

Book Reviews

1600 Pennsylvania Avenue. Presidents and the people, 1929-1959. Walter Johnson. Little, Brown, Boston, Mass., 1960. x + 390 pp. \$6.

Presidential Power. The politics of leadership. Richard E. Neustadt. Wiley, New York, 1960. xii + 224 pp. \$5.95.

The President's Cabinet. An analysis in the period from Wilson to Eisenhower. Richard F. Fenno, Jr., Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1959. xii + 327 pp. \$5.50.

Facts about the Presidents. A compilation of biographical and historical data. Joseph Nathan Kane. H. W. Wilson, New York, 1959. 348 pp. \$6.

It is probable that we in the United States are at the beginning of a serious debate concerning the structure and functions of our government. It is quite clear—even if nothing else is—from the development of the discussion so far, that none of its branches is satisfactorily organized for proper functioning. The bland assertion by politicians, who are more declarative than informed, that it is the greatest government on earth and so on and so on, is denied by every careful study that is published. We have before us here several of these studies. No one can read them with any care and continue to be complacent about the situation.

It is natural, this being a Presidential year, that political scientists and publishers should have arranged their schedules so that the current books—and articles—should capitalize on the interest incident to the election. So far this year, I have counted no less than a dozen books, and even more articles, dealing with the Presidency. Those which are not merely eye-catchers express a deep concern about the state of the Presidency. But it is evident that this is part of a larger uneasiness about the whole system subjected to the pressures of the atomic age.

The Presidency, as its assessors look back over the years, has had, out of 33 different incumbents, not more than

six or seven who are rated now as being really competent for the duties of the office. [See L. Koenig, coauthor with E. S. Corwin of *The Presidency Today* (New York University Press, 1956), whose latest book, *The Invisible Presidency* (Rinehart, 1959), is an account of several of the most notable "Kitchen Cabinets" and confidential agents, including those of President Eisenhower.] This is a frightening fact. The possibility that some crisis may find in the White House another such as Buchanan, who was there when the nation was splitting in two, is all too likely. This points to a selection process that must be defective.

But there is also the fact that the nation is now several times larger than it was in 1860, and many times more complex. Also, its relations with other powers are infinitely more delicate. It has assumed vast responsibilities for productive facilities, for the welfare of its citizens, and for the security of other noncommunist nations. And the President is looked to as the chief counsellor in all these matters. That any one man can accomplish all that the Presidency is supposed to be responsible for in these times is altogether beyond reason. And the truth is that he does not accomplish it satisfactorily. Many of his duties are delegated to nonelected officials, many have gone to so-called independent agencies which have no place whatever in the American constitutional system, and, unhappily, many are neglected or lost in the bureaucratic complexity of the expanded office. That office has grown from one of a few hundred members, 20 years ago, to one of several thousand members—uncountable exactly because many of them are loans from the Departments, and because many duties that belong to the office are often shunted to the Departments themselves.

Before going on to consider the Presidency itself, let me say that the other branches are, if we read the critical literature, in no better case. The Congress has consented to a good deal of *Execu-*

tive reform, but it has not been willing to seek reform itself. And when it has made a gesture toward change—for example, in the La Follette-Monroney Act of 1946—the provisions made into law have been almost completely ignored by succeeding legislatures. The faults complained of by Woodrow Wilson have not been overcome. Committees are still in control; their powerful leading members can smother legislation almost without check, and their investigative procedures often come under severe criticism. But the most serious failure is that of leadership. It is practically impossible for a program to originate in the legislative branch; and the tendency to resist those originating in the Executive, bad enough at any time, is made worse when, as has so often been the case in late years, the Executive belongs to one party and the congressional majority to another.

The indictment extends to the third branch, the Judiciary. The Supreme Court has proceeded more and more boldly—most boldly of all (which seems something of a paradox) when there has been a "liberal" majority—to usurp the law-making function. Sanctioning, as it has, the intrusion into the governmental structure of the independent agencies, it has proceeded to make these agencies responsible to the Court by refusing the President the right to dismiss those he appoints but retaining for itself the right to approve or disapprove agency decisions. It has made judicial review into a principle upon which judicial supremacy has been built. And this astounding *tour de force* is no longer questioned by those that it most affects. Most astounding of all, the Court had the audacity to tell President Truman what constituted the Doctrine of Necessity. He allowed himself to be instructed in the steel seizure instance (1952). And from now on no President will know what he may and may not do when the nation is confronted with crisis or disaster.

All this is not as dangerous to democracy, perhaps, as the critics insist. The nation has not succumbed either to governmental confusion or to dangers from without. And there is a certain virtue in passing through a period of failure and self-doubt, such as the present, if it results in soul-searching and, in the end, reasoned reform. The strictures of the political scientists, moreover, are turning from negative criticisms to positive suggestions. They have not yet become very bold in constitutional terms, but that would seem to be

the next turn of the debate now going on. It may be that, despite appearances, revisions will antedate the crisis that would result in breakdown.

The present focus on the Presidency has resulted in the books before us. Walter Johnson writes a history of recent times with the focus on the Presidency as the center of policy making; Richard Fenno writes of the President and his Cabinet; Richard Neustadt analyses the Presidential power together with the politics of leadership; and Joseph Kane furnishes a rich display of data from which we can learn what past Presidents have been like.

Johnson's *1600 Pennsylvania Avenue* is a historian's, rather than a political scientist's, view of the Presidency. Characteristically, he considers the events of three Administrations—Roosevelt, Truman, and Eisenhower, with looks backward at that of Hoover—for the lessons to be learned. He finds that Roosevelt and Truman accomplished much, that Hoover floundered, and that Eisenhower has almost a genius for missing his opportunities. But Roosevelt had a tendency, he says, to deviousness, and Truman never lost the traits of the county politician. These are judgments about the Presidents themselves. But his interest does not extend to questioning the adequacy of the office itself or of the system of which it is part. He is, in other words content to review the achievement of each, measured by the immense demands of the times in which he lived. It is true that these were times of transformation and that during some of the crises incident to the times the occupant of the White House seemed caught up in cyclonic winds far beyond his power to subdue. But it is still possible to make some estimate of their effort, and that is what Johnson has done. As a historian, he is sometimes more interested in the events themselves than in the President about whom the events centered, but the only criticism to be made of this preoccupation is that he chose to call his book by a title that seems to indicate that it is about the Presidency. His brief history of some 30 years is that of one who lived through and had some part in the years, and that of one, too, who has a facility for summarization and exposition. *1600 Pennsylvania Avenue* was the scene of dramatic decisions, the center of national management; but whether its decisions could have been more wisely made or whether its affairs could have been better managed, we do not learn.

Something about this emerges from

Fenno's study of the Cabinet. Anyone who goes seriously into the situation of this body in the American governmental system is certain to emerge more sophisticated but also more despairing than when he began. Fenno is no exception. He does, however, recognize that he is dealing not just with the relationship of a group of men to their chief and with ways to organize that relationship more effectively. His main concern has to be with some fundamentals such as whether the President is to be made stronger or weaker, whether the government itself is to move toward unity or is to keep its essentially pluralistic character, whether administrative management or policy making is the first Presidential duty.

In a sense the Cabinet has no existence; in another it has to be recognized as a persistent institution. It has no constitutional authorization; it is completely subordinate to the President, since all its members are his heads of Departments, and he is after all, Chief Executive. But the Congress has always designated Department heads for duties independent of Presidential control, and the tendency to do this has not lessened in recent years. Therefore when the Cabinet members are used as a Council for advice, the President has around his table a group some of whom may be disposed *not* to take directions from him even in administrative matters. Their feeling of independence, because they are the representatives in government of vast interests—finance, agriculture, labor, business, and so on—may outweigh the loyalty that the President may expect of them.

This is not true—or is much less true—of two of their number, the Secretary of State and the Attorney General. These are, by their situation, closely identified with the President. The others have demanding administrative duties which make it impossible for them to become well informed about matters outside their own provinces, and their ties to special interests very often lessen their value as advisers. As a matter of fact, it has sometimes been suggested that of all possible groups of men, these Department heads, with the two exceptions, are the least likely to give the President good counsel.

Cabinet meetings have a tendency to become very nearly farcical. Matters of high concern are seldom discussed because the number of people is too large for intimacy and because so many with no special competence are present; matters of departmental concern are not spoken of because Secretaries dislike

sharing their troubles with other officials. Still it always seems to be a comforting assumption that the President is surrounded by statesmen of high caliber, who will give his decisions weight and certainty. However many disclosures are made showing that the fact is otherwise, the myth persists. Presidents, realizing that Cabinet meetings are so often a costly waste of time, have in at least two instances attempted to discontinue them altogether, and in many others have reduced their frequency. But public disapproval has always had to be taken into account, and more or less regular meetings have been kept up.

Political scientists have treated this governmental anomaly with caution. None, I believe, has advocated discontinuance of its advisory function, but some have suggested a series of sub-cabinet organizations of a more nearly functional nature. Still others, sharing the public feeling that there ought to be a Presidential Council, have wanted to establish a special Cabinet secretariat with the duty of regularizing and upgrading the advisory function. This seemed to President Eisenhower, with his military background, a necessary change, and it was made.

It has not been successful. No amount of briefing or following-up could make Cabinet members wiser than they were before; neither could it reduce the work load of the Departments. Further, it could not change their desire to have private talks with the President himself, rather than with a large group. The whole matter will again be open for recasting by the next President.

All this is fully and adequately gone into by Fenno. To sharpen several of the problems, he has related illustrative incidents. There are many accounts of these meetings available in the notes of those attending them. Sometimes they have been recounted by several participants. They are amazingly uniform in their deprecation of the Council idea. But it still persists.

For a candid account of a most elusive subject, seldom before approached with such extensive use of anthropological and psychological critiques, political science is indebted to the author.

Neustadt's study is directed to a quite different problem. He is interested in what a President must do to be successful in the circumstances of the present. He is concerned that so much depends on the expertness of the one man who disposes of the Presidential power. Here again, there is in operation a powerful myth which is respected even by those

who know it for what it is. Americans elect Presidents in political campaigns which are heated partisan battles, and the man who is elected is recognized as the head of his party. Yet he is expected instantly, once he is inaugurated, to be "above politics." It is elementary that it cannot be had both ways; yet every President strains to make the impossible straddle. Some convey the impression that they have thus risen above their origins; but if they actually have made such an attempt, they almost certainly have lost the power to lead. They cannot exert the discipline needed by the amorphous and often rebellious Congress without the use of party means. And if they do not lead, they disappoint the expectations of the electorate and fade into history as failures.

Using the experience of recent Presidents, Neustadt illustrates the Presidential requirements and shows how very difficult it is to find an individual who can meet them. Such an individual is something of a clerk, which is to say that he must work within an elaborate apparatus that can be expected to have an almost immovable inertia; yet he must try to find the means to move it. He does not have a separated power; he has a shared power; and the sharing is almost the most important characteristic of his office. Yet he can, if, as Woodrow Wilson said, he is man enough, find the leverage to alter the course of events, furthering, as he must believe, the best interests of the nation of which he is the head and symbol. So Mr. Eisenhower may be a Republican, he may be strongly disapproved of by many Americans for one or another reason, and he may be made the subject of caustic comment. But when the head of another State ridicules him, the outrage that seizes Americans is explosive. He is their man.

It is this potential support that a President must know how to gather and dispose for the nation's good. This is his central duty. But there have been many Presidents who have not known how to perform it, and it is a matter for despair to suggest any reasonable way of choosing individuals who will be so gifted.

If the last few Administrations are examined, as Neustadt examines them, none provides a perfect case of Presidential competence. But there are instances of remarkable success as well as others of abysmal failure. The successes, like the failures, are almost frighteningly connected with personal circumstances. Roosevelt was superb in

the first days of the New Deal, but in 1937 he handled the Supreme Court battle as though he had never learned anything about leadership in a democracy. Eisenhower's indifferences to many problems has seemed to originate in a tiredness which grew as his time in office lengthened. Truman's Marshall Plan and Point Four programs were vigorous examples of leadership, but he allowed relations with the Soviet Union to fall into the state where exchanges became hardly more than slanging matches that went on for weary year after weary year while the crisis of atomic armament deepened.

We are led, although this is to go beyond the Neustadt suggestions, to ask whether something more drastic is not needed. That the President may be a hero to his people does not make it less likely that he will fail because he cannot do all that is expected of him. For almost a generation now, the attempts to bolster his performance with administrative aids have been the favored approach to the admittedly serious problem. This elaboration of machinery has tended to conceal the essential truth that a President cannot be changed by assistance. He can be aided by it, but it will not make him any wiser. It will not change the fact that he is one single, often elderly, individual and that he is sometimes tired or ill.

A book which is thoughtful and considerate, as Neustadt's is, makes the conclusion almost inevitable that we have been looking in the wrong direction, trying the wrong remedies, and that presently we shall need to re-examine our situation in much the same way as it was re-examined in Philadelphia in 1787. When we do, we are not likely to conclude that, for modern America, the institutions of a small emerging seacoast power are altogether adequate, more than a century and a half later, for a continental nation. Indeed, if the proceedings are conducted in the spirit of the Convention we are certain to find the institutions insufficient, just as the forefathers found the ones they were revising insufficient.

As a kind of addendum here, of interest to those who are finding themselves at a loss for many of the facts needed to judge how the Presidency has served us, and who wonder what the uniformities are in the processes of election or even in Presidential performances, a most useful compendium has become available in Joseph Nathan Kane's *Facts About the Presidents*. It will certainly be found on every politi-

cal scientist's desk from now on. Careful searching has turned up most useful comparative data about origins, affiliations, performance, and many other relevant matters. They are all here. There are no judgments, simply facts. It is a relief to have them, for once, in uncolored form.

R. G. TUGWELL

119 Northway Road,
Greenbelt, Maryland

The Special Theory of Relativity. J. Aharoni. Oxford University Press, New York, 1959. viii + 285 pp. Illus. \$7.20

This book is a technical introduction to the special theory of relativity, written with considerable emphasis on the formal aspects of the subject, and quite apparently aimed at British students of physics and of applied mathematics, whose backgrounds and attitudes vary somewhat from the backgrounds and attitudes met with, on the average, on American campuses. Although the book covers more or less the same ground as any other competent text, the slight change in approach makes for interesting reading.

The chapters are devoted in turn to the following topics: kinematics of the special theory and of the Lorentz group; three-dimensional tensors; Maxwell's theory in tensor formulation; general field theory (nonquantum, to be sure); relativistic particle dynamics and hydrodynamics; and spinors (treated in the van der Waerden formalism). An appendix is concerned specifically with the propagation of light and generally with electromagnetic waves. The author introduces group-theoretical concepts to the extent that he discusses tensors and spinors as representations of the orthogonal group and the Lorentz group and gives some attention to questions of irreducibility of representations. Three-dimensional and four-dimensional notation are used side by side. As far as I can tell, the explanations are straightforward and there are no errors in either the physics or the mathematics. It is quite obvious that the author is considerably more knowledgeable than might be assumed by the neophyte who is favorably impressed by the simplicity of presentation. Though quantum theory is only hinted at, much of the book's work is preparatory to the study of quantum field theory.