

Francis Wilcox

Chief of Staff

Senate Foreign Relations Committee, 1947-1955

Preface

by Donald A. Ritchie

The size and role of congressional committee staffs changed very little between the appointment of the first committee clerks in the 1850s and the passage of the Legislative Reorganization Act of 1946. Staffs were small. Their responsibilities were limited to handling correspondence, overseeing the printing of committee documents, and setting up the mechanics of public and executive hearings. Generally, they had to rely upon the executive agencies to generate information, reports, and even drafts of speeches on proposed legislation. When Francis O. Wilcox became the first chief of staff of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in 1947, its staff consisted of one full-time clerk, a half-time clerk, and a half-time secretary. Wilcox then set out to build a professional staff to enable the committee to develop its own sources of information to form independent judgments.

Born in Columbus Junction, Iowa, on April 9, 1908, Francis Wilcox came to the committee after teaching at the University of Louisville, working with the Office of Inter-American Affairs and the Office of Civilian Defense, and serving as the international relations specialist for the Legislative Reference Service of the Library of Congress. In that latter capacity he accompanied Senators [Arthur Vandenberg](#) and [Tom Connally](#) to the United Nations Conference in San Francisco in 1945. When the Legislative Reorganization Act authorized committees to appoint professional, nonpartisan staffs, Senators Vandenberg and Connally agreed that Wilcox was the right man to head the Foreign Relations Committee staff. He epitomized the nonpartisan nature of the new staff. As Senator [Bourke Hickenlooper](#) (R-IA) later noted of Wilcox: "I have served with him on the Committee of Foreign Relations since 1948, and I still do not know to what political party he belongs because I have never been politically minded to such an extent as to inquire what his partisan politics may be. I can say honestly that he has never disclosed them to me, voluntarily or involuntarily, and I have never inquired of him. It is sufficient to say that in his service to the committee he has acted not only without partisanship, but also in such a manner as to serve Democrats and Republicans with complete impartiality and intelligent assistance." Appropriately, Francis Wilcox served on the Foreign Relations Committee staff during the zenith of bipartisanship in American foreign policy. Much of his oral history is devoted to discussing the forces and personalities that facilitated such bipartisanship, and that eventually unraveled it. He served under the chairmanships of Arthur Vandenberg, Tom Connally, [Alexander Wiley](#), and [Walter George](#), while the committee was deliberating over such momentous issues as the Truman Doctrine, the Marshall Plan, and the formation of the North

Atlantic Treaty Organization. After leaving the committee staff in 1955, Wilcox continued a distinguished career in foreign policy. From 1955 to 1960 he was Assistant Secretary of State for International Organization Affairs, a position which gave him a view of policy making from the executive branch's perspective. From 1961 to 1973 he served as dean of the prestigious School of Advanced International Studies at Johns Hopkins University. In 1973 he became executive director of the Committee on Organization of Government for the Conduct of Foreign Policy and from 1975 to 1984 he was director general of the Atlantic Council of the United States. His books include *Proposals for Changes in the United Nations* (with Carl M. Marcy), 1955; *Congress, the Executive, and Foreign Policy*, 1971; and *The Constitution and the Conduct of Foreign Policy*, 1976. Francis Wilcox died on February 20, 1985.

About The Interviewer: Donald A. Ritchie is associate historian of the Senate Historical Office. A graduate of C.C.N.Y., he received his Ph.D. in history from the University of Maryland. He has taught at the University College of the University of Maryland, George Mason University, and the Northern Virginia Community College, and conducted a survey of automated bibliographical systems for the American Historical Association. He has published several articles on American political and economic history, a book, *James M. Landis: Dean of the Regulators*. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1980), and has edited the *Executive Sessions of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee (Historical Series)* for publication by the committee. He has served as an officer of both the Oral History Association and Oral History in the Mid-Atlantic Region (OHMAR), and in 1984 received OHMAR's Forrest C. Pogue Award for significant contributions to the field of oral history.
