

# CHAPTER TWO



*Republican Policy Committee meeting, January 3, 1950.*

## CHAPTER TWO

# The Policy Committee's Formative Years (1947-1954)



*[The formation and functioning of the Policy Committee under Senators Robert Taft (1946-1952), William Knowland (1953) and Homer Ferguson (1954), most notably during the Republican majorities of the Eightieth and Eighty-third congresses.]*

**D**uring its first eight years of operation—four in the majority and four in the minority—the Republican Policy Committee demonstrated an effectiveness for developing and promoting party programs. When strong differences of opinion occurred within the party's ranks, either inside the Senate or between senators and a Republican presidential administration, the Policy Committee tended not to take sides, since neither it nor the Conference had authority to enforce decisions upon dissenting members. Instead, the committee helped determine consensus within the party on issues and considered how Republican senators might overcome disagreements. Although the Policy Committee's evolving role in achieving party unity and discipline proved more confined than its creators expected, observers agreed that the

Republican Policy Committee came close to achieving these goals under the chairmanship of Senator Robert A. Taft.<sup>1</sup>

After Republicans won the congressional elections in November 1946, returning to the majorities in the Senate and House for the first time since 1933, Senator Taft declined to run for Senate majority leader during the Eightieth Congress. Anticipating that he would run for president in 1948 and not wanting to be tied to the Senate's floor schedule, he preferred to serve instead as chairman of the new Republican Policy Committee. During these formative years, the committee functioned much the way its creators had anticipated: it considered policy options, determined party consensus, recommended whether to take party positions on issues, set priorities, and determined the order of business for the Senate, down to the day and hour when bills would be called from the calendar. While the Republican Conference convened infrequently, the Policy Committee met weekly to set the agenda for the party at a critical juncture in its history.<sup>2</sup>

## 1947: The Republican Eightieth Congress

At the start of the Eightieth Congress, the Republican Policy Committee issued an ambitious twenty-part "Republican Legislative Program" that proposed ending wartime economic controls, reducing the number of federal employees, cutting federal taxes, and balancing the rights of employers and employees in labor disputes. The Policy Committee recommended dividing measures for consideration into two categories: those that the Conference would approve as a matter of policy; and those on which the Conference wanted Senate action but would not take an official party position.<sup>3</sup>

In January 1947, the Republican Conference convened to determine organizational matters. Anticipating a challenge to the seating of a Mississippi Democrat, Theodore Bilbo, due to improper campaign practices, Senator Taft moved that the Policy Committee "be authorized to take such actions as it deems desirable and to proceed to take any and all necessary steps in the matter." By unanimously adopting his resolution,





*Drawing by Clifford K. Berryman, October 23, 1947, US Senate Collection, Center for Legislative Archives.*

the Conference turned the party's position on the matter over to the Policy Committee and set precedent for similar actions on other issues during that Congress.<sup>4</sup>

Staff director George Smith attended Policy Committee meetings, together with Secretary for the Majority Mark Trice and Secretary of the Senate Carl Loeffler, to help them implement the committee's agenda. Direct federal funding that resulted from the Legislative Reorganization Act of 1946 enabled Smith to expand his research staff to act as a "general service staff" for all Republican senators. In addition to the staff director, the staff included four research associates, legislative analysts and writers, two research assistants, a secretary, and two stenographers, ten in

all. Six were paid under the Policy Committee appropriation, the other four through the Conference. Smith gained a free hand in hiring the Policy Committee's initial staff. Among those he selected were a professional writer, a magazine editor, a public relations specialist, and several recent college graduates. By contrast, the newly created Democratic Policy Committee was slow to assemble a staff and continued to rely primarily on research from the executive agencies.<sup>5</sup>

The Republican ascendancy in 1947 coincided with a total reorganization of Senate committees and the creation of their first professional staff, under the Legislative Reorganization Act of 1946. For the Republican Policy Committee, George Smith sent a memorandum to each new committee chairman outlining good personnel practices, urging them to consider a broad range of expert assistants, and recommending that they consider hiring women in professional categories. The Policy Committee

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*Throughout the Eightieth Congress, Senator Taft used the Policy Committee to set the schedule for the Senate chamber.*

assigned one of its own staff members to maintain potential personnel files to assist the committees in their initial staffing. Further defining its functions, the Policy Committee sought to have Republican senators notify them of what

candidates they were recommending for executive appointments, asserting authority to judge whether the candidates were satisfactory.<sup>6</sup>

Throughout the Eightieth Congress, Senator Taft used the Policy Committee to set the schedule for the Senate chamber. In February, he presented the order of ten major bills and nominations for the committee's approval. The chairman informed the committee that he had been in consultation with the House Republican leadership, which had urged the Senate to move first on the proposed constitutional amendment limiting presidents to two terms in office. Senator Taft's interests lay primarily in domestic issues and he generally deferred on foreign policy to Michigan Senator Arthur Vandenberg, who served in the Senate from 1928 to 1951 and chaired the Foreign Relations Committee during the critical early years of the Cold War. At Taft's recommendation, Senator Vandenberg, as



president pro tempore, attended Policy Committee meetings, where he regularly briefed the committee on the international situation.<sup>7</sup>

## Initial Efforts of the Policy Committee

Despite some division between the conservative and moderate wings of the party, most Republican senators agreed with the directions that Taft and the Policy Committee had taken. The staff canvassed the range of legislation pending before the Senate's standing committees and made reports on specific legislation and nominations. Armed with this information, the committee sought to reconcile conflicting views among Republican senators to maintain party harmony. The Policy Committee considered questions of floor strategy; made up the list of measures to be scheduled for floor operation; invited senators to attend its meetings to present their views on pending legislation; and urged certain committee



Senators (left to right) *Robert A. Taft (R-OH), Arthur H. Vandenberg (R-MI), and Wallace H. White, Jr. (R-ME).*

investigations. If the Policy Committee reached consensus on an issue, it would recommend calling a meeting of the entire Republican Conference. With the authorization of the Conference, it then prepared and issued policy statements on those issues. If the Policy Committee could not reach a consensus on the bill, however, the Conference would not be called. In some cases, the Policy Committee authorized the Republican whip to conduct a poll on the legislation or its proposed amendments.<sup>8</sup>

During the Eightieth Congress, the Policy Committee staff drafted bills and speeches at the request of Senate legislative committees or individual Republican senators, if party interests were involved. In 1947, the staff launched its “Record Vote Analysis,” containing excerpts from the *Congressional Record* summarizing each bill, and listing how each senator voted, and who had been absent. (The Record Vote Analysis evolved over time to provide staff-written synopses of legislation, and the major arguments given for and against each bill, as well as how senators voted.) The staff also offered “spot research”—quick mobilization of data on pending bills and nominations—and more extended research on important issues ranging from the unification of the armed forces to the authorization of the St. Lawrence Seaway. In its collection of data, the staff contacted committees, government agencies and private organizations, and kept a newspaper clipping file. During that Congress, the Policy Committee also published a weekly newsletter, *Majority News*, which was distributed to all Republican senators. Finally, at the close of each session of Congress, the staff prepared a detailed report on the record that Senate Republicans had achieved.<sup>9</sup>

## The Republican Policy Committee's RECORD VOTE ANALYSIS

see examples on the following pages

Republican Policy Committee files contain Record Vote Analyses dating back to the 2nd Session of the 80th Congress, in 1948. Initially, staff reproduced excerpts from the *Congressional Record* that summarized the bill, listed those whom the leadership announced would be absent, and indicated how senators voted. [See example from January 18, 1949.]

Over time, the Record Vote Analysis evolved beyond excerpts from the *Congressional Record*, to provide a staff-written synopsis of the legislation, the major arguments given for and against it, and lists of how senators voted, or why they were absent. [See example from January 22, 1997.]





**SUBJECT: Confirmation of Dean G. Acheson to be Secretary of State.**

**SYNOPSIS: Vote of confirmation of Dean G. Acheson to be Secretary of State.**

**ACTION: Nomination confirmed.**

**EXCERPTS FROM THE CONGRESSIONAL RECORD**

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. If there be no further reports of committees, the clerk will state the nomination on the calendar.

The legislative clerk read the nomination of Dean G. Acheson to be Secretary of State. The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to this nomination?

Mr. WHERRY. On this question, I ask for the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The yeas and nays have been ordered, and the clerk will call the roll.

The Chief Clerk called the roll.

Mr. LUCAS. The Senator from New Mexico [Mr. ANDERSON], who is absent because of illness, would vote "yea" if present.

I announce that the Senator from Delaware [Mr. FREAR] is attending the ceremonies incident to the inauguration of Hon. Elbert N. Carvel as Governor of the State of Delaware, and the Honorable Alexis I. Dupont Bayard, as Lieutenant Governor of the State of Delaware, and is therefore necessarily absent. If present, the Senator from Delaware would vote "yea."

The Senator from California [Mr. DOWNEY] and the Senator from New York [Mr. WAGNER], who are necessarily absent, would vote "yea," if present.

The Senator from Maryland [Mr. TYDINGS], who is absent because of illness, would vote "yea," if present.

Mr. SALTONSTALL. I announce that the Senator from Utah [Mr. WATKINS] is unavoidably detained on official business. If present and voting, the Senator from Utah would vote "yea."

The Senator from Kansas [Mr. SCHOEPEL] is necessarily absent.

The result was announced—yeas 83, nays 6, as follows:

YEAS—83		
Aiken	*Hill	Millikin
Baldwin	*Hoey	Morse
*Barkley	*Holland	Mundt
Brewster	*Humphrey	*Murray
Bricker	*Hunt	*Myers
*Broughton	Ives	*Neely
Butler	*Johnson, Colo.	*O'Connor
*Byrd	*Johnson, Tex.	*O'Mahoney
Cain	*Johnson, S.C.	*Pepper
*Chapman	*Kefauver	Reed
*Chavez	Kem	*Robertson
*Connally	*Kerr	*Russell
Cordon	*Kilgore	Saltonstall
Donnell	Lodge	Smith, Maine
*Douglas	*Long	Smith, N. J.
*Eastland	*Lucas	*Sparkman
Ecton	*McCarran	*Stennis
*Ellender	McCarthy	Taft
Ferguson	*McClellan	*Taylor
Flanders	Ives	*Thomas, Okla.
*Fulbright	*McFarland	*Thomas, Utah
*George	*McGrath	Thye
*Gillette	*McKellar	Tobey
*Green	*McMahon	Vandenberg
Gurney	*Magnuson	Wiley
*Hayden	Malone	Williams
Hendrickson	Martin	Young
Hickenlooper	*Maybank	
	*Miller	
NAYS—6		
Bridges	Jenner	Langer
Capehart	Knowland	Wherry
	NOT VOTING—7	
*Anderson	Schoeppel	Watkins
*Downey	*Tydings	
*Frear	*Wagner	

So Mr. Acheson's nomination was confirmed.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, the President will be notified forthwith of the confirmation.

**ANALYSIS OF VOTE:**

	REPUBLICANS (42)	*DEMOCRATS (54)
Yeas (83)	34	49
Nays (6)	6	0
Not Voting (7)	2	5
POSITIONS OF SENATORS NOT VOTING:	----	----
Not paired—Position "yea"	1 <sup>1</sup>	5 <sup>3</sup>
Not paired—No position	1 <sup>2</sup>	0

<sup>1</sup> Watkins.

<sup>2</sup> Schoeppel.

<sup>3</sup> Anderson, Downey, Frear, Tydings, Wagner.



SENATE RECORD VOTE ANALYSIS

105th Congress  
1st Session

Vote No. 1

January 22, 1997, 2:17 pm  
Page S-617 Temp. Record

ALBRIGHT NOMINATION/Secretary of State

**SUBJECT:** Madeleine Korbel Albright, of the District of Columbia, to be Secretary of State. Confirmation.

**ACTION:** NOMINATION CONFIRMED, 99-0

**SYNOPSIS:** Madeleine Korbel Albright was born in Prague, Czechoslovakia. She received a BA in Political Science from Wellesley College and her Masters and Doctorate from Columbia University's Department of Public Law and Government. Her employment history includes the following: Chief Legislative Assistant to Senator Muskie; Staff Member on the National Security Council and White House Staff Member; Fellow, Woodrow Wilson Center; Senior Fellow, Center for Strategic and International Studies; Professor, Georgetown University; President, Center for National Policy; and United States Ambassador to the United Nations (1993-present).

**Those favoring confirmation contended:**

Ambassador Albright's personal history, her academic research and writing, her diplomatic experience, and her political acumen place her among the few people in America who are well qualified to serve as Secretary of State. Her sterling performance over the past 4 years as Ambassador to the United Nations, where she forcefully advanced United States' interests, gives us confidence that she will do well in this post. On these bases alone we would vote to confirm her, as we would vote to confirm any similarly qualified nominee. Certainly many of us, especially those of us who are Republicans, may disagree with her on specific policies, but the President should have leeway to select Administration officials with whom he is in philosophical agreement. Those of us who are Republicans note also that the President could easily have selected a qualified nominee with views far to the left of those held by Ambassador Albright. She was twice forced to flee her native land of Czechoslovakia, first as a result of the Nazi occupation, then 10 years later after the communist coup. Her first-hand experience with the two worst forms of tyranny this century--Nazi socialism and communism--have taught her the importance of standing firm against

(See other side)

YEAS (99)				NAYS (0)		NOT VOTING (1)	
Republican (55 or 100%)		Democrats (44 or 100%)		Republicans (0 or 0%)	Democrats (0 or 0%)	Republicans (0)	Democrats (1)
Abraham	Hutchinson	Akaka	Inouye				Rockefeller-2
Allard	Hutchison	Baucus	Johnson				
Ashcroft	Inhofe	Biden	Kennedy				
Bennett	Jeffords	Bingaman	Kerrey				
Bond	Kempthorne	Boxer	Kerry				
Brownback	Kyl	Breaux	Kohl				
Burns	Loft	Bryan	Landrieu				
Campbell	Lugar	Bumpers	Lautenberg				
Chafee	Mack	Byrd	Leahy				
Coats	McCain	Cleland	Levin				
Cochran	McConnell	Conrad	Lieberman				
Collins	Murkowski	Daschle	Mikulski				
Coverdell	Nickles	Dodd	Moseley-Braun				
Craig	Roberts	Dorgan	Moynihan				
D'Amato	Roth	Durbin	Murray				
DeWine	Santorum	Feingold	Reed				
Domenici	Sessions	Feinstein	Reid				
Enzi	Shelby	Ford	Robb				
Faircloth	Smith, Bob	Glenn	Sarbanes				
Frist	Smith, Gordon	Graham	Torricelli				
Gorton	Snowe	Harkin	Wellstone				
Gramm	Specter	Hellings	Wyden				
Grams	Stevens						
Grassley	Thomas						
Gregg	Thompson						
Hagel	Thurmond						
Hatch	Warner						
Helms							

**EXPLANATION OF ABSENCE:**

- 1—Official Business
- 2—Necessarily Absent
- 3—Illness
- 4—Other

**SYMBOLS:**

- AY—Announced Yea
- AN—Announced Nay
- PY—Paired Yea
- PN—Paired Nay

Compiled and written by the staff of the Republican Policy Committee—Larry E. Craig, Chairman

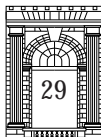


## Freshmen Senators Seek More Influence

The large new class of sixteen freshmen—one-third of all Republican senators in the Eightieth Congress—also sought a role for themselves in determining party policy. The freshmen sent a letter to Conference Chairman Eugene Millikin (a senator from Colorado from 1941 to 1957) requesting more frequent meetings of the Conference and greater representation for their class on the Policy Committee. Freshman Raymond Baldwin (who served as a senator from Connecticut until 1949) explained that rather than a revolt, their action constituted a desire to make greater contributions toward achieving common goals. Baldwin pointed to a recent Policy Committee decision concerning income tax reductions that had put several senators “on the spot.” Both the Conference chairman and the Policy Committee chairman opposed holding weekly conferences. Senator Taft argued that conferences should only be called when a matter of party policy was at stake. Since votes of the conference were not binding upon its members, and since the defection of only four members of the majority on any issue could defeat them on the floor, Taft argued that “the Conference was not an effective method of running Congress.” Taft insisted that no “secret stuff” transpired in the Policy Committee, and pointed out that under Conference rules Policy Committee meetings were open to all Republican senators (although nonmembers could not vote). Senator Millikin suggested that the freshmen senators designate two of their number to sit in routinely with the Policy Committee.<sup>10</sup>

## 1947: Making Policy, Not Publicity

As chairman of the Senate Labor Committee, Senator Taft made particular use of the Policy Committee to advance the Taft-Hartley Act, labor legislation that he sponsored to correct inequities in the New Deal’s labor laws. Although Taft prevailed on most issues within the Labor Committee, divisions among Republican members of the committee caused him to lose four votes. He reintroduced each of these points as amendments on the floor, winning an additional two of them. The



conference committee restored the rest of Taft's objectives in the omnibus bill. When dissenting Republicans on the Labor Committee called for separate votes on the bill's components, Taft gained the support of the Policy Committee and then the Conference for an omnibus bill. That backing enabled him to present the question as a matter of party loyalty. Although two Republicans still voted against the omnibus bill, Taft-Hartley won enactment over President Harry Truman's veto.<sup>11</sup>

Senator Taft saw the Policy Committee's mission as making policy, not publicity. Senator Arthur Watkins (who represented Utah from 1947 to 1959) pointed to the bad press created by budget cuts for reclamation projects and urged the Policy Committee to develop better publicity for

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explaining party positions. Taft responded that public relations was a function of the Republican National Committee and the Republican Senatorial Campaign Committee. Nevertheless, the Policy Committee remained keenly at-

tuned to the political implications of its actions. Near the end of the Eightieth Congress, the committee invited Republican senators standing for reelection that November to present their views about how pending legislation might affect their campaigns.<sup>12</sup>

## **The 1948 Election: Disappointment and Disarray**

Despite Taft's prodigious efforts, 1948 proved a disappointing year. Balancing his Senate responsibilities and a vigorous campaign in the primaries, Taft lost the Republican presidential nomination to New York Governor Thomas E. Dewey. Dewey in turn unexpectedly lost to President Truman. Truman's upset victory after a biting campaign against Congress helped Democrats regain the majority in both the Senate and House. Soon after, George Smith, in ill health, expressed a desire to retire





*Drawing by Clifford K. Berryman, November 20, 1947, US Senate Collection, Center for Legislative Archives.*

as secretary of the Policy Committee. To Senator Taft, Smith defined the ideal qualifications for his replacement:

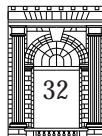
Any man chosen to head this staff should have a good working knowledge of the principles and history of the Republican Party. He should be a competent writer because writing is a major product of the office. The wider his knowledge of source materials and current problems, domestic and foreign, the more useful he will be to the Senators he serves. It is highly desirable, but not absolutely necessary, that he have a legal training. Much of

what he does as staff director will be dependent on his own initiative, imagination and energy, and it will be well to look for those qualities in anyone seeking the job.<sup>13</sup>

## Challenges to Taft's Leadership

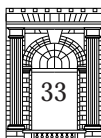
Seeking to rebuild the party after losing the majority, a group of “Young Turk” moderate Republican senators challenged Taft's leadership. The insurgents tended to support more liberal domestic policies than the Taft wing of the party, and were more internationalist in foreign policy. In the Republican Conference, California Senator William F. Knowland (who served in the Senate from 1945 to 1959) moved that any party leader with a fixed term of office—notably the chair of the Policy Committee who served a four-year term—could not be reelected. Knowland's motion lost first by a vote of 16 to 25; it was reconsidered and again lost, 18 to 24. Taft's supporters then amended the rules to allow him to remain as chairman of the Policy Committee, a move that passed by a vote of 29 to 13. Another moderate, Henry Cabot Lodge, Jr. (Massachusetts senator from 1937 to 1944 and again from 1947 to 1953), then challenged Taft for the Policy Committee chairmanship. Taft defeated Lodge by a vote of 28 to 14. While the insurgents knew they lacked the votes to win, they had hoped that their challenge would gain them a greater voice in party policy. For his part, Senator Taft followed his victory by reminding all Republican senators that they were welcome to appear before the Policy Committee at any time.<sup>14</sup>

Republican moderates won a rules change in 1949 to increase the elected members of the Policy Committee to provide a wider scope of opinion. Among those elected that year was the new Senator from Maine, Margaret Chase Smith (who served until 1973), the first Republican woman senator.<sup>15</sup> Conference Chairman Millikin added that geographic balance had prevented them from also putting Senator Knowland on the Policy Committee. He promised that in the next Congress he would “root and toot” to have Senator Knowland join the Policy Committee” (Knowland eventually gained the seat in 1951 and succeeded Taft as chairman in 1953).<sup>16</sup>





*Senator William F. Knowland (R-CA).*



## Changing Role as the Minority Party

As Republicans reverted to the minority, the Policy Committee's influence over the Senate's agenda diminished. "The business of the opposition is to oppose," said Taft. "Minority leaders have no responsibility for presenting a program. Their role is one of opposition and criticism." Instead, the Policy Committee staff devoted itself to preparing legislative histories of major bills passed during the previous Congress and providing the Republican Calendar Committee (which examined and watched the Senate calendar) with a "quick working digest of bills" (a forerunner of the "Legislative Notice"). The Policy Committee also added a lawyer to its staff to assist the Calendar Committee and generally to be available to Republican senators for legal consultation.<sup>17</sup>

Although Democrats held a twelve-vote majority in the Senate, they could not enact President Truman's "Fair Deal" legislative agenda. Debates over amending the Senate cloture rule and over an omnibus appropriations bill paralyzed the Senate for weeks. Several major nominations were rejected after protracted debates. An increased number of private bills also cluttered the Senate's calendar. Truman's legislative initiatives stalled, including his civil rights and national health insurance proposals and his efforts to repeal the Taft-Hartley Act. Even with Democratic majorities, President Truman vetoed thirty-two bills in the first session of the Eighty-first Congress alone. The Republican Policy Committee therefore directed its staff to prepare a report comparing the accomplishments of the Republican Eightieth Congress to the dismal record of the Democratic Eighty-first Congress.<sup>18</sup>

### 1949: Democratic Leader Seeks the Republican Policy Committee's Cooperation

Alarmed over the legislative disarray and the Senate's inability to complete its legislative workload, some Republican senators urged cooperation with the majority party on appropriations bills to facilitate an early





adjournment. Others, however, preferred to leave responsibility for the legislative program to the Democratic leadership. Republicans chose not to press for an early adjournment but pledged that if the majority formulated a “sensible program” they would help expedite its enactment. At the suggestion of the Republican Policy Committee, Republican Minority Leader Kenneth Wherry held discussions with Democratic Leader Scott Lucas. In an unprecedented move on August 10, 1949, the Democratic leader walked into the closed Republican Policy Committee meeting to ask for bipartisan support in discharging a Displaced Persons bill from the Judiciary Committee. Members of the Policy Committee welcomed their political adversary. While Senator Taft declined to commit the party on an issue that the Policy Committee had not yet discussed, he said he personally would sign the discharge petition.<sup>19</sup>

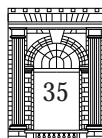
In June 1950, war erupted in Korea. Senator Taft protested that President Truman had sent American troops into combat without seeking a congressional declaration of war. Congressional relations with the administration further deteriorated. By December, the Republican Policy Committee—with only Senator Margaret Chase Smith dissenting—voted a resolution declaring its loss of confidence in Secretary of State Dean Acheson and calling on President Truman to replace him. The

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Republican Conference adopted the resolution, and while it did not cause Acheson’s removal it did signal a breakdown of the bipartisanship in American foreign policy that had prevailed during the early years of the Cold War. President Truman’s firing of

General Douglas MacArthur further undermined the administration’s relationship with Congress. In response, the Policy Committee coordinated Republican demands for a congressional inquiry into the conduct of the Korean War.<sup>20</sup>





*Secretary of State Dean Acheson testifies before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee concerning the Korean War.*

## 1953: A Return to the Majority

In 1952, Senator Taft lost a hard-fought race for the Republican presidential nomination to General Dwight D. Eisenhower, the supreme commander of the Allied troops in Europe during World War II. With Eisenhower heading the ticket in November, Republicans narrowly regained the Senate majority. New Hampshire Senator Styles Bridges (who served from 1937 to 1961) had been Republican minority leader since the death of Kenneth Wherry in 1951. Bridges contemplated becoming president pro tempore and chairman of the Appropriations Committee. If Bridges left the floor leadership, Eisenhower supporters wanted William Knowland to seek the post. Instead, Senator Taft chose to stand for majority leader himself, not only to promote the new Republican administration's legislative program but to keep it in line. Taft called Knowland and promised to support him as chairman of the Policy Committee. Also at

Taft's urging, George Smith was retained as an advisory counsel to the Policy Committee as the party returned again to the majority, while Lloyd Jones, a journalist and public relations specialist, became staff director.<sup>21</sup>

The Eighty-third Congress convened in 1953 with Robert Taft firmly in control of the Senate Republican leadership. "Wherever one looks at the top there is a Taft man," wrote the Washington correspondent William S. White. Taft as floor leader was "formidably backed" by

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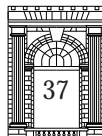
*The Eighty-third Congress convened in 1953 with Robert Taft firmly in control of the Senate Republican leadership. "Wherever one looks at the top there is a Taft man," wrote the Washington correspondent William S. White.*

the Republican Conference chairman, Senator Eugene Millikin of Colorado, "the chief philosopher of the party and a Taft friend in sunshine and in rain." While the new Policy Committee chairman, Senator Knowland, had once challenged

Taft, his positions over time had shifted sufficiently to make him a trusted lieutenant. In addition, Knowland chaired a Policy Committee whose members were drawn largely "out of the old Taft school of politics."<sup>22</sup>

## Working with a Republican President

Not a single Republican senator in 1953 had ever served with a Republican president. With Eisenhower in office, the majority leader and Policy Committee chairman attended weekly congressional leadership meetings at the White House. Since the Republican administration was now offering a legislative program, and since Senator Taft as majority leader retained much of the task of agenda-setting in the Eighty-third Congress, the Policy Committee shifted its attention from setting policy to devising strategies to promote those policies. Senator Knowland persuaded the committee to adopt a procedure for counter-acting Democratic attacks on the Republican administration and majority: "The procedure is that as soon as the Floor Leader or his Deputy becomes aware of an attack which he feels should not be permitted to



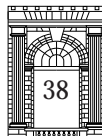
go unanswered, he will notify or have the Floor Secretary notify the following: the Chairman of the Standing Committee concerned, the Senators from the State of the individual who is the object of the attack, and the Cabinet or Agency official or the Party official concerned. When requested to do so, the Staff Director of the Policy Committee will get together material to be sent to the floor for use in rebuttal.” For the most part, the committee concurred with plans already devised by the party leadership.<sup>23</sup>

As Policy Committee chairman, Senator Knowland briefed the Republican Conference on the planned legislative program and urged better attendance at committee meetings and floor debates. The Conference also instructed the Policy Committee’s staff to prepare a report on pending legislation to provide facts and arguments to support the Republican position.<sup>24</sup>

## Changing Leadership

On June 23, 1953, Senator Robert Taft attended his last meeting of the Republican Policy Committee. Hospitalized soon afterwards for treatment for cancer, Taft designated the Policy Committee chairman, Senator Knowland, as acting leader, rather than choosing the whip, Leverett Saltonstall (who represented Massachusetts in the Senate from 1945 to 1967). Explaining his choice, Taft said of Knowland: “nobody can push him around.”

During the weeks in which he wore both hats, Knowland used the Policy Committee to establish a consensus over which legislation should be completed before adjournment. Since the Eisenhower administration was then in disagreement with a majority of Senate Republicans over a proposed constitutional amendment to limit the president’s treaty-making power, sponsored by Ohio Republican Senator John Bricker (who served from 1947 to 1959), Senator Knowland relied on the Policy Committee to preserve party unity. The Policy Committee invited Senator Bricker, Secretary of State John Foster Dulles, and Attorney General Herbert Brownell to its meetings to apply some pressure to the administration to reach a compromise.





*Senators Robert A. Taft (R-OH) and William F. Knowland (R-CA).*

Although the Eisenhower administration agreed to terms that the Policy Committee recommended, Senator Bricker rejected the proposed compromise. Bricker's amendment was defeated and a substitute amendment failed by a single vote to gain the needed two-thirds margin.<sup>25</sup>

## **Ferguson Becomes Third Chairman**

Senate Majority Leader Robert A. Taft died on July 31, 1953. Both the Policy Committee and the Conference quickly addressed the reorganization of the Republican leadership in the Senate. Some members of the Conference opposed any speedy action, given that the first session of the Eighty-third Congress was about to adjourn. New Hampshire Senator Styles Bridges, hospitalized due to an accident, asked for a postponement

of the Conference. Noting that he and several other senators could not attend, and that proxy votes were not allowed, Bridges urged that election of a new leader be delayed until the opening of the next session, in January 1954. But Senator Knowland argued that he lacked a mandate to continue in the leadership even on an acting basis and insisted that unless the question were settled immediately it would have a damaging effect on the party.

On August 3, the day that the First Session adjourned, Knowland announced his resignation as Policy Committee chairman and promised to abide by the decision of the Conference. Turning the chair of the Policy Committee over to Senator Millikin, the Conference chairman, Knowland absented himself from the rest of its proceedings. The Policy Committee voted unanimously that the Conference meet as scheduled to elect a majority leader, citing the uncertainty of international conditions and the possibility that the president might later call a special session.<sup>26</sup>

On August 4, 1953, the Republican Conference unanimously elected William Knowland as majority leader. Although Knowland shared Taft's integrity and decorum, he lacked his parliamentary skill. Burly and gruff and "subtle as a Sherman tank," Knowland often found himself outmaneuvered by his wily counterpart, the Texas Democrat Lyndon B. Johnson. Michigan Senator Homer Ferguson—who had won prominence as a tenacious investigator—was elected to succeed Knowland as chairman of the Policy Committee. Senator Homer Capehart (an Indiana Republican who served from 1945 to 1963) then moved that the Policy Committee be expanded to include all chairmen of standing committees or—if the party should return to the minority—all ranking members of committees. Party leaders argued against this expansion, concerned that the committee would grow too large to be effective. Capehart's proposal was not adopted. Two years later, however, all Republicans facing reelection were added to the Policy Committee, almost doubling its membership from twelve to twenty-three. In 1957, the Policy Committee was reduced to fourteen members, eight ex-officio and six elected.<sup>27</sup>





*Senator Homer Ferguson (R-MI).*



# Subject: G. O. P. Policy

By WILLIAM S. WHITE

WASHINGTON

**W**ith increasing pressure for enactment of the President's legislative program, the spotlight is on the Senate Republican Policy Committee, which masterminds legislative strategy in the upper chamber. To this end it lays out, in close consultation with the Republican Senate floor leader, Senator William F. Knowland, who is a member, the week-by-week program that the Republicans, as the responsible party, must bring to the Senate floor for action.

Meetings, usually on Tuesdays, are held in the second-floor Capitol office of the Secretary of the Senate, Mark Trice, over an average sort of luncheon sent upstairs from the Senate restaurant. Senator Homer Ferguson, committee chairman, is host for this occasion, after which the meeting comes to order with such topics as: What should Senate Republicans attempt to do about farm legislation, and when shall a specific item in this connection be sent to the floor? Chairmen of interested legislative committees—labor, agriculture, etc.—often take part in the discussions if they are not already committee members.

In effect, "Policy" is equivalent to the board of directors of a great corporation which gives much leeway to its management personnel. Rarely is any attempt made to bind the members—not to mention G.O.P. Senators in general—to a specific course. Rather, a kind of consensus is all that is sought. Even so, the members' views have a great influence on the rank and file.

—*New York Times Magazine*, May 23, 1954



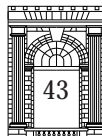


## 1954: The Army-McCarthy Hearings

During the Second Session of the Eighty-third Congress, in 1954, with Republicans maintaining a narrow majority in the Senate, the Policy Committee devoted its attention to such controversial issues as the Army-McCarthy hearings and the potential intervention of U.S. armed forces in Indochina. Because of its smaller size, the Policy Committee remained an effective place for sensitive negotiation—yet rarely did the Policy Committee determine a party position or make a decision to report to the conference. Instead, Majority Leader Knowland arranged for the Republican whip, Senator Leverett Saltonstall, to relay information about Policy Committee discussions and decisions to all Republican senators in person as soon as possible after the committee meetings.<sup>28</sup>

Senator Joseph McCarthy's celebrated clash with the United States Army dominated much of the Senate's attention. The Army-McCarthy hearings began in April 1954. Policy Committee Chairman Ferguson arranged for the committee to confer confidentially with Republican members of the Senate Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations, chaired by Senator McCarthy (senator from Wisconsin from 1947 to 1957). Members of the Policy Committee expressed the desirability of expediting the hearings and ending them within a reasonable time. Speaking for the Permanent Subcommittee members, Illinois Senator Everett Dirksen (who served in the Senate from 1951 to 1969) described their intentions to limit the public phase of the hearings.<sup>29</sup>

Reacting to growing criticism of Senate investigations, the Policy Committee in 1954 proposed new rules under which a vote of the full committee was necessary to authorize any subcommittees; hearings were prohibited unless a quorum was present; and committees were restricted from delegating subpoena power, initiating an investigation, holding a hearing outside of the District of Columbia, or taking confidential testimony unless authorized by a majority of committee members. Witnesses subpoenaed would have the right to counsel. Only senators and authorized staff personnel could interrogate witnesses. After unanimously approving these rules, the Policy Committee forwarded them to the Senate



Rules Committee. The Rules Committee, however, chose to let individual committees set their own investigative standards and procedures. The next year, the Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations adopted rules similar to those that the Policy Committee had recommended.<sup>30</sup>

## **Divisions Over the McCarthy Censure**

In July 1954, Senator Ralph Flanders (a Vermont Republican who served from 1946 to 1959) introduced a resolution to censure Senator McCarthy. The measure included removing the senator as chairman of the Government Operations Committee and its Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations. Seeking to avoid any drastic action that might affect the seniority system, Majority Leader Knowland turned to the Policy Committee for authorization to table Senator Flanders' motion or instruct him on some other course of action. The Policy Committee unanimously voted to authorize the majority leader to move to table Flanders' resolution in the Senate.<sup>31</sup>

Only in December, following the Republicans' loss of majority status in both houses, did the Senate reconvene to act on a censure motion against Senator McCarthy. Public disapproval of the Wisconsin senator since the televised Army-McCarthy hearings had hurt Republican candidates at the polls. Because Senate Republicans were almost equally divided on the issue, the Policy Committee took no official position. Senator Knowland and twenty-three other Republicans voted against the censure, while Senator Ferguson (who had been defeated for reelection that fall) joined twenty-two Republicans, forty-six Democrats and one independent to condemn Joseph McCarthy for conduct unbecoming a senator.<sup>32</sup>

## **The Policy Committee as a Flexible Tool**

During its first eight years of existence, under the chairmanships of Robert Taft, William Knowland, and Homer Ferguson, the Policy Committee provided a flexible tool for the Republican leadership. The





*Senators (left to right) Everett M. Dirksen (R-IL), Joseph R. McCarthy (R-WI), Secretary of the Army Robert Stevens, Karl E. Mundt (R-SD) (standing), and Charles E. Potter (R-MI).*

Republican Policy Committee operated in a more formal and institutionalized manner than its Democratic counterpart, with regularly scheduled meetings and formal votes. When Republicans held the majority, the Policy Committee helped forge policy and maintain unity. When in the minority, the committee helped shape the Republican response to the Democratic agenda. Analyzing its record in 1962, the political scientist Malcolm Jewell concluded that:

The Policy Committee under Taft from 1947 through 1952 came closer to being a policy body than it has been since or than the Democratic Policy Committee has ever been. The primary ingredient necessary for such a recipe of action was a chairman determined to use the committee as a tool for translating his own policies into Republican policies. He succeeded only when a second ingredient was present: a high degree of Republican agreement, at least in general terms, on the issues at stake.<sup>33</sup>

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Malcolm E. Jewell, *Senatorial Politics and Foreign Policy* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1962), 96; Malcolm E. Jewell, "The Senate Republican Policy Committee and Foreign Policy," *Western Political Quarterly* 12 (December 1959), 966–980; Hugh A. Bone, "An Introduction to the Senate Policy Committee," *American Political Science Review* 50 (1956), 352; and Charles O. Jones, "The Senate Minority and Policy Analysis," and "Senate Party Leadership in Public Policy," Commission on the Operation of the Senate, *Policymaking Role of Leadership in the Senate*, 94th Congress, 2nd session, 1976.

<sup>2</sup> William S. White, *The Taft Story* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1954), 60–61; Republican Policy Committee Minutes, May 3, June 2, 1947.

<sup>3</sup> "Republican Legislative Program—1947" c. January 1947, Robert A. Taft Papers, Library of Congress.

<sup>4</sup> Republican Conference Minutes, January 2, 4, 1947.

<sup>5</sup> George H.E. Smith memorandum to Steering Committee Chair and members, c. January 1947, Taft Papers; Republican Policy Committee Minutes, January 7, 1947; Gladys M. Kammerer, *The Staffing of the Committees of Congress* (Frankfort, KY: The Bureau of Government Research, 1949), 37–38.

<sup>6</sup> Kammerer, *The Staffing of the Committees of Congress*, 5–6; Republican Policy Committee Minutes, January 23, 1947.

<sup>7</sup> Republican Policy Committee Minutes, February 17, 28, March 8, 1947.

<sup>8</sup> Staff of Republican Policy Committee, January 10, 1949; Smith Memorandum to Chairman and Members of the Policy Committee January 9, 1949; Republican Policy Committee Minutes, April 4, 26, December 15, 1947.

<sup>9</sup> Examples are "The Story of the 80th Congress" and Senate Document No. 1989 (80th Congress) "Summary of Legislation of the 80th Congress."

<sup>10</sup> Republican Conference Minutes, March 10, 1947.

<sup>11</sup> James T. Patterson, *Mr. Republican: A Biography of Robert A. Taft* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1972), 357–358.

<sup>12</sup> Republican Policy Committee Minutes, April 26, 1947, July 26, 1948.

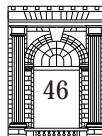
<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, December 30, 1948; Smith to Taft, January 17, 1949, Taft Papers.

<sup>14</sup> Republican Conference Minutes, January 3, 1949; Patterson, *Mr. Republican*, 428–429; David W. Reinhard, *The Republican Right Since 1945* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1983), 58–59.

<sup>15</sup> Gladys Pyle, a South Dakota Republican, won a special election to fill an unexpired term in the Senate in November 1938. However, the Senate did not meet during the two months of her term and she was never sworn in as a senator.

<sup>16</sup> Jewell, *Senatorial Politics and Foreign Policy*, 87; Republican Conference Minutes, January 3, 6, 1949, January 8, 1951.

<sup>17</sup> In 1941, the Republican Conference authorized its chairman to appoint a Calendar Committee "to be charged with the obligation of familiarizing themselves with bills upon the Calendar and of following the call of the Calendar in behalf of the



Minority. Republican Conference Minutes, January 4, 1941. Taft quoted in Neil MacNeil, *Dirksen: Portrait of a Public Man* (New York: The World Publishing Company, 1970), 186.

<sup>18</sup> Republican Conference Minutes, June 7, 1949; Republican Policy Committee Minutes, March 15, 1949; Smith to Senator Guy Cordon, March 12, 1949; Floyd M. Riddick, "The Eighty-First Congress: First and Second Sessions," *Western Political Quarterly* 4 (March, 1951), 48–66; Republican Policy Committee Minutes, October 11, 1949.

<sup>19</sup> Republican Conference Minutes, August 4, 10, 1949; *New York Times*, August 11, 1949.

<sup>20</sup> Republican Policy Committee Minutes, December 7, 15, 1950, April 11, 1951.

<sup>21</sup> Republican Conference Minutes, January 2, 8, March 6, 1953; Patterson, Mr. *Republican*, 585–587; Reinhard, *The Republican Right Since 1945*, 99–100; *Congressional Record*, 85th Cong., 2nd sess., May 21, 1958, 9128–9129.

<sup>22</sup> *New York Times*, January 11, 1953.

<sup>23</sup> Republican Policy Committee Minutes, January 19, April 15, 23, 28, June 23, 1953.

<sup>24</sup> Republican Conference Minutes, June 2, 1953.

<sup>25</sup> Republican Conference Minutes, June 2, 1953; Republican Policy Committee Minutes, July 21, 27, 1953; Jewell, *Senatorial Politics and Foreign Policy*, 1962), 93–94; Duane Tananbaum, *The Bricker Amendment Controversy: A Test of Eisenhower's Political Leadership* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988).

<sup>26</sup> Republican Policy Committee Minutes, August 1, 3, 1953, and Styles Bridges to Eugene Millikin, August 3, 1953.

<sup>27</sup> These elections affected only vacant positions; Conference Chairman Eugene Millikin and Assistant Republican Leader Leverett Saltonstall retained their positions. Republican Conference Minutes, August 4, 1953; Jewell, *Senatorial Politics and Foreign Policy*, 92; Donald A. Ritchie, "William Fife Knowland," *Dictionary of American Biography* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1994), Supplement Nine: 467–469.

<sup>28</sup> Republican Policy Committee Minutes, February 2, 1954.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, May 7, 14, 18, 1954.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, June 26, 28, 30, 1954; *Congressional Record*, 83rd Cong., 2nd sess., 2970.

<sup>31</sup> Republican Policy Committee Minutes, July 13, 14, 1954.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, July 20, 27, 1954.

<sup>33</sup> Beginning in 1949, the Democratic Policy Committee also began holding more regularly scheduled meetings and around 1953 began taking formal votes. Jewell, *Senatorial Politics and Foreign Policy*, 96.

