

Hook Source

Ferrell, Robert H. *Off the Record: The Private Papers of Harry S. Truman*. Harper & Row, Publishers. New York, NY. 1980.

TO JONATHAN DANIELS (UNSENT)

February 26, 1950

Dear Jonathan:

I wonder if you have thought to go into the background and ability of each member of the cabinet and those who sat with the cabinet which I inherited on April 12, 1945. It should make an interesting chapter in your book. Maybe I shouldn't bring the subject to your attention, but as I look back on that situation it makes me shudder. I am sure that God Almighty had me by the hand. He must have had a personal interest in the welfare of this great Republic.

There was Stettinius, Sec. of State—a fine man, good looking, amiable, cooperative, but never an idea new or old; Morgenthau, block head, nut—I wonder why F.D.R. kept him around. Maybe you know. He fired himself from my cabinet by threatening what he'd do to me under certain circumstances. Then there was Stimson, a real man—honest, straightforward and a statesman sure enough. Francis Biddle, attorney general—you make your own analysis. Frank Walker, P.M.G.—my kind of man, honest, decent, loyal—but no new ideas. Miss Perkins, Sec. of Labor, a grand lady—but no politician. F.D.R. had removed every bureau and power she had. Then Henry Wallace, Sec. of Commerce, who had no reason to love me or to be loyal to me. Of course he wasn't loyal. "Honest" Harold Ickes who was never for anyone but Harold, would have cut F.D.R.'s throat—or mine for his "high minded" ideas of a headline—and did. Agriculture's Wickard, a nice man, who never learned how his department was set up. Then there was Leo Crowley, whose sense of honor was minus and Chester Bowles, price control man, whose idea of administration was conversation with crazy columnists. Thank God Fred Vinson was there as O.W.M.R. and Bill Davis as Chairman of the Labor Board.

But, Jonathan, there was not a man in the list who would talk frankly at a Cabinet meeting! The honest ones were afraid to and the others wanted to fool me anyhow.

Am I wrong? Take a look and see how and in what manner they left me. Poor Forrestal, you'll have to evaluate yourself. He never could make a decision. Harold Smith, A 1 conniver.

TO FRANK KENT (UNSENT)

March 5, 1950

Using the Hook Source

→ What challenges does a President face upon taking office?

- How does this letter illustrate this idea?
- Is it important to know that this letter was unsent? Why or why not?
- What does this tell us about Truman and his leadership abilities?

Background Essay on How does a President's leadership style shape the government?



Truman Presidential
Museum & Library

When Franklin Delano Roosevelt died of a cerebral hemorrhage on April 12, 1945, Harry Truman took over from a government that had grown exponentially through years of New Deal programs and efforts to win World War II. By some accounts FDR had struggled to coordinate this massive growth by being personally involved in decision-making and paying little attention to his cabinet. "He allowed everything to sprawl and then tried to control and manipulate the jumble -- or jungle -- in complicated ways."¹ Dean Acheson, who served as FDR's Assistant Secretary of State and later served at Truman's Chief Diplomat, agreed: ". . . he was tone deaf to the subtle nuances of civil government organization. This was messed up in his administration for the simplest of reasons: he did not know any better."² In hindsight it makes sense that building a bureaucracy in the midst of crisis was not a simple task.

Harry Truman brought to the presidency a background that made him uniquely capable to address this bureaucracy problem. Early in his political career Truman served as the Judge of Eastern Jackson County, Missouri. This position required Truman to develop skills as an administrator, and it was in this capacity that he established his passion for efficient government. Truman was proud of his ability to deliver projects "on time and under budget." During World War II Senator Truman had developed a reputation for efficiency and accountability through the *Truman Committee*. Officially known as the Senate Special Activity to Investigate the National Defense Program, this was Truman's opportunity to make a name for himself by working to uncover waste and fraud in the industry.

Upon assuming the presidency, Truman struggled in his relationships with FDR's former cabinet members and aides. At first he kept the former Cabinet members on, allowing for continuity during a time of war. Conflicts quickly emerged, and Truman began replacing members. Within three months of taking office, Truman had retired six of the 10 Roosevelt department heads. Where he had concerns about loyalty, attitude or competence, Truman had no problem taking swift action. This explains the fact that he went through 24 different department heads during his seven years as president. Sometimes these firings appeared to be done with a lack of tact on Truman's part, which created tension with his subordinates. On the other hand, many found Truman to be very easy to work with because they knew where he stood on the issues: he considered himself "the boss," no matter what.

During his time in office Truman took steps to establish order on the government apparatus that surrounded him. His passion for an efficient government led him to call for a reorganization of the executive branch. Truman's personal interactions with his cabinet resulted in life-long friendships and public confrontations. By looking at the perspectives of several individuals who worked with Truman during this time we get a chance to glimpse first-hand the characteristics that defined Truman as a leader. Those interactions reveal both the inner workings of the Truman administration as well as the personal characteristics that shaped his presidency. These observations help the student of presidency look past and present leaders to answer the question: How does a President's leadership style shape the government?

¹ Robert H. Ferrell, *Harry S. Truman: A Life*, University of Missouri Press, 1994.

² Dean Acheson, *Present at the Creation: My Years in the State Department*

Source 1

[Statement of the President Upon Signing the Reorganization Act of 1945](#). December 20, 1945.

Under the authority of the Act, I shall undertake a systematic review of the Government agencies with a view to regrouping their functions in the most efficient and economical manner and abolishing such functions or agencies as may not be necessary....

The results of reorganization will be evident primarily in the increased effectiveness of Government operations. Regrouping and consolidation to bring together those agencies having related purposes will lead to a greater consistency in the policies of the agencies and better coordination of their programs in operation. This should mean also a simpler and clearer relation between the agencies of the Government and the public. Through these means, the Act will enable us better to adapt the Government for carrying out its responsibility of serving the people.

Using Source 1

Sourcing Questions	What is President Truman's purpose in creating this source?
Contextualization Questions	How long had Truman been in office when this Statement was given? What Presidential authority did Truman refer to in this Statement?
Corroboration Tasks	Using source #2, what was the motivation behind efforts to reorganize the government?
Close Reading Questions	According to Truman, what were the potential benefits of government reorganization? What part of government was most likely being reorganized by this act?

Source 2

Lederle, John W. [*The Hoover Commission Reports on Federal Reorganization*](#). Marquette Law Review. 33.2. 1949

One thing is clear: The problem of executive branch organization is a big one! The federal government in recent years has impressed many citizens as being more like a menacing octopus than a servant of the people. Since the 1920's the number of civilian employees has grown from 570,000 to over 2,000,000; the number of bureaus, sections, services and units has quadrupled to over 1,800; annual federal expenditures have jumped from \$3,600,000,000 to more than \$42,000,000,000; the annual debt per average family has shot up from approximately \$500 to about \$7,500.² It is little wonder that many citizens look back with nostalgic yearnings to the 1920's.

Yet the clock is not likely to be turned back. The impact of the Depression led the federal government into many new areas of regulation of private enterprise or of direct social service. The impact of World War II and the universal recognition of America's inevitable involvement in international problems, has influenced the growth and costs of the federal government even more than did the Depression.³ While it is conceivable that cutbacks in some services might be made, economizers in our national legislature are never able to marshal more than generalized support. When the economizers point to specific spots where cuts should be made, their brothers jump ship. Big Government is with us and is likely to stay.

One area of investigation which might profitably have been developed further by the Commission is that of collective consideration of government-wide problems by the President's Cabinet. Since World War I the British Cabinet has evolved some interesting techniques for collective consideration and coordination of administrative activities. The potentialities of the American Cabinet have never been tapped; an adequate secretariat to prepare the ground in advance for Cabinet discussions is sadly lacking. While the American President is entirely free to use or ignore his Cabinet, the Commission would have done well to present some striking proposals suggesting that he should consider the British experience. The ad hoc interdepartmental committees suggested by the Commission to deal with individual sore thumb situations are a poor resort at best. The Cabinet could be developed into a effective council of material assistance to the President.

Using Source 2

Sourcing Questions	What is the purpose of the author in creating this source? What is the tone of this source? What words or phrases help you understand that?
Contextualization Questions	What events of the Great Depression and World War II might relate to information in this source?
Corroboration Tasks	What does Truman say about this report in source #3? Does Truman's point of view in his statement agree with this source?
Close Reading Questions	What does the source mean when it says, "Big government is with us to stay."? What do the statistics mentioned in this source tell us about the size of government?

Source 3

Harry S Truman. [Special Message to the Congress upon signing the Reorganization Act of 1949](#). June 20, 1949.

To the Congress of the United States:

I have today signed the Reorganization Act of 1949. The provisions of this Act depart from my recommendation and that of the Commission on Organization of the Executive Branch in that they permit the rejection of reorganization plans by action of either House of Congress, acting alone. Nevertheless, I am glad to proceed, under this measure, in cooperation with the Congress on the important task of improving the organization of the executive branch.

I am today transmitting to the Congress seven reorganization plans, each with a related message setting forth its purpose and effects. I shall also transmit an additional message recommending legislation to place the management and financing of the Post Office Department on a more business-like basis. These reorganization measures will contribute significantly to the more responsible and efficient administration of Federal programs. They are important steps in putting into effect several major recommendations of the Commission on Organization of the Executive Branch of the Government

During this session of the Congress, I have made a number of recommendations for improvement in the organization and management of the executive branch. They are closely related to the proposals submitted today. . .

- Reorganization Plan No. 4 of 1949 rounds out the organization of the Executive Office of the President by transferring to it the National Security Council and the National Security Resources Board, two important over-all staff agencies of the executive branch. . .

With respect to particular Departments and Agencies:

I have previously recommended enactment of the Federal property and administrative services legislation which has passed the House of Representatives and is pending in the Senate. This legislation will create the General Services Administration and make fundamental improvements in the Government's system of procurement and property management . . .

I have recommended, and the Congress has enacted, legislation to permit the reorganization of the Department of State along lines approved by the Commission on Organization. The internal reorganization of that Department is proceeding. . .

I have recommended, and the Senate has acted upon, a bill to amend the National Security Act and improve the organization and administration of our defense activities. It is essential that action be completed on this measure in order to provide responsible leadership for our defense establishment. This legislation will not only strengthen the administration of our armed forces in the interest of national security, it will also make possible major economies in the execution of activities common to the several armed forces. . .

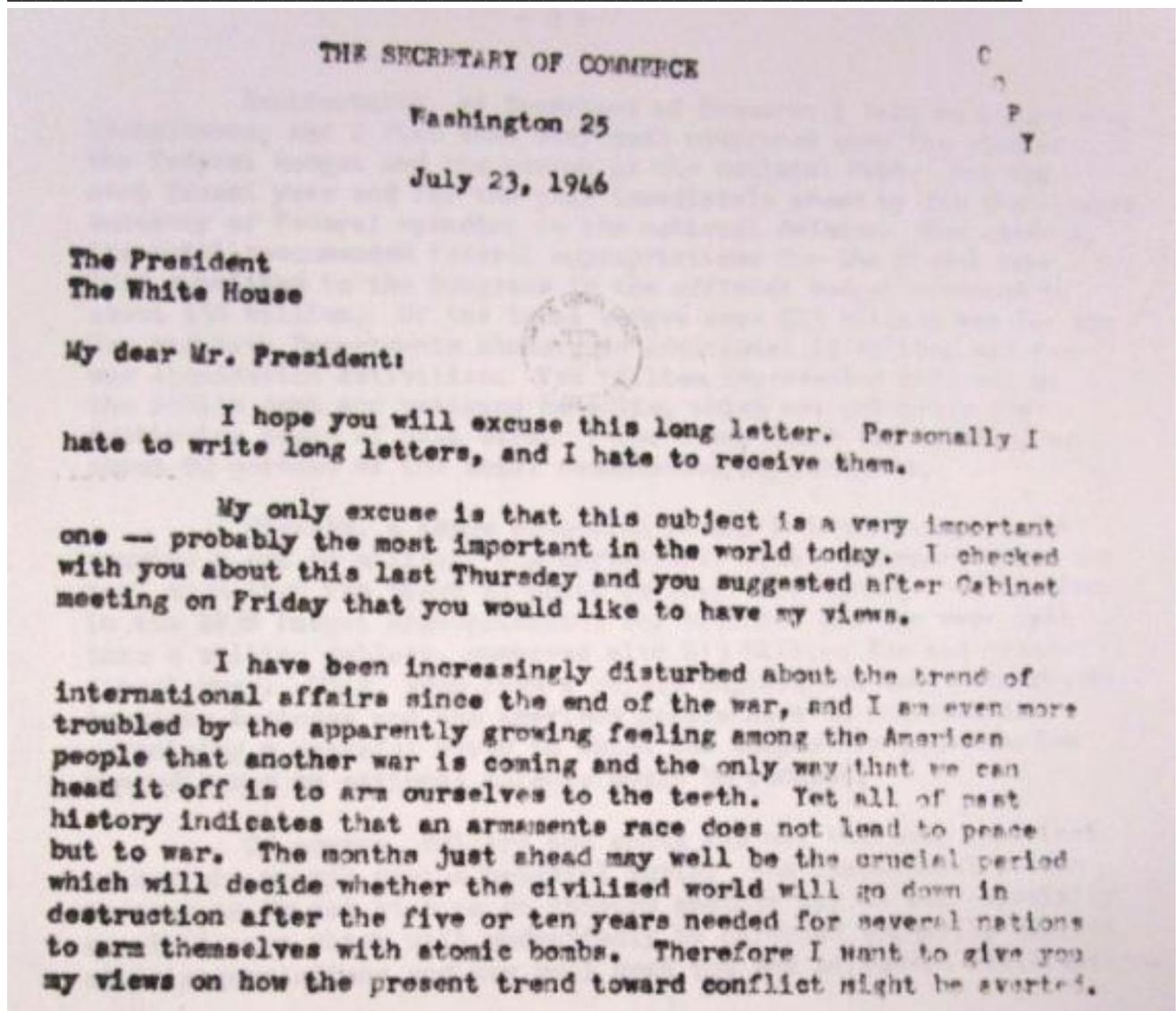
- Reorganization Plan No. 1 of 1949 will create a Department of Welfare to administer most of the programs now within the Federal Security Agency. The creation of this Department will meet a long standing need of the executive branch and recognize the importance of our social security, education, and related program.

Using Source 3

Sourcing Questions	What is President Truman's purpose in creating this source? Why is Truman talking to Congress on this topic?
Contextualization Questions	What does it tell us that Truman is having to revisit government reorganization again in 1949?
Corroboration Tasks	To what extent do the recommendations in this source address the concerns mentioned in source #2?
Close Reading Questions	What specific changes in government is Truman asking for in this source? How does Truman justify those requests? What does Truman say was his goal as head of the executive branch?

Source 1

Cover Page to Speech from Secretary of Commerce (H. Wallace) to Truman. July 23, 1946. Clark M. Clifford Papers, Box 19. Wallace, Henry. This cover letter is connected to a [speech](#) Wallace intended to deliver on September 12, 1946 at Madison Square Garden in New York. In the speech Wallace called on the United States to develop a peaceful coexistence with Russia.



Using Source 1

Sourcing Questions:	What is the relationship between the President and the Secretary of Commerce? Why would the Secretary of Commerce write a letter like this to the President? What was his goal? What was Henry Wallace's role in the Roosevelt Administration? Why is that important?
Contextualization Questions	What was going on in Truman's administration when this source was created? How long had Truman been President at this time? What "trend in international affairs" might Wallace be referring to in this source?
Corroboration Tasks	What do other sources indicate what happened after Truman received this letter?
Close Reading Questions	What does Wallace recommend in this source?

Source 2

Memo to Mr. Clifford. September 18, 1946. Clark M. Clifford Papers, Box 19. Wallace, Henry...

THE WHITE HOUSE

8107/90/90

WASHINGTON

September 18, 1946

MEMORANDUM FOR MR. CLIFFORD:



Congressman Walters called from Easton, Pa. and left the following message that he thought might be of interest to you:

"I have just received reliable information from a source that I am certain is correct that Mr. Wallace deliberately tried to embarrass the President with his speech."

He left his phone number in case you were interested in talking to him.

mlh

Using Source 2

Sourcing Questions	How is the format of this source significant? The author of this source is not clear; Where did this source likely come from? What is the purpose of this source? Is there any way know how reliable it is? Who was Francis Walter?
Contextualization Questions	How long after Wallace's speech was this source created?
Corroboration Tasks	How does this document relate to Source 1? Notice how this source fits between Truman's longhand notes from September 16 and 19 (source 3). Is there any evidence that Truman believed the claim in this note?
Close Reading Questions	

Source 3

Longhand Notes of President Harry S. Truman, September 16 & 19, 1946. President's Secretary's Files (online). [Sept. 16, 1946 Letter](#). [Sept. 19, 1946 Letter](#).

Read to the Sec. of State and discussed- not typed or mailed

HST

Sept. 16, 1946

... Wallace and I have always been friendly and I am sure he is not unfriendly to me, and I don't think he would want to put anything over on me. If the speech had been made by anyone else anywhere else it would have attracted no attention. Then my statement at the press conference that I had read and approved the speech added to its importance.

I shall not edit speeches anymore particularly when I am pressed for time as I was that day. Wallace only asked for 15 minutes and it took 30 minutes to read the speech. I was behind in my timetable and some other most important people were coming.

Anyway it was a most unfortunate proceeding. I wish my Cabinet members would stay in their own fields and attend to their own business. Wallace has a habit of attending to every member's business but his own....

Sept. 19, '46

Mr. Wallace spent 2½ hours talking to me yesterday. I'm not so sure he's as fundamentally sound intellectually as I had thought. He advised me that I should be far to the "left" when Congress was not in session and that I should move right when Congress is on hand and in session. He said F.D.R. did that and F.D. never let his "right" hand know what his "left" hand did!

I'm not so sure that Henry didn't purposely put it over on me with his Madison Square Garden speech. It isn't customary to expect a Cabinet officer to be "fuzzy" in his thinking- but I'm very much afraid Henry not only is "fuzzy" but that he has absorbed some of the "Commy" - "Jesuit" theory that the end justifies the means....

Using Source 3

Sourcing Questions	What kind of details might occur in someone's daily notes ? Are sources like this more or less reliable? Why might Truman keep notes like these?
Contextualization Questions	How long after Wallace's speech were these two notes? What else was Truman doing between these dates?- Check Truman's daily calendar .
Corroboration Tasks	Note corroboration tasks for Source 2
Close Reading Questions	What is the difference between Truman's thoughts on September 16 and 19? What is Truman's greatest concern as expressed in these sources? What does Truman say about Henry Wallace on September 19th?

Source 4

Charlie Ross' Recollection of Meeting Between Henry Wallace & Harry Truman. September 20, 1946. President's Secretary's Files: Box 135, Commerce: Henry A. Wallace (Secretary of

The conversation that followed went into the whole subject of Mr. Wallace's attitude. I had not intended to take part in any policy making as between Mr. Truman and Mr. Wallace, but I was drawn into the discussion. Each of them seemed to want my opinion. I gave it frankly. Mr. Wallace is a strange person. As he said himself, he is a crusader with a messianic^{mic} complex. He said, among other things, that he left the Republican party for the Democratic party because he felt that the Republican party was the party of imperialism, ^{and} the Democratic party was the party of peace. He said the great issue before the American people was the foreign policy of this country. We all agreed on this point. I found that the President had asked him to refrain during the campaign from making any speech on foreign policy. Mr. Wallace had replied that he could not speak without discussing foreign policy. He felt that this was

It was quite clear to me that Mr. Wallace was extremely eager to remain in the Cabinet and continue his fights from within the Cabinet. The President was emphatic in the expression of his belief that in this emergency we should present a united front to the rest of the world. Wallace accused Byrnes, Vandenberg and Connally -- he seemed to have a personal hatred(?) against all three of them, and especially Byrnes and Vandenberg -- of having attempted to set this country on an imperialistic track. No one could doubt the man's sincerity. The matter of his resignation was not brought up by President Truman, but at one point in the conversation, Mr. Wallace said that, of course, if the President wished him to get out of the Cabinet, he would do so. The President brushed this aside, saying that he did not want Mr. Wallace to leave the Cabinet. Wallace disavowed any political ambitions for himself. He expressed

Using Source 4

Sourcing Questions	Why was this source created? Why would Charlie Ross be the one recording these details?
Contextualization Questions	Why was this meeting held? What was Truman's policy towards the Soviet Union at this time? How did that conflict with Wallace's thinking?
Corroboration Tasks	When was this account created in relation to Wallace's speech? The warning note to Truman?
Close Reading Questions	What specific topics were addressed in this meeting, as recorded in this source? According to this source, who brought up the idea of Wallace's resignation? What concern did Truman mostly express in this source? What commentary did Charlie Ross add to this source about Wallace?

Source 5

Statement by the President: Henry Wallace Resignation. September 20, 1946. Clark M. Clifford Papers: Box 19, Wallace, Henry...

8107/90/90 STATEMENT BY THE PRESIDENT

The foreign policy of this country is the most important question confronting us today. Our responsibility for obtaining a just and lasting peace extends not only to the people of this country but to the nations of the world.

The people of the United States may disagree freely and publicly on any question, including that of foreign policy, but the Government of the United States must stand as a unit in its relations with the rest of the world.

I have today asked Mr. Wallace to resign from the Cabinet. It had become clear that between his views on foreign policy and those of the administration — the latter being shared, I am confident, by the great body of our citizens — there was a fundamental conflict. We could not permit this conflict to jeopardize our position in relation to other countries. I deeply regret the breaking of a long and pleasant official association, but I am sure that Mr. Wallace will be happier in the exercise of his right to present his views as a private citizen. I am confirmed in this belief by a very friendly conversation I had with Mr. Wallace on the telephone this morning.

Our foreign policy as established by the Congress, the President and the Secretary of State remains in full force and effect without change. No change in our foreign policy is contemplated. No member of the executive branch of the government will make any public statement as to foreign policy which is in conflict with our established foreign policy. Any public statement on foreign policy shall be cleared with the Department of State. In case of disagreement, the matter will be referred to me.

Using Source 5

Sourcing Questions	What was Truman's purpose in issuing this statement? Why not just ignore the issue?
Contextualization Questions	When was this source created? How long was it after Truman's meeting with Wallace? What was Truman's policy towards the Soviet Union at this time? How did that conflict with Wallace's thinking?
Corroboration Tasks	To what extent are the reasons given in this source for Wallace's resignation consistent with the narrative presented by other sources?
Close Reading Questions	How did Truman hear about Wallace's resignation? In this source, what does Truman give as the reason for Wallace's resignation? What does Truman say in this source about his foreign policy? How does that reveal his concerns about this incident? What does Truman reveal about his feelings about Wallace's freedom of speech?

Source 1

[Oral History Interview with Charles S. Murphy](#): Administrative Assistant to the President of the United States, 1947-50; and Special Counsel to the President, 1950-53. Washington, DC. June 3, 1963. C.T. Morrissey.

MORRISSEY: Would you receive your assignments directly from the President?

MURPHY: A great many of them. Others would just develop in the normal course of business.

MORRISSEY: Did you attend the President's staff meeting?

MURPHY: Yes.

MORRISSEY: Could you tell me something about how this meeting was conducted?

MURPHY: I could. When I first went there as an administrative assistant to the President, it was not customary at that time, for administrative assistants to attend the staff meetings. They did so only occasionally and then only when they were asked to come because they had some special business to take up. After I had been there a number of months, I was invited frequently enough so that Matt Connelly who looked after such matters said that I might as well come to all the meetings because I was there most of the time anyway. This was, I think, substantially, an opening wedge and before long other administrative assistants began to come more and more; and finally, I think, all administrative assistants to the President came regularly to the staff meetings.

The staff meetings were held fairly early in the morning, about 9:30 as I remember, and lasted usually only a half an hour, and the President went around the staff rather quickly to see if they had anything to mention quickly. It was understood that this was not a time and place to bring up matters that required lengthy discussion.

Each member of the staff had a particular seat that he usually sat in. I don't remember now where they all were, but I recall Charlie Ross always sat at the end of the desk on the President's left; John Steelman always pulled up a chair directly across the desk facing the President; Bill Hassett sat in one of the chairs by the wall around to the President's left; Clifford, as I recall, always sat next to Hassett; I sat on the sofa on the President's right. I don't remember all the others at the moment. The President kept on his desk a folder with tabs on it--names of various staff members and he would, during the day, put papers in this folder to be handed to staff members at the meetings, so he regularly went through that to see what was in it and passed it out. There was usually some brief discussion of his appointments for the day and instructions for the rest of us for the day.

MORRISSEY: When the President handed out an assignment to somebody in this meeting, would he mention when he would like to have a report back or would he allow the particular administrative assistant to finish the report regardless of how much time it took?

MURPHY: I don't remember that he ordinarily said anything about when he wanted the report back.

Using Source 1

Sourcing Questions:	What was Charles Murphy's role within the Truman Administration? How might the fact that this source is an oral history affect its reliability?
Contextualization Questions	What challenges did Truman face during his presidency? Who are the other people mentioned in this source? Why might they be present at Truman's staff meeting? What is the role of the staff in an administration as opposed to cabinet members?
Corroboration Tasks	What does this source include that the others in this set do not? Is Murphy's tone similar to or different from other oral histories in this set?
Close Reading Questions	What specific actions taken by Truman are mentioned in this source? How would those actions assist President Truman in his job?

Source 2

[Oral History Interview with George M. Elsey](#): Assistant to the Special Counsel to the President, 1947-49; Administrative Assistant to the President, 1949-51; Assistant to the Director, Mutual Security Agency, 1951-53. July 10, 1969.

MORRISSEY: Could you tell me what kind of man Mr. Truman was as President?

ELSEY: He was, as I'm sure you know, an extremely thoughtful, courteous, considerate man. He was a pleasure to work for. He was very kindly in his dealings with staff members--I speak, of course, as a junior staff member. When he first began to be conscious of me as an individual by name and face, I was still a young Naval Reserve officer in uniform. . . . From those early times, right on through to the end of his administration, he was unfailingly thoughtful and kind.

He was never too busy to think about the members of his staff. These are the comments that I suppose are traditionally and tritely said about all Presidents, but, somehow I think, in Mr. Truman's case, they happen to be true and I've seen enough of some other Presidents over there to know that they're not quite so true as they are in his case.

He had an interesting faculty, which I was particularly conscious of, having studied history--and which he would sometimes talk with me about on these weekends at the *Williamsburg*, at Key West or elsewhere--of detaching himself from the Presidency itself. He had a tremendous veneration and respect for the institution of the Presidency. He demanded at all times respect for the President of the United States. He didn't demand any respect at all for Harry S. Truman; he demanded respect for the President of the United States.

He could see himself and the President as two different objects. He could stand aside and talk about the President as though the President were something entirely different. He would speculate aloud about what should the President do. "What do you think the President ought to do?" He wouldn't be asking what I ought to do, but what should the President do. And, he'd try to stand back and look at the Presidency and see what the President ought to do rather than what he, as a man should do.

This has its virtues and its admirable characteristics. It sometimes, however, I think led him into some of the more embarrassing situations that he got into. Because sometimes he would behave as Harry S. Truman, forgetting that the rest of the country couldn't make this differentiation that he could between the man and the office. When he would write a boiling, hot letter to a music critic or would call Drew Pearson a "son-of-a-bitch"--which I happen to think he is--he was behaving as Harry S. Truman, not as President of the United States. But, of course, other people couldn't see that and this caused embarrassment to him and I think reflected on the Office, which, of course, is the last thing in the world, he wanted to have happen.

This was also true in his continued association with some people, some individuals. He had an intense loyalty to old friends who'd stood by him through thick and thin and he was determined to stand with them. This was notable from the, really the earliest weeks of his being President. He flew out to Kansas City to attend the funeral of "Boss" Pendergast and was soundly criticized for that. His reply was that Pendergast had been a friend of his.

He never changed this behavior pattern throughout his administration. If somebody had been a friend of his and had stood by him when he needed help, he would stand by that man or woman, when he or she needed his help.

I don't know how one handles a situation like this. I suppose a President has to be cruel and hard-blooded at times and cold-blooded and cast friends aside. Mr. Truman, somehow, didn't have that element of cruelty and he couldn't quite cast aside some people that probably, from the point of view of the Presidency, he might well have managed to find another role for.

Using Source 2

Sourcing Questions	What was George Elsey's role within the Truman Administration? How might the fact that this source is an oral history affect its reliability?
Contextualization Questions	What challenges did Truman face during his presidency? Who was "Boss Pendergast?" What was Truman's connection with him?
Corroboration Tasks	What does this source include that the others in this set do not? Is Elsey's tone similar to or different from other oral histories in this set?
Close Reading Questions	What personality or character traits are mentioned about Truman are mentioned in this source? How would those traits assist or complicate President Truman's job as president? What is the significance of mentioning Truman's separation of himself and the office of President?

Source 3

[Oral History Interview with Clark M. Clifford](#) Assistant to White House Naval Aide, 1945-46; Special Counsel to the President, 1946-50. Washington, D.C. February 14, 1973. Jerry N. Hess

HESS: On the subject of Mr. Truman's Cabinet, what did Mr. Truman see as the proper role of his Cabinet? Were they his principal advisers on all matters, or on some matters, or just what was their role?

CLIFFORD: Different Presidents use Cabinets in different ways. I believe that President Truman used his Cabinet in two ways: one, they were his specific representatives in the various departments, which it was their administrative responsibility to conduct. And then from time to time matters of broad general interest would be presented for discussion so that he might get, if possible, some thrust of agreement in general areas. He did not use his Cabinet as a board of directors. I understand that to a certain extent President Eisenhower used his Cabinet as part of the policy-making machinery. President Truman did not use his Cabinet that way. He understood that that was not the function of the Cabinet under our governmental system. The Cabinet as a group has no power. It does not even have any existence in our law. It is just a term that's been applied to a group of men who happen to be appointed to specific positions.

President Truman was very much aware of the lack of power of the Cabinet. ... He would not call the Cabinet to discuss important specific problems. At Cabinet meetings he oftentimes would start discussions which would give him a general feeling of their attitude toward matters; but he did not depend on them as a policymaking body, nor did he assign any responsibility in that regard to his Cabinet.

HESS: We hear today of occasions when White House staff members interpose themselves between the President and his Cabinet members. Were there similar actions attempted by any staff members during the Truman administration?

CLIFFORD: I doubt that one could say that staff members would interpose themselves. President Truman used his staff a great deal. He developed a good feel for the kind of contribution that his staff could make. He was closer to his staff than any President that I know. As an illustration, I believe President Truman was the only President who took his vacation with his staff. Other Presidents would take their personal friends and might even prefer as part of the relaxation to get away from their staff. President Truman was comfortable with the staff, he used them well. . .

There would be times when staff members would differ with Cabinet members. It is good for a President to hear different views. Maybe we touched one time earlier on a dramatic meeting that I remember when Secretary of State George Marshall came over with Lovett and we had a conference on whether or not our Government should recognize Israel. We had very sharp differences of opinion. There is one comment also that I think has value: the President learned so much as his Presidency progressed. At the very beginning, I believe he accepted as *carte blanche* representations or recommendations from his Cabinet members, and sometimes got into trouble by doing so. You remember the Henry Wallace incident, and the speech in Madison Square Garden which must have been back in . . . September of '46. After some experiences of that kind President Truman would many times have Cabinet officers submit recommendations in the form of a memorandum. Then he would have the staff go over the memorandum almost from the standpoint of presenting the other side of the issue. So, there began, I think in the Truman administration, a

system whereby certain staff members developed relationships with certain departments which made the machinery operate more smoothly.

Using Source 3

Sourcing Questions	What was Clark Clifford's role within the Truman Administration? How might the fact that this source is an oral history affect its reliability?
Contextualization Questions	What challenges did Truman face during his presidency? Why might Clifford compare Truman's presidency with Eisenhower's? What happened in the meeting between Truman and George Marshall? Why might that be significant enough to mention in this source?
Corroboration Tasks	What does this source include that the others in this set do not? Is Clifford's tone similar to or different from other oral histories in this set? How does this comment about George Wallace compare with the documents in document set #2? How does this source shed new light on that event?
Close Reading Questions	What specific actions taken by Truman are mentioned in this source? How would those actions assist President Truman in his job? What does this source say about how Truman viewed his cabinet? Why is that significant? To what extent did Cabinet members influence Truman's decision-making? How do you know?

Source 4

[Oral History Interview with Matthew J. Connelly](#): Appointments Secretary to the President, 1945-53. New York, NY. November 28, 1967. Jerry N. Hess

HESS: Any other duties? I know you had many and they were varied.

CONNELLY: Yes, well, I attended all the Cabinet meetings.

HESS: Tell me about that.

CONNELLY: Well, I'd make longhand notes, and it was suggested, I believe, by Jimmy Forrestal, who was then Secretary of the Navy and later Secretary of Defense, that we should have a shorthand report on Cabinet meetings, what each fellow said, period. So Truman suggested that to me and I said, "No. You have found out now that Roosevelt never really had Cabinet meeting. He would hold a meeting but members would not talk in front of other members, because he played one against the other so they'd go around the other way and talk to him personally. But if you have a record of what's going on in the Cabinet, they're not going to speak for that record, where if they could speak off the cuff, they will say more and you will have closer cooperation between them," and he agreed. So I took just longhand notes like, "Forrestal took this position," and so forth. He'd go around the table, always in the same order, he'd go from his left around to his right.

HESS: Did you sit in on all of the Cabinet meetings for Mr. Truman's full period of his administration?

CONNELLY: With a few exceptions.

HESS: And those are the notes that you tell me that are now out at the Truman Library, is that right?

CONNELLY: That's right, but not in the Library, according to what Dr. Brooks told me. They're in Mr. Truman's personal possession.

HESS: How did President Truman look upon the Cabinet? Just what did he think the duty of a Cabinet was? Were the Cabinet members his principal advisers or did he have other advisers in regular Government agencies that he would place as much or more credibility on their advice as he would a member of the Cabinet?

CONNELLY: No, definitely not. Each Cabinet member was responsible for his own department, and whatever came from that department to the President came through the Cabinet member. He never used anybody to undermine any Cabinet member. When he appointed them he said, "This is your job, you're not going to have any interference; you run it, period. You can pick your own people."

Source 5

[Oral History Interview with Matthew J. Connelly](#): Appointments Secretary to the President, 1945-53. New York, NY. August 21, 1968. Jerry N. Hess

HESS: I think we have touched upon some of those in our previous interviews. That is all the questions that I have on the Cabinet. Do you have anything else you'd like to say concerning the Cabinet?

CONNELLY: Well, when President Truman took over, it was very soon apparent that a Cabinet meeting under Roosevelt was practically a nothing. The members of the Cabinet all suspected each other, and Roosevelt played one against the other, with the result that nobody would talk openly, or one of the other members would go out and get it planted in a news story. Well that was not Truman's method of operation, and he wanted a team. And gradually he changed the whole pattern of Cabinet meetings to make it open discussion and that's what he wanted. And if there was a difference of opinion between members they would bring it up at the Cabinet meeting, not go behind the door and try to get the President's ear personally.

Using Sources 4 & 5

Sourcing Questions	What was Matthew Connelly's role within the Truman Administration? How might the fact that this source is an oral history affect its reliability?
Contextualization Questions	What challenges did Truman face during his presidency? Who are the individuals mentioned in this source? Why would Connelly mention the Roosevelt Administration in this source?
Corroboration Tasks	What does this source include that the others in this set do not? Is Connelly's tone similar to or different from other oral histories in this set?
Close Reading Questions	What specific actions taken by Truman are mentioned in this source? How would those actions assist President Truman in his job? What does this source say about how Truman viewed his cabinet? Why is that significant? To what extent did Cabinet members influence Truman's decision-making? How do you know?

How does a President's leadership style shape the government?

	Why does a President need efficiency in the executive branch?	What can the Wallace Affair tell us about Harry Truman as a leader?	How did Truman's personality influence his relationship with his Cabinet?
What do the documents show about ineffective responses or decisions by Truman?			
What do the documents show about ineffective responses or decisions by Truman?			