

The National Archives at a Turn in the Road

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The National Archives

THE National Archives after fifteen years of existence as an independent agency, responsible immediately to the President, has lost that status. By the terms of Section 104 of the Federal Property and Administrative Services Act (Public Law 152, 81st Congress), approved June 30, and effective July 1, 1949, the National Archives became a constituent bureau of the newly established General Services Administration. All other bureaus the functions of which were transferred to the new Administration were abolished. The National Archives was not, nor was the office of the Archivist of the United States, but the functions of the Archivist, with minor exceptions, were transferred to the Administrator of the new Administration, and it was provided, furthermore, that "the Archivist of the United States shall hereafter be appointed by the Administrator."

This action came suddenly — all too suddenly for its implications to be thought out and fully debated. What is its meaning? Is it to be discounted as a move of superficial character that will have little practical effect on the agency and its program; or will it in a more radical and fundamental way alter the direction of the agency's history and services? Of course only the future holds the answer. But we might endeavor to understand what has happened and why; and to try, in the light of that background, to weigh some of the opportunities and dangers of the new position. The opportunities must be recognized and grasped. The dangers must be understood to be avoided or minimized.

Because it is not yet generally available, it may be well to quote Section 104 in its entirety. It appears under a heading "Records Management: Transfer of the National Archives."

SEC. 104. (a) The National Archives Establishment and its functions, records, property, personnel, obligations, and commitments are hereby transferred to the General Services Administration. There are transferred to the Administrator (1) the functions of the Archivist of the United States, except that the Archivist shall continue to be a member or chairman, as the case may

be, of the bodies referred to in subsection (b) of this section, and (2) the functions of the Director of the Division of the Federal Register of the National Archives Establishment. The Archivist of the United States shall hereafter be appointed by the Administrator.

(b) There are also transferred to the General Services Administration the following bodies, together with their respective functions and such funds as are derived from Federal sources: (1) The National Archives Council and the National Historical Publications Commission, established by the Act of June 19, 1934 (48 Stat. 1122), (2) the National Archives Trust Fund Board, established by the Act of July 9, 1941 (55 Stat. 581), (3) the Board of Trustees of the Franklin D. Roosevelt Library, established by the Joint Resolution of July 18, 1939 (53 Stat. 1062), and (4) the Administrative Committee established by section 6 of the Act of July 26, 1935 (49 Stat. 501), which shall hereafter be known as the Administrative Committee of the Federal Register. The authority of the Administrator under section 106 hereof shall not extend to the bodies or functions affected by this subsection.

(c) The Administrator is authorized (1) to make surveys of Government records and records management and disposal practices and obtain reports thereon from Federal agencies; (2) to promote, in cooperation with the executive agencies, improved records management practices and controls in such agencies, including the central storage or disposition of records not needed by such agencies for their current use; and (3) to report to the Congress and the Director of the Bureau of the Budget from time to time the results of such activities.

Back of this legislation there were three elements that came together as contributing forces: (1) the persistent belief of administrators and political scientists that there are too many independent agencies; (2) the recent demand for a central general services agency for the Federal Government; and (3) the movement for the more effective management of records in the Federal Government — not just the older records, which the National Archives was admittedly handling with reasonable effectiveness, but current and semicurrent records which, for the most part, were beyond its authority. The first two elements may be sketched briefly — the third requires more extended consideration. Significantly, however, all three elements were matters of interest and concern to the political scientist and the administrator. The historians, who played such a large role in the creation of the National Archives, were on the sidelines.

A basic note sounded in all the many reorganization proposals since World War I has been to the effect that the President's span of control must be lessened. "The primary purpose of a rational organization of the administrative agencies of the Executive

Branch of the Government is to reduce to a manageable compass the number of agencies reporting to the President," wrote the President's Committee on Administrative Management in its *Report* in 1937. In almost every reorganization some progress was made to that end. President Roosevelt, under an act approved March 3, 1933, made a number of such consolidations. But independent agencies mushroomed again under the impact of New Deal legislation and programs. Most of these were, under the authority granted by an act approved April 3, 1939, transferred to the permanent departments or merged into larger agencies such as the Federal Security Agency, Federal Works Agency, and Federal Loan Agency. The authority given the President to appoint not to exceed six administrative assistants represented an effort to deal with the same problem in another way — as did also the grouping of staff agencies into an Executive Office of the President.

World War II again brought forth its host of independent agencies, so that in these post-war years they seem as numerous as ever, and the demand to poke their heads under has continued unabated, despite the arguments of a minority that such consolidations do not necessarily effect economies, that departments and large agencies tend toward top-heaviness, with additional layers of authority and responsibility, and that the heads of such agencies lose intimate knowledge of and contact with the work that is actually being performed. There are other arguments pro and con, but this is not the place to debate the question. It is sufficient to record that through all previous reorganizations the National Archives sailed serenely on its way. There was some discussion within the agency as to whether, if the blow had to fall, the National Archives might be transferred to the Department of State or might not properly fit more logically into the new Executive Office of the President. From the outside, however, no one appeared to notice the agency. Its name never appeared in the endless documents or in newspaper discussions. This lack of attention may have troubled a few, but to the many on the staff who wished to continue unmolested about their business the apparent immunity of the agency was consoling, *provided*, of course, that the Congress would only notice it sufficiently to give it the funds its rapidly expanded holdings and work load required. Congress seemed, instead, to have settled upon the agency a sort of fixed annual allowance that no presentation of the facts of life could increase.

The National Archives appeared immune because it did not fall readily into any natural grouping of agencies. Its work was unique.

There was little chance for overlapping and involvement in jurisdictional conflict. It did not belong within the Executive Office of the President because it was not a coördinating agency or a policy making agency of the administration in power to that extent. It truly appeared to occupy a special position apart from all other agencies, but dealing with them all — Legislative, Executive, and Judicial — on an equal basis. The logic of this position was considered carefully when the law establishing the agency was written in 1934. In practice the position appeared to have justified itself, as witness the fact that in 15 years the older records of both houses of Congress, of practically all the departments and independent agencies of the Executive Branch, and of many of the courts were centralized in the National Archives Building and in its custody. This was really an amazing achievement, and one that was not paralleled in nations where the archival authority had been handicapped by subordination to some higher department or ministry. Energetic and intelligent liaison work had built up close and effective working relations with all Government agencies. As an independent agency surely the National Archives had proved itself worthy of its special charter. It could be assumed, perhaps, that it was now safely within that category of independent agencies that appear to survive all reorganizations unscathed.

This feeling of security failed to recognize, however, the possibility of being included in a grouping of "general service agencies" of the Government, a relatively new idea that gained sudden popularity and support when recommended by the Commission on Organization of the Executive Branch of the Government (the Hoover Commission) in February of this year. The National Archives, of course, had considered itself a general service agency of the Government. It had emphasized this fact again and again in its publications and in its budget justifications. It prided itself on being, in fact, both a cultural agency and a service agency — on having a twofold justification for existence. It hoped to keep the two in healthful balance as a matter of policy, and to make its mark in both fields. It is true that in the beginning the National Archives was not especially thought of as a service agency. It is still not thought of in that light by the general public. Within the Government, however, as a result of its work, it had been granted this wholly honorable status, and it was proud of such recognition.

Perhaps, then, if its services to the Government were to be emphasized to that extent, it was logical that the National Archives

should be grouped with agencies controlling space and buildings, property management, and central purchasing and warehousing. Yet, despite the fact that its staff members frequently got their hands dirty, the National Archives was not used to thinking of itself as just a housekeeping agency of the Government. It was a service agency to American scholarship too. It held in its custody the central source materials of the nation's history and information for research in almost every field of knowledge. It was, indeed, its very high responsibility, because of its function of appraising and selecting those records of the present that are worthy of permanent retention, to determine the future's heritage from the past, to protect and preserve that heritage, and to guide scholars in its use. Surely it was still an agency that should stand apart from this newly suggested grouping.

The fact is that it probably would have continued to remain apart — no one would ever have thought of including the National Archives in this grouping — had it not been for the third factor mentioned — "records management." Behind that phrase lies the real story of what happened.

Within the National Archives the term "records administration" has been more frequently used. In recent years "records management" has grown in popularity, and appears to be preferred by many outside the agency that have become interested in the field. "Records management," significantly, is the term used in the recent act. Unless one wishes to quibble, the two terms may be considered as interchangeable, and will hereafter be so used in this article without quotation marks.

The real problem of definition arises when records administration is related to archives administration. Are they synonymous? Is archives administration the more inclusive term, of which records administration, relating to current records, is but a part? Or, is archives administration just a part of records administration — that part that has to do with the selection and administration of the records deemed worthy of permanent preservation? A fourth view would insist on the two being considered separate fields, joining up to each other but not overlapping. The debate hangs, obviously, upon the meaning given to the term "archives." Upon the answer depends the meaning given to the term "archivist," and the rôle that should be assigned to the archival agency. Situations, of course, will not wait for such an academic debate to be resolved. If archivists cannot make a decision, it will be made for them, and that in a sense is what has happened.

In this article the fourth view will be adopted arbitrarily for the sake of clarity, and henceforth the terms records administration or records management will refer to the administration of records that are still in the custody of existing agencies of the Government.

How did the National Archives get so involved in records management, especially since there was nothing in its basic legislation that gave it any specific duties or authority in this field aside from the authority to inspect? It will be remembered that many of its earlier accessions consisted of the records of temporary World War I agencies. It was discovered that these mammoth, hurried agencies had made no attempt to restrain the creation of records, to prune by eliminating duplicate and routine material, to adopt consistent patterns of filing, to consolidate and systematize. Instead they had used all the effective record-creating devices of the modern age to produce copies that were filed mechanically and indiscriminately at every level by untrained file clerks without overall planning, controls, and supervision, and all had been left for a new and unprepared agency to manage. Given time, money, and no new emergencies, these records might eventually have been reduced to manageable compass and systematized. But the greater emergency agencies of the New Deal were already in existence and repeating the pattern. They were to be followed by defense agencies, the agencies of a longer and greater World War, and reconversion agencies — all offering no breathing spell nor hope of one.

Furthermore, the realization had dawned that the problem was not limited to emergency agencies. The permanent agencies, too, since the end of the automatic restrictions imposed by hand copying — with the accompanying careful controls that were required — had similarly abandoned the old restraints. The first Government-wide survey of Federal records, carried out in 1935-37, revealed a disconcerting picture in this respect. It was more painfully evident as the National Archives attempted under its 1934 mandate to select those records considered worthy of permanent retention and to report all others to Congress for disposal. It became obvious that modern classified files were not designed for efficient weeding, that the classifications themselves were often faulty, that finding aids were too often inadequate or non-existent. The archivist could never hope to secure funds and labor to do the work the agencies themselves were leaving undone. The old controls had been lost, and nothing was taking their place. The real answer appeared to lie higher than the filing units — to lie with officials that were concerned with costs in file room labor, in space and equip-

ment, and in efficiency in administration — in management itself. And management either was not paying attention to the problem or did not know how to deal with it.

There was a long debate within the National Archives as to what its rôle should be. It did not know all the answers to records management problems, but it thought it knew some of them, and it was gaining in experience. Advantage was taken by some of the staff members of opportunities that arose within the agencies to discuss the more obvious solutions. The National Archives could not do the work, but surely it could preach the virtues of good records management, give suggestions when invited to do so, and encourage the setting up of records officers or records management units when the situation was ripe. The *Report of the Archivist* for the fiscal year ending June 30, 1941, was the first to have in it a section on records administration, and it contained this significant statement of policy: "The National Archives should be prepared to assist the agencies in planning such programs."

The really dramatic expansion of the work came during World War II when a large number of National Archives staff members left their agency to go into the war agencies, both military and civilian, carrying their viewpoints and ideas with them, eager to test them in practice. They were energetic and effective salesmen, and they found or made opportunities. They drew younger men from the National Archives to serve as staff assistants or as lieutenants in the bureaus, and when the supply from the National Archives ran out they trained their own, thus widening the circles of those who caught the fever and advanced the work. The less active records were gotten out of the way through listing and scheduling for disposal, through transfer to the National Archives, through the establishment of central overflow depositories where they were analyzed, weeded, and consolidated, or through the efficient use of microfilm. Decisions were made instead of postponed. Directives and manuals were drafted to revolutionize paper work and control it, and to train and indoctrinate those responsible. Spectacular savings were reported, and notable examples of increased efficiency were quoted. These men seemed to prove, certainly, that the right approach, sufficient authority, and a determined attack did result in progress.

The effort continued beyond the war into the liquidation of some of these agencies, the record aspects of which were carefully planned and controlled for the first time. Again there were instances of notable success, as in the case of the Office of Censor-

ship and the Office of Price Administration. The gain to the National Archives as it took over these records in manageable compass and serviceable order was incalculable. In other cases where there had been no control at higher levels the results were as disastrous as ever. In some cases control was lost at a critical period by drastic curtailment in funds or by lack of backing because of switches in authority.

The National Archives was no mere bystander in all this. It not only furnished the original impetus and much of the leadership, but it encouraged the establishment of records officers and high-level programs at every opportunity in agency after agency, permanent or war-born. It wrote plans and job descriptions or saw that those working successfully in other agencies were widely disseminated. It gave advice in the choosing of personnel. It prepared manuals, and its staff members read papers, held conferences, and brought persons with common problems together. It sponsored the Inter-agency Records Administration Conference where records administrators and files supervisors were for the first time brought together periodically to exchange experiences and seek solutions. It successfully sought legislation to speed up records disposal by means of schedules. It persuaded agencies to make plans for the systematic retirement of their records before the end of the conflict so as not to be caught short when that time came. So impressed was the Bureau of the Budget with this latter activity that it urged the National Archives to move into some agencies before the National Archives felt the situation was ripe — thus touching off a notable debate within the agency as to the wisdom of forcing such programs. No one can examine the published and processed output of the National Archives at this time, nor read its annual reports, without being impressed with the attention and effort that was given to promoting this work. Much of the seed fell on fallow ground, of course, but enough of it had rooted and spread so that by the end of the war a movement of considerable proportions and great potentiality was under way — a movement that was continuing to expand under its own momentum but that still, almost desperately, needed guidance. Who should give this guidance? This was an important time to furnish it when agencies were settling back into peacetime routines and setting the patterns that might govern record keeping for a generation. Besides, the war had brought into existence certain major activities that now needed direction, if not some measure of control, from a central agency if they were to be operated in the interests of economy and efficiency. Examples were

microfilming and the establishment and operation of overflow records centers. Should the National Archives relinquish this field and return to the traditional labors of an archival agency — which labors, with increased accessions and increased service demands, admittedly needed all the resources that came its way? Could the National Archives in the interests of its own future let go? If microfilming by the agencies, for example, continued uncontrolled and if processing work performed in the many intermediate records centers was not coordinated with policies of the National Archives, would not the records inherited by that agency in the future likely be in a chaotic state? On the other hand, the National Archives, if it were to assume the responsibility, ought also to have the legislative authority and backing of Congress, and its intended rôle should be made clear throughout the Government. The National Archives carried on no campaign one way or another. The decision was not that easy to make.

The time arrived when, according to newspaper reports, the Commission on the Organization of the Executive Branch of the Government was appointing its "task forces." "Perhaps we ought to recommend a task force on records administration," suggested the Archivist. A letter was written to the Commission stressing the importance of the subject, outlining some of the problems that needed attention, and requesting especially a determination as to how and where responsibility for such a program should be distributed. What should be the responsibility of the Administrative Management Division of the Budget Bureau? What should be the contribution of the National Archives? What should be expected of the agencies themselves? At the time it was felt that such a study, if made, would have the virtue of drawing attention to the problem and, perhaps, pointing up the alternatives. It was not supposed that it would have much other practical effect. In other words, it could hardly do any harm; it might do some good.

The Hoover Commission approved the proposal and employed Emmett J. Leahy, Executive Director of the National Records Management Council, to head a task force on records management. Mr. Leahy as a former member of the National Archives staff was entirely familiar with the part that agency had played in the development of the movement; as the director of a large and notably successful records management program in the Navy Department during the war, he possessed experience in operating such a program in a major field of Government activity. He associated with him on his task force as consultants: Herbert E. Angel, Di-

rector of Office Methods, Navy Department; Robert H. Bahmer, Assistant Archivist of the United States; Frank M. Root, Archivist of the Westinghouse Electric Corporation; and Edward Wilber, formerly Assistant Chief of the Bureau of the Budget's Management Improvement Branch but subsequently with the Department of State. The result of the study and deliberations of this task force was a report to the Commission, printed in January 1949 under the title *Records Management in the United States Government*. The report was written solely by Mr. Leahy and has come to be referred to generally as the "Leahy Report."

A general review of this *Report* is not possible here.¹ Two of its three major recommendations were in keeping with a program that the National Archives had long advocated. The other — "That a Federal Records Administration be established and that the existing National Archives Establishment become an integral part thereof" — came as a surprise, and immediately met with spirited opposition within the agency. The creation of a larger agency that would swallow up the present one, with a new Federal Records Administrator at the head, to whom the Archivist would be subordinate, seemed like promoting excessive bureaucracy and appeared unnecessary even to advocates of a strong records administration program.

The effect of the Leahy Report did not end here. Its strong emphasis on the National Archives, or rather the proposed Federal Records Administration, as a service agency led the Hoover Commission logically to associate it with the other general service agencies of the Government. It was hardly a surprise, therefore, to find in the Commission's expected report on an *Office of General Services*, issued in February 1949, the recommended "creation of a Records Management Bureau in the Office of General Services, to include the National Archives." Because of its successful records administration program the National Archives was at last noticed, and its reward was to be submerged two levels at once and to be grouped with other agencies whose interests seemed almost completely foreign.

By letter of March 1, the President requested the comments of the Archivist on the recommendations of the Hoover Commission. They were given through the Director of the Bureau of the Budget on March 21 in a carefully reasoned document that would be of the utmost interest to the profession. The Archivist opposed both

¹ The reader will find a review by Martin P. Claussen in *American Archivist* 12: 286-290 (June, 1949).

the creation of a Bureau of Records Management and the inclusion of the National Archives in an Office of General Services. In the slower pace at which legislation generally moves it is inconceivable that the logic of the arguments marshalled in this document should have been without effect. The National Archives was caught, however, in a stream of events that was moving too rapidly. A host of bills was being introduced to carry various recommendations of the Hoover Commission into effect, and there was strong pressure for some action from this Congress. Meanwhile the President's own request for reorganization powers was still being held up by controversy in Congress and, it appeared, might not be passed in time to be effective at this session. The Administration decided, under the circumstances, to move ahead with the General Services idea, one of the main Hoover Commission recommendations that seemed to be generally accepted as desirable.

The House Committee on Expenditures in the Executive Departments had long been perfecting a bill for an improved property management program in the Federal Government (H.R. 2781), upon which it had held extended hearings. There were now grafted on this bill entire sections and new phraseology that would bring it more nearly into line with the recommendations of the Hoover Commission on the subject of general services and supply activities, including at the last minute, on the recommendation of Hoover Commission representatives, the insertion of Section 104 on records management. The new bill (H.R. 4754), which passed the House on June 8, did not include the provision for a Bureau of Records Management, thus eliminating at least one layer of authority over the National Archives. In transferring the functions of the Archivist to the Administrator the bill also specifically excepted his function under the Act of July 7, 1943, of submitting directly to Congress his recommendations on the disposal of records not deemed to have sufficient value to warrant further preservation by the Federal Government, thus preserving his right to act as the agent of Congress in the vital matter of appraisal. Hoover Commission representatives, however, succeeded in having this important reservation eliminated from S. 2020, the bill acted upon by the Senate, as not being in accord with the Commission's insistence that all authority and responsibility be lodged in the head of an agency. The Senate version survived in the Conference report and in the final Act.

There were no hearings on these revised bills. Time pressed. There was certain existing legislation due to expire June 30 that

this legislation would replace. The Committee reports urged passage as a major administrative reform. The sponsors made their speeches presenting the bills on the floor. A few questions were asked relating to property and supply phases, but there was no general debate. The National Archives staff awoke on July 1 to find themselves members of a new agency, the General Services Administration. The Acting Administrator, Mr. Jess Larson, whose expected appointment as Administrator was soon confirmed by the Senate, had ready his Temporary Regulation No. 1, which provided that, "temporarily and until further order. . . . All agencies, bodies, and boards transferred by the Act to the General Services Administration shall continue, within such Administration, to administer their respective functions in the organizational structures and under the nomenclature existing and applicable immediately prior to such transfers. . . ." Committees have been appointed, on which the National Archives is represented, to study and advise on the problem of permanent organization.

Looked at objectively, is this subordination of the archivist to the administrator — if we may lower case the titles at this point — any different from the subordination of the professional in many other fields of Government service? Of the military man, for example? In his case we insist that there must be civilian control at some point. Or of the scientist in a multitude of agencies? The Director of the Geological Survey should be a professional geologist, just as we hope the Archivist will always be an archivist, but we do not expect that the Secretary of the Interior must also be a geologist. The nonprofessional superior takes over at some level. It is only a question as to where that level should be. At some point the professional is responsible to his boss — the representative of the American people. Whether that boss be the directly chosen President or one of his higher level appointees should not make a great deal of practical difference, provided he be a man of understanding. The danger has always existed that some President might make unsuitable appointments or, through lack of sympathy or understanding, otherwise cripple the agency and its work. In this respect the National Archives to date merely has been unusually fortunate.

What is important is that the professional head and the administrator should meet in friendly give and take in the formulation of policy and program, and then that the functions involved in carrying out a professional program should be delegated back to the

professional head. There can be no half and half business about this. Records management must be included in this unified program. It has made progress only as it was led by a professional group and dominated by the professional spirit. Records management in the agencies and in the intermediate records centers must be coordinated and harmonized with the work in the National Archives — must be a professionally controlled activity throughout the life history of the records. That is the meaning of the revolution through which we have passed. Let there be no mistaken impression that it was the opposite — that the entire program was to be de-professionalized. Failure and a quick relapse to the old situation would follow.

There is unquestionably a danger, inherent in the present alignment, that services to the Government will be given precedence to the extent that obligations of the National Archives to culture and scholarship will be relegated to a lesser rôle — in budget matters, in choice of personnel, and in emphasis in planning and programming. There is no end, of course, to the amount of funds that can be put into records administration work. The latter, fundamentally, is an effort to combat or counteract human disorderliness, and it can be successful only to a degree. Records administration can be a will-o'-the-wisp that will lead us farther and farther into a morass, sapping our strength and our resources, until in its pursuit we have forgotten other objectives of existence. In other words, just as the tasks of scholarship are never done, so also, we must recognize at the outset, that the tasks of records administration will never be done. There is no measurable task or work load for either that can be budgeted for mathematically. It all depends upon judgment. Whose judgment? The Archivist is obviously, because of his closer contacts with both programs, the more likely to see them in perspective. Perhaps under the circumstances the professional and scholarly organizations need to consider the setting up of some representative committee to keep a closer watch over the situation. Or shall we rather say to furnish advice and support?

The reservation that was written into both House and Senate bills, only to be eliminated at the insistence of representatives of the Hoover Commission, deserves a little further consideration. The power to say what may be destroyed is the power to say what shall be kept — to determine the content of the records to be available for the future for the people's audit, through their scholars, of the activities of their Government. To make these recommendations to the Congress calls for broad educational background, for

training in research and research needs in many fields, and for experience built up only from close attention to details over a long period. It requires an objectivity, and a fund of information and precedent, that cannot be expected of an administrator of a large agency, whether he be the head of a General Services Administration or any other. There are special dangers, however, when the responsibility is assumed by the head of an agency likely to be involved in so many complicated relationships with other agencies as will be the General Services Administration. The Administrator, it would seem, would be well advised if he clearly delegated this function back to the Archivist and protected him in its independent exercise. To even appear to limit the Archivist's freedom in making these recommendations might jeopardize the great gains that have been made and turn the clock back to the days before the National Archives was established as a check upon ill-advised disposal.

What now are some of the possible advantages of the new position of the National Archives? It is not likely that all of them can be perceived at first glance, so new is the field of vision, and so unexplored are the resources embodied in the new legislation. These resources are not only those added by Section 104(c), but those involved in the controls given the General Services Administration over space and equipment. To be under the same roof with the agencies concerned with these vital elements involved in records management should lead to closer coordination in working out objectives and solutions than was ever possible before — toward getting more suitable, and at the same time more economical space for records storage, especially in connection with intermediate records centers, and toward getting more suitable, and at the same time more economical equipment and supplies for the housing and maintenance of records.

There is also the immediate space problem of the National Archives itself. The degree to which this can be solved and the way in which it is solved in the next few years will determine the agency's future history to a considerable extent and affect its ability to continue to serve the Government as it has in the past. The present building is almost filled. Room can still be found for smaller accessions, but larger ones cannot be handled. The War Assets Administration and the Office of Housing Expediter, for example, are soon to be liquidated and, despite expected heavy reductions in bulk through disposal, will have large bodies of records that must be kept for long periods or permanently. The National Archives cannot offer hope of space for such large accessions in the

present building. These are but two among a number of such agencies. The National Military Establishment has long been aware of the fact that the National Archives cannot hope to house the military records of World War II. The backlog of non-current records of permanent value has been growing until another building the size of the National Archives in Washington might now easily be filled. The lack of this building is one of the major factors behind the rapid growth of intermediate records centers established by the agencies themselves in all parts of the country.

Several different proposals for meeting this problem have come to grief in the past, in part because of the inability of the several agencies involved to get together on their plans at the right time. Now with the General Services Administration having full responsibility and the chief agencies involved, the National Archives and the Public Building Administration, under the same roof, a coordinated plan of attack on the problem should have greater chance of success. Any opportunity for the intelligent, centralized, and economical administration and preservation of the more important records of this generation is at stake. Through the controls now given the General Services Administration over intermediate records centers, the whole complex situation can be worked on as one problem. Insofar as reduction in bulk of records through the intelligent use of microfilm is a factor in the situation, centralized control of this factor is also possible for the first time.

The new association also offers much hope for progress through the preparation of general disposal schedules to cover records in all agencies that relate to the procurement of supplies and equipment, property accounting, space control, and building management. These represent the chief housekeeping records that now appear over and over again on the lists and schedules submitted by individual agencies. If by close coöperation with agencies now under General Services that are centrally responsible for these activities, such general schedules can be developed and put into effect, much time spent by the National Archives on these matters in the past will be saved, with resulting economies to all agencies of the Government.

Finally, it is the hope of many that the budget situation of the National Archives may be benefitted. It is expected that the Congress, having committed itself to an improved records management program in the hope of achieving major overall economies, will be willing to give the agency made responsible for spearheading the program larger appropriations in order to achieve such results. The

substantial gains made in records management by the National Archives in the past have been in the nature of extra dividends from the agency's regular appropriation and, although a demonstration of what even a little can do when intelligently invested in this field, the gains have been at the expense of the normal, traditional activities of the National Archives. These latter should be benefitted if no longer taxed to carry the records management burden. It can hardly be expected that Congress, as a whole, will ever possess an appreciation of the traditional activities of the agency. It accepts them to a degree on faith but without enthusiasm or even much interest. The records management program, however, judging from its prompt endorsement of the recommendations of the Hoover Commission, appeals to Congress as an obvious ingredient of efficient and economical administration that deserves support.

The present legislation is not intended to be the final word. Both the Senate and House Committee reports emphasized that the limited authority for records management given in Section 104 was only a first step permitting the Administrator to make a beginning on the program. In the words of the Senate Committee report, "Additional legislation will be necessary to establish an effective system of records management. Such a system, however, should be built around the National Archives Establishment, and should be administered in the General Services Agency, so that this transfer [of the National Archives to the General Services Administration] is a logical first step toward its creation." There had been no time to consider such legislation in the thorough manner in which that on property management had been developed. The National Archives has already been called upon to draft such legislation, with the intention that it shall be considered at the next session of the Congress. It has been intimated that such legislation will not be limited necessarily to the subject of records management, but may involve a reconsideration of the basic legislation of 1934 establishing the National Archives. It is to be hoped that this time there will be an opportunity for all interested parties to be heard.