy, principle, and implementation. They demand quite different types of personnel in the key positions. Imagine trying to adjust a Forrestal to a War Department civilian position; it would have ended in his complete frustration and uselessness as a Secretary. And just as civilian control cannot be part active and part passive, organizations must follow one pattern or the other.

The Rockefeller Committee frankly recognized the need for choosing between these two alternatives. It adopted the active concept, and its recommendations were built firmly and consciously on that foundation. But the choice was not an easy one; it was made only after careful consideration of both sides.

*Counterarguments.* There remained then, in early 1953, just as there still remains, a forceful body of thought in favor of the passive concept. It is a workable approach — or at least it has worked in the past. It offers an antidote for the weak civilian Secretary. It also offers some cure for the lack of continuity in office of the civilians (for instance, five Secretaries of Defense in seven years). It has considerable appeal to many in the career military service.

These arguments in favor of passive civilian control were presented to the Rockefeller Committee by a number of witnesses; ex-Secretary McCloy reaffirmed his stand; and the case against the concept of active civilian control was summarized in a military study presented to the Committee, as follows:

"The direct command of military forces in the field would devolve upon an appointive civilian

official, who, having neither the personal wealth of military experience nor the continuity in office of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, would be tragically handicapped in the discharge of this awesome and personalized responsibility for decision."

Note that the important activity of the top executive is described as "direct command of military forces in the field," and that the basic ingredients of decision are catalogued as "personal wealth of military experience" and "continuity in office."

The fact remains, however, that there is much more to war than the military command of forces in the field. Indeed, a major disadvantage of the passive concept of civilian control lies in its probable unsuitability for any future war. Strategic over-all decisions, the development of new weapons, industrial mobilization, relations with allies, arousing the moral support of the allied peoples, support of civilian populations, extension of supply lines, and materiel distribution — to name a few important problem areas — involve a spectrum of knowledge and experience not usually available in any single profession, particularly not in the military profession.

It may be an oversimplification to state that victory in World War II was due to big factories rather than the big forces in the field or the strategic manipulation of those forces. But there is enough truth in the statement to demonstrate that modern warfare requires a weighing of factors and a bundle of skills not solely, and perhaps not normally, within the experience and knowledge of the professional military man (or any other kind of professional expert). Top-level decisions in war must be based also on the experience and knowledge of the scientist, the engineer, the production expert, the transportation expert, the psychologist, the fiscal expert, even the lawyer.

*Need for Generalists.* Not only is there much more to war than any single specialist skill; it is also clear that all the necessary specialized knowledge and experience must be blended into a single decision by "generalists" rather than by "specialists." And the expressions of specialist opinion must flow to the generalists unimpeded by any military or other specialist filters.

The favorite justification for having a specialist as top executive is the assumption that, unless he has a "personal wealth of military experience" and "continuity in office," a person will not be capable of interpreting wartime situations or of

making the proper decisions. Yet commercial and industrial experience has indicated that it is far more satisfactory for the top executive to be a generalist.

There is no contrary experience in the military departments, in war or in peace. The passive concept worked in World War II because the top military leader in the War Department — General of the Army Marshall — happened to be an outstanding general executive. It is not safe, however, to *count on* general administrators coming to the military top. It did not happen in the Navy Department, although the wartime Chief of Naval Operations, Fleet Admiral King, was one of the greatest global strategists of all time.

Men with a "personal wealth of military experience" are in the main specialists. While there are exceptions, specialists do not normally develop into generalists. This comment is not pointed solely at military men. Accountants and lawyers are also specialists who as a rule make poor top executives, the exceptions being so few that they prove the rule. Furthermore, military men are seldom developed for over-all executive direction; rather, promotion to top military rank often depends on proficiency in a well-defined special field.

There is such a professional as an "executive generalist." This type of man is far more effective in the top executive position than is the specialist because he not only develops more objective qualities of mind but also has more skill in weighing diverse factors and coming to a conclusion on the basis of the several specialist points of view. The generalist can and should be appointed to the top executive position. He will usually be found in civilian life.

The advantages of continuity in office are of course obvious. Lack of continuity has plagued all top governmental administration; it is not confined to civilians. Military men are, unfortunately, too often subject to a definite program of rotation which is totally inconsistent with continuity. In neither case, however, can continuity be produced by an organizational chart. It depends on the individuals and their inducements to stay in office.

As for the danger of weak civilian Secretaries, the Committee felt that the President could and should avoid that. So, while fully aware of the counterarguments, it felt they were strongly outweighed by the advantages of the active concept.

## Military Decisions

In addition to favoring the active concept of civilian control, the Rockefeller Committee came to one more fundamental conclusion. It rejected the theory that military matters and civilian matters can be kept separate and distinct and handled in dual lines of command which meet only at the very top. The Committee felt that departmental decisions had to be made as a unit — military, civilian, and all other specialized considerations being blended into a single departmental program or decision.

In the days of hand-to-hand combat, and perhaps for a few generations thereafter, there may have been decisions purely military in character. But that restricted approach to war became unrealistic many years ago. The only thing that has kept this fact from showing up is that military education and training expanded to cover many pursuits which previously had been considered civilian — for example, transportation, engineering, science, production management, purchase and distribution of supplies, warehousing, construction, and the like. But war expanded even faster.

Today, with the revolutionary advances of science and with the spread of war to whole populations, the characterization of any decision as purely military, except possibly a decision made immediately before or during actual combat, is simply shadow boxing. Practically all so-called military decisions, particularly those reached at departmental levels, involve some application of skill and knowledge found just as often in the civilian as in the military man. Atomic and thermonuclear weapons are examples of scientific contribution to actual combat operations.

Furthermore, war is only a means to a political end, and to permit decisions in war to be made solely by military men often wins the war by destroying the political objective — what is generally called "losing the peace," though actually it is produced by the way in which the war is fought. All wars are regrettable, but wars which destroy their original objectives are doubly undesirable.

There is an equally significant corollary to the proposition that no decisions are "purely military in character." No decisions are "purely civilian in character," either, except possibly the purchase of passenger automobiles and office equipment for headquarters within the conti-

mental United States. Even those exceptions are questionable.

The recognition of these two propositions points logically to two conclusions: (1) no organizational structure can be erected on the assumption that military matters can be handled under one arrangement and one line of command, and civilian matters or departmental affairs under a different arrangement and a different line of command; and (2) that the final decisions which must receive major consideration at the military departmental level, particularly including those in the broad strategic field, can be made only after an integration of military and civilian knowledge and experience.

### Tracing the Reorganization

Now, with this background, let us take a look at the way the various reorganization moves of the past seven years have led up to the implementation of the Rockefeller Committee's recommendations.

#### National Security Act — 1947

In a pioneering experiment, the National Security Act of 1947 split the War Department into two separate departments — Army and Air Force. The Army and the Air Force continued to follow the passive concept of civilian control as developed in the War Department. The Navy continued under the Forrestal philosophy of active control. The resulting three departments (Army, Navy, and Air Force) were loosely combined into the National Military Establishment to be headed by a Secretary of Defense. This top Secretary was furnished with three special civilian assistants (not Assistant Secretaries of Defense), and also with three statutory staff organizations:

- (1) The *Munitions Board* was to operate according to rigid statutory direction in the fields of procurement, production, and supply.
- (2) The *Research and Development Board*, under a similarly rigid charter, was to operate in the area described by its name.
- (3) The *Joint Chiefs of Staff* were to be the military planning board for both the President and the Secretary of Defense, and in addition were to be given a rather vaguely defined responsibility with respect to "unified commands in strategic areas."

The three military departments were given separate administrative command structures un-

der their own civilian Secretaries, who had the right of appeal directly to the President and to the Bureau of the Budget. These military Secretaries were also assigned all powers and duties not specifically conferred on the Secretary of Defense. And the Secretary of Defense had no power to appoint civilian personnel in any of the military departments.

The germs of ineffectiveness and confusion were inherent in the 1947 organizational structure. Civilian control of the military establishment on an over-all basis was hopelessly diluted. Debating the power of the Secretary of Defense became a major pastime in the Pentagon. He had "general control," but the military departments were to be "separately administered" and were to possess all powers not specifically conferred on the Secretary of Defense. The active concept under such circumstances could not be followed; the Secretary was left without adequate informational sources to make intelligent decisions. The passive concept was just as impossible; there was no top military commander, and the individual military departments were part free and part subordinate — no one was clear just how.

Two parallel lines of command appeared. Consistent with the principles of geometry, those lines never met. Decisions stayed just as far apart. In the planning field, the Joint Chiefs of Staff were unable to free themselves from the points of view of their particular service and were split three ways, incapable of movement or stability. The statutory boards — Munitions, and Research and Development — were not, as a practical matter, able to formulate substantive policies, so they turned to issuing "procedures." As such procedures grew more and more definite, they became detailed prescriptions of operating methods. Operations and operating personnel began to appear in the Office of the Secretary of Defense.

#### Key West Agreement — 1948

As stalemate and confusion increased, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, who had been delegated certain command functions during the war, now undoubtedly influenced by that background, sought to fill the vacuum created by the limitations on the authority of their directing head and began to neglect their fundamental objective of broad strategic planning.

In assuming more and more command, the

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Joint Chiefs of Staff were aided by the Key West Agreement of April 21, 1948. This so-called agreement was really an order by the Secretary of Defense — approved by the President — which, in addition to defining the roles and missions of the three military services, permitted the Joint Chiefs of Staff to appoint one of their members as the effective commander of a designated unified command in a strategic area (anywhere outside the United States). An entirely separate and distinct line of military command thus appeared which was operated to short-circuit civilian control. The marvel is not that the structure failed, but rather that it was able to continue at all.

## Forrestal Proposals — 1949

We are deeply indebted to Forrestal for his decision to seek statutory relief in 1949. If he had not sought to escape from his predicament, the system with a single military chief over all services might be with us today; that was the only alternative. Weakness in civilian control had already led to a single military commander in the War Department; here was proof enough that the most certain way to introduce the single military commander is simply to have civilian control fail.

Although Forrestal did not phrase his 1949 legislative proposals in terms of a particular theory of civilian control, they were obviously based on the active concept. This can be demonstrated by a very summary listing of his proposed amendments to the National Security Act. Forrestal asked Congress for:

1. Clarification, in unmistakable and ringing phrases, of the supreme authority of the Secretary of Defense.
2. Augmentation of his staff by a Deputy Secretary and three Assistant Secretaries.
3. Transfer to him of the power of appointment of the Chairmen of the two statutory boards, the Director of the Joint Staff, and all other civilian personnel down into the military departments.
4. Transfer to his office of the specific statutory functions of the Munitions Board, the Research and Development Board, and the Joint Chiefs.
5. Provision for the Secretary of Defense to have effective managerial control over budget and fiscal affairs.

Those changes can be fitted only into an active control philosophy. The fact that, in order to make the Joint Chiefs of Staff a more effective

body, he proposed the appointment of a Chairman as the authoritative head of the Joint Chiefs does not conflict with this conclusion. Forrestal — like the Rockefeller Committee in 1953 — had discovered that a managerial head was necessary to make the Joint Chiefs of Staff function as a planning body.

In one major respect, Forrestal did not follow his theory to its logical conclusion. He did not seem to sense fully the tendency of the Joint Chiefs of Staff to assume command functions at the expense of their planning duties. He did not suggest modification of the Key West Agreement to take all command functions from the Joint Chiefs. That remained for the Rockefeller Committee and 1953.

It is not necessary to trace the legislative history of the Forrestal proposals in the Senate and the House of Representatives. It is enough for our purpose to state that the ultimate amendments were again a compromise in which no principle was followed to its conclusion.

There was considerable acceptance of the active concept of civilian control. The authority of the Secretary of Defense was clarified and strengthened by certain statutory word changes. In addition, the Secretary was made the principal assistant to the President in all matters relating to the Department of Defense. His staff was augmented by a Deputy Secretary and three Assistant Secretaries. The Secretaries of the military departments were deprived of their privilege of presenting recommendations to the President and the Budget over the head of the Secretary of Defense, though they were given the right to present such recommendations to Congress.

The Secretary was refused the right to appoint civilian personnel outside his immediate office. The authority and responsibilities of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Munitions Board, and the Research and Development Board were not vested in him. A nonvoting Chairman for the Joint Chiefs of Staff in much weaker form than recommended was authorized. The distinction between the Joint Chiefs of Staff as a free-wheeling command body and as an advisory and planning body was never squarely faced.

## The Period 1949-1951

Despite the clarifying 1949 amendments, the focal points of executive ineffectiveness continued to be much the same as previously discerned by Secretary Forrestal. Except during the brief tenure of Secretary Johnson, who as-

sumed command and made it stick, the authority of the Secretary of Defense continued to be obstructed by endless challenge and argument, particularly from the military departments. The Joint Chiefs of Staff, even with the addition of a nonvoting Chairman, remained primarily a corporate command body asserting authority superior in many fields to that of the Secretaries of the military departments; and secondarily a debating society for the airing of service views (instead of a vigorous strategic planning body) and a sort of staff organization for the Secretary of Defense which was overloaded with minor problems (for instance, expressing a "military opinion" as to how many coffee roasting plants should be operated by the Army).

One of the Joint Chiefs, in testifying before the Rockefeller Committee, flatly rejected the idea that the Joint Chiefs of Staff were planners; he insisted that they were commanders who relegated planning to a lower echelon. As the Joint Chiefs of Staff continued to concentrate on command functions, the authority of the Secretary of Defense and also of the military Secretaries weakened. The Joint Chiefs went on to consolidate a line of military command circumventing all civilians below the level of the Secretary of Defense. Clearance with even the Secretary of Defense was casual and largely after-the-fact.

The 1949 cure as modified by the practice under the Key West Agreement threatened to be almost as bad as the 1947 disease.

*Lovett Proposals.* As had Secretary Forrester, Secretary of Defense Lovett recommended legislation just as his tenure ended. He felt that he had accomplished as much as possible administratively in building up the authority of the chairmen of the statutory boards, and that the Secretary of Defense could not continue unless his authority was clearly established as supreme throughout the entire Department. He recommended a more specific legislative declaration to that effect and thus indicated that he too had come to believe in the active concept of civilian control.

Secretary Lovett was so disappointed with the neglect of strategic planning that he proposed a rather drastic reform for the Joint Chiefs of Staff. He suggested a separate military staff for the Secretary of Defense. Under such an arrangement, he felt, the Joint Chiefs would return to their primary statutory duty, i.e., strategic planning. He did not, however, suggest removing

the Joint Chiefs of Staff from the command functions they had assumed.

### Rockefeller Committee — 1953

The report of the Rockefeller Committee presented a consistent and logical plan of reorganization. Consistent with the adoption of the active concept of civilian control, it recommended a simple line of command running directly from the Secretary of Defense to the Secretaries of the three military departments, and restriction of the Joint Chiefs of Staff to the field of planning and advice. These fundamental principles were supplemented by recommendations as to methods and practices, most of which are outside the scope of an article on organizational principles.

The President's approval of the Rockefeller Committee Report took the form of a Message to Congress and the presentation of Reorganization Plan No. 6. The Committee Report, the Message of the President, and Reorganization Plan No. 6 must be read together to appreciate fully the approved changes. Reorganization Plan No. 6 was the most abbreviated of these documents since it was limited to the few matters which could not be accomplished without legislation. The President's Message was intended to approve the Committee Report in substance, and the fact that the President did not specifically mention each Committee recommendation has no significance.

Some important steps were taken during the course of the Committee investigation. For instance, it was soon clear that no legislative amendments were needed to strengthen the statutory provisions for the authority of the Secretary of Defense. Everything necessary had been done in 1949. It remained only to sweep away the annoying challenges of that authority made from time to time by what Secretary Lovett characterized as "legal beavers." This was accomplished by a firm and unmistakably clear opinion of the Counsel for the Rockefeller Committee and General Counsel for the Department of Defense.<sup>1</sup> This opinion was approved by the President and the Secretary of Defense and was accepted by the military Secretaries. It was followed by unmistakably clear action by the Secretary of Defense. That opinion is now the basic law of the Pentagon.

<sup>1</sup> The author, now General Counsel for the Department of Defense, was at that time General Counsel for the Rockefeller Committee. — *The Editors.*

To enable the Secretary of Defense effectively and intelligently to supervise, coordinate, and control the entire Department, the statutory Boards with their complicated organizations and numerous employees were abolished. Their functions were vested in the Secretary of Defense where, as staff functions, they should always have been vested. This required legislative action and is, therefore, dealt with in Reorganization Plan No. 6.

### Elimination of Boards

Thus, instead of boards with rigidly defined responsibilities, a staff of six additional Secretaries and a General Counsel was given to the Secretary of Defense, making a total staff of ten men of the Assistant-Secretary rank. Contrary to what has been frequently said, the substitution of ten men of Assistant-Secretary rank for three Assistant Secretaries and two statutory Boards is not a "swelling" of the staff of the Secretary of Defense. Ten is, of course, a larger number than five, but a statutory Board is not comparable on a unit basis with an individual Secretary. Considering the Munitions Board as a unit is reminiscent of the little boy's restrained request for only *one* Christmas present — a toy store.

The replacement of the Munitions Board by an Assistant Secretary for Supply and Logistics has already resulted in the reduction of staff personnel in that area (exclusive of the cataloging activities) from 449 as of January 1953 to 232 as of October 1953 — with a further reduction to 145 probably effective by the time this article is read. Furthermore, the withdrawal of the Secretary's staff from operations will permit the new Assistant Secretaries, with much smaller staffs below them, to supply the Secretary of Defense with more adequate information on which to base his decisions than was ever supplied under the former, more complicated statutory Board structure.

### Lines of Authority

The Secretaries of the military departments have not been submerged. They are not subject to orders from the Assistant Secretaries of Defense. They do not have to go through the Assistant Secretaries to reach the Secretary of Defense. The channels of communication are just as simple and direct as the lines of authority:

(1) The line of command runs directly from the Secretary of Defense through the Deputy Secretary to the individual Secretaries of the military

departments. The Assistant Secretaries of Defense have no command functions. The Secretaries of the military departments have direct and ready access to the Secretary of Defense.

(2) Most important, the management committee of the Department of Defense consists of the Secretary of Defense, the Deputy Secretary of Defense, and the three Secretaries of the military departments. These Secretaries, known as the Joint Secretaries, meet frequently. Here is the focal point of management decision for the Department. The Assistant Secretaries of Defense do not even attend such meetings except by invitation. The intimacy between the Secretary of Defense and the Secretaries of the military departments has been intensified.

(3) Questions of broad policy are considered by the Secretary of Defense with the Armed Forces Policy Council created under Section 210 of the National Security Act, which Council consists of the Joint Secretaries and the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Again, the Assistant Secretaries of Defense are not members of the Armed Forces Policy Council and attend its meetings only by invitation.

The additional Assistant Secretaries have simplified an extraordinarily complex chart of organization, have brought about a reduction in aggregate staff personnel, and have facilitated the delegation of operating authority to the Secretaries of the military departments. The Assistant Secretaries of Defense are not operators or commanders. Strange as it may seem, they are just exactly what they were intended to be — top-level staff assistants to the Secretary of Defense.

The delegation of operational authority to the Secretaries of the military departments is inherent in the National Security Act and is emphasized in the Rockefeller Committee report. Under the current organizational structure and the precepts of the present Administration, it would take an internal revolution and earthquake combined to turn the tide again toward centralization.

The thought that a single channel of command is cumbersome is absurd.<sup>2</sup> It stems from the erroneous assumption that every channel of communication must follow meticulously the lines of seniority in command. That is neither necessary nor desirable. The power of decision has been, and will continue to be, delegated to the operating people most fitted to decide. There is no requirement, and there will be no require-

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Eugene S. Duffield, "Organizing for Defense," *HARVARD BUSINESS REVIEW*, September-October 1953, p. 29.

ment, that papers demanding action must pass through a multitude of hands, none of which has the power or the desire to act.

### Joint Chiefs of Staff

Before discussing in any detail the increased power of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, it is important to note that Congress, starting in 1947, intended the Joint Chiefs of Staff to be planners and not commanders. The Rockefeller Committee in turn stated that "the Joint Chiefs of Staff were established as a planning and advisory group, not to exercise command"; and accordingly recommended that the Key West Agreement "be revised to remove the command function from the Joint Chiefs of Staff, in order to enable them to work more effectively as a unified planning agency."

That revision has been effected. It has generally escaped public notice because it required no statutory change. It is the final coup de grace to the fear about a single military commander. The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs is thereby limited to planning along with the other Joint Chiefs. If the Joint Chiefs do not command, then no one by controlling them can seize command. He who seizes planning seizes a headache.

Thus, the expansion of the authority of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff is limited to planning and is directed solely to expediting and making more efficient and thorough the planning activities of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the subordinate planning group, the Joint Staff. The Chairman was not given any vote in the deliberations of the Joint Chiefs. He is not able — even if he has the inclination — to control either the decisions or the deliberations of the Joint Chiefs. Although under the statute the Chairman is responsible for providing an agenda for the meetings of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, it requires a completely undisciplined imagination to conjure up the spectre of a voteless Chairman deciding, contrary to the votes of the other Joint Chiefs, what is to be placed on the agenda and what is not to be placed on the agenda.

Under Reorganization Plan No. 6, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff was given only two powers which he did not previously possess — (a) the right to cause the removal of members of the Joint Staff, and (b) the power to "manage" the Joint Staff and the Director of the Joint Staff.

*Power of Removal.* The Joint Staff consists of 210 officers — 70 from each service — to do the necessary factual investigations and analyses upon which the Joint Chiefs will base their judgments. Members of the Joint Staff since 1949 have been appointed by the unanimous concurrence of all four members of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, including the Chairman. That condition remains absolutely unchanged.

On the other hand, since previously all four Joint Chiefs had to agree on removal — a most cumbersome process — the power now delegated to the Chairman to remove a member of the Joint Staff for failure to do his work or because of narrowness of vision does represent an innovation. Nevertheless, the fear that the Chairman may mold the Joint Staff to his own way of thinking simply by the power of removal assumes that he will be permitted by the President and the Secretary of Defense to remove all members of the Joint Staff except his adherents and then somehow prevent the appointment of any successors except those of his particular choosing. Such fantastic procedure is perhaps possible, but it hardly is either realistic or likely. It would require not only a supine President and a somnolent Secretary of Defense but also much more tractable military chiefs than this nation has ever seen.

*Management of Joint Staff.* The provision for management of the Joint Staff by the Chairman was inserted solely to make certain that the Joint Staff completed intelligently and thoroughly the studies and analyses assigned to it. This provision has no other significance and cannot be twisted into any other meaning. Someone must see to it that the Joint Staff does its "homework" on schedule and well; the word "manage" was selected as the most descriptive single word to express the intended meaning. If there is any vagueness in the word, the true intent is made completely definite by the Committee report, by the questions and answers in Congress, and by the established practices.

Whether the assignment to the Chairman of these day-to-day administrative duties with respect to the Joint Staff represents a trend toward an all-powerful single military commander is a matter of opinion or, perhaps more accurately, a matter of clairvoyance. Undoubtedly Secretary Root would have resented bitterly the suggestion that his creation of a Chief of Staff of the Army would lead to passive civilian control and a single

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military administrative commander for that department — and yet that is exactly what happened. On the other hand, some of the most likely fears have never materialized.

No one can guarantee what will happen, but the odds are heavy against the emergence of a single military commander in the United States. The Germanic acceptance of obedience as a relief from the responsibility of decision is alien to our national character. Furthermore, the danger of a trend toward a single military commander is counterbalanced by the removal of the Joint Chiefs from any command function. As a matter of fact, the failure of the Joint Chiefs of Staff to perform their planning duties and the way they were turning more and more to command was much more of a step in that dangerous direction. The restoration of active civilian control and the express exclusion of the Joint Chiefs of Staff from the line of command ended that tendency.

The increased managerial duties of the Chairman, therefore, do not signify any trend except toward increased efficiency of the Joint Staff. As long as the Department management committee — the Joint Secretaries — is civilian, any service military chief sensing the slightest move of the Chairman to try to gain control of either the thinking or the factual investigations of the Joint Staff has a ready civilian avenue of complaint. Knowing the characters of our Joint Chiefs, we can be sure they will not hesitate to use it. As a matter of fact, the trend away from a single military commander, like the trend away from centralization, is both clear and irresistible.

### Conclusion

The tendency toward centralization in the Department of Defense has been ended. Decentralization is today's reality. Before any reverse trend can be started, some very fundamental concepts — for the first time clearly identified — will have to be faced and a contrary selection openly made. Even if that unexpected event should occur, the changes would be made con-

sciously, instead of unconsciously as they were in the past.

One word of caution is necessary. Decentralization will not be effective unless the military departments in all their echelons are organized to accept the operating responsibilities delegated to them. In order to delegate, there must be available an effective recipient of such delegation. Some of the blame for operations having crept into the Office of the Secretary of Defense in the past can be laid at the door of the military departments. They have not always been anxious to operate. Vacuums are filled — in nature and in the Pentagon. Steps are now under way to reconstitute the military departments to discharge their delegated responsibilities and powers, consistent with the basic philosophy outlined above.

Furthermore, as Secretary Forrestal frequently said, "Organizational charts do not do the work — work requires men." No chart can be prepared which cannot be ruined by weak or stupid executives. The concept of active civilian control will not succeed under Secretaries who desire to be passive or who have no capacity for sound decision. Shifting responsibility to the military hierarchy would provide no guaranteed remedy for the unsuitable civilian; it would be merely an exchange of risks. There can also be weak and unsuitable military chiefs. Furthermore, while proficiency in specialized skills is still an important prerequisite for top military command, it is not the most important attribute of a strong and effective top executive.

The risks can be lessened only by the appointment of suitable top executives — military and civilian. The present organizational setup makes it possible for the government, for the first time, to offer positions of prestige and effectiveness to leaders in industry, labor, and the professions. It should result in an increased infusion of the needed skills — special and general alike — at levels of importance. The contributions of these men can now be made not only with a minimum of frustration but also with a reasonable chance for substantial accomplishment.

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