GENERAL JOHN S. BRAGDON, THE OFFICE OF PUBLIC WORKS PLANNING, AND THE DECISION TO BUILD PENNSYLVANIA'S KINZUA DAM

In his presidential address before the Western History Association in Salt Lake City in 1983, historian Francis Paul Prucha emphasized that scholars researching and writing about Indian-white relations "can no longer focus their attention on the Department of the Interior and the Bureau of Indian Affairs." Prucha pointed out that "responsibility for Indian affairs in the twentieth century has spread remarkably to other agencies of the federal government." The role of the White House staff is one area of decision-making which has been largely ignored by scholars analyzing Indian-white relations, although staffers help filter and formulate policies. President Dwight D. Eisenhower's Office of Public Works Planning and its director, Major General John S. Bragdon, illustrate the importance of presidential advisors in the development of official directives that bear directly on native peoples.

By focusing on General Bragdon and his office's role during the Kinzua Dam controversy, this article also sheds light on the nature of Eisenhower's leadership, the so-called "hidden-hand Presidency," which has been the subject of growing scholarly attention over the past decade. The President, in the words of Eisenhower biographer Stephen Ambrose, "ran the show" more than contemporary observers credited him in the 1950s; nevertheless, the Kinzua Dam debate indicates a willingness to collaborate with, and, at times, give wide discretionary authority to his White House staff. Unlike most other American Indian policies of the postwar period which were set rather openly in the committees of Congress, public works projects affecting American
Indians during the Eisenhower years had the official imprimatur of the Executive Branch and were made "backstairs at the White House." The building of the $125 million Kinzua Dam broke a federal-Iroquois treaty, the Canandaigua Treaty of 1794; flooded more than 9,000 acres of Seneca lands, all acreage below 1,365 feet elevation, including the entire Cornplanter Tract, the last Indian tribal lands in Pennsylvania; destroyed the old Cold Spring Longhouse, the ceremonial center of Seneca traditional life; caused the removal of 130 Indians families from the "take area"; and resulted in the relocation of these same families from rural surroundings separated by great distances to two suburban-styled housing clusters, one at Steamburg and the other called Jimerstown which is adjacent to the City of Salamanca. In compensation, Congress awarded the Seneca Nation $15,000,573 in a law passed belatedly in 1964. This act provided $1,289,000 for direct damages caused by land loss; $945,573 for indirect damages to compensate the Indians for relocation expenses, loss of timber and destruction of wildlife; $387,023 for "cemetery relocation"; $250,000 for Indian legal and appraisal fees; and $12,128,917 for "rehabilitation" which was directed at meeting the Senecas' urgent need for community buildings, economic development, education and housing. Even today, more than twenty years after the flooding of their homeland began, Seneca elders have difficulty speaking of this modern time of troubles. Going against Iroquois customary decor, Seneca elders break down and cry, expressing their anguish in recalling the years, 1957 to 1964. To them, the relocation and removal of Seneca families from the "take area" was their second "Trail of Tears," comparable only to these same Indians' loss and removal from the Buffalo Creek Reservation in the first half of the nineteenth century.

Senecas of all ages still ask themselves and their elders how this dam tragedy came about since they had attempted to stop it from 1927 onward; nevertheless, the federal courts dismissed their arguments in 1958, insisting that the doctrine of "Plenary Power" allowed Congress to unilaterally sever treaty guarantees, even by a $1 million line item in the $800 million House Public Works Appropriations Bill passed on June 19, 1957. Despite the heroic and massive attempt to sway public and political opinion against the 180-foot high dam right through the fall of 1964, the Senecas and their friends had lost the battle long before the flooding occurred. Although much of the writings on the Kinzua Dam has centered on the Presidency of John F. Kennedy, the critical period for the Seneca Nation was from 1955 to 1959. The inclusion of the small but initial Kinzua line item appropriation in the 1958 budget...
was not altogether the work of the lobbying efforts of the Pennsylvania delegation in Congress. It was a carefully calculated decision by President Eisenhower and his White House staff led primarily by General Bragdon.

For nearly fifty years prior to the Eisenhower administration, a variety of interests had proposed an upper Allegheny River dam and flood control project. The idea largely stemmed from the organization of the Flood Commission of Pittsburgh by the city's chamber of commerce in 1908. Headed by "Ketchup King" H. J. Heinz and composed of a special engineering committee, this commission attempted to work out a detailed plan for flood control at the "golden triangle," the confluence of the Allegheny and Monongahela Rivers which form the Ohio River at Pittsburgh. In 1912, the commission recommended the development of a series of reservoirs on the three-river system to provide flood control, and, at the same time, to encourage industrial growth for Pittsburgh and environs. The need for flood control in the Ohio River systems was made clear in the following year when the tragic Dayton flood killed 200 people and destroyed $200 million worth of property. The United States Army Corps of Engineers became involved in the plans for flood control from 1924 to 1928, issuing a special report in the latter year which apparently favored the idea of power development more than flood control by the construction of a series of dams for the Allegheny River. By the early 1930s, the Army Engineers were working in tandem with various Pittsburgh companies—Jones and Laughlin, Carnegie Steel, Gulf Oil—and special interests groups such as the Pittsburgh Chamber of Commerce and the Allegheny River Improvement Association to promote the Kinzua Dam project to prevent the potential idling of their factories' work force. Pittsburgh industrialists were also interested in having the Allegheny River kept at a uniform level through Kinzua and other projects to reduce the pollution of the sulphurous drainage from the coal mines in the city's environs which were rusting boilers in their steel factories.6

Impetus for flood control arose again in 1936. On St. Patrick's Day in that year, a disastrous flood hit Pittsburgh with most of the downtown area of the city inundated by waters that crested at a record of forty-six feet. The need for flood control coincided with the joint efforts of industrialist Richard King Mellon and Mayor David Lawrence, later elected Governor of Pennsylvania, to create a "Pittsburgh renaissance." Even before the formal master plan for Pittsburgh rejuvenation was born at the Allegheny Conference on Community Development that took place in 1943, the City's political power was already weighty and
influential. Congress passed three flood control acts in 1936, 1938 and 1941 that dealt with Pittsburgh and environs. The 1936 act included the Kinzua Dam as part of nine flood control reservoirs planned for the protection of Pittsburgh and for the reduction of flood heights in the Ohio River Valley. This Allegheny project was also included in 1938 as part of a general comprehensive plan for flood control in the Ohio River Basin. The 1941 act authorized a modification of the original plan to take into consideration the interests of pollution abatement and stream flow regulation for navigation. In each case, no specific funds were appropriated by Congress for the construction of the dam, largely because of increasing foreign crises, military preparedness spending and significant opposition from the Interior Department and the Executive Branch of government.\(^7\)

In the postwar period, proponents of the project added two other arguments for the dam’s construction. Maurice Goddard, professor of forestry at Pennsylvania State University and later Secretary of Forestry and Waters for the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, for one promoted Allegheny River flood control to further state park and recreational development. In addition, by the mid 1950s, dam building nationwide, as was also true of interstate highway construction, was substantially affected by Cold War pressures. Every Soviet success in the area of public works as well as armaments had to be met in kind by the United States to calm fears of an apprehensive American public.\(^8\)

On August 12, 1955, President Eisenhower created the Office of Public Works Planning and appointed General Bragdon, his former classmate at West Point, as his chief advisor on public works. In appointing him the first “Special Assistant for Public Works Planning,” Eisenhower maintained that Bragdon was to “advise him on public works and to coordinate ‘as rapidly as possible’ Federal, State, and local efforts in the field.” Although Eisenhower was increasingly concerned about the excessive costs of public works projects, the President, nevertheless, viewed Bragdon’s appointment as more to facilitate, not stall, the development of these efforts in the United States.\(^9\)

Bragdon’s background is noteworthy, revealing apparent conflicts-of-interest in his later public works decision-making. A native of Pittsburgh, the city that would benefit most by the construction of the Kinzua Dam, Bragdon was educated in engineering at West Point and at Carnegie Institute. He was a classmate and friend of Eisenhower at the United States Military Academy where Bragdon was graduated fifth in a class of one hundred sixty-four cadets. After graduation, he spent his army career on assignment with the Army Corps of Engineers,
serving with distinction in both World Wars I and II. In December, 1949, Bragdon became Deputy Chief of Engineers, serving in that capacity until his retirement in June, 1951. Later, he became the Vice President of Vermilyea-Brown, a major construction company based in New York City.  

Although the final decision-maker, Eisenhower depended on Bragdon who abstracted, coordinated, and filtered information to him about the "Upper Allegheny River Flood Control Project" sent from the Department of the Army, the Justice and Interior Departments and from the Seneca Nation of Indians and their supporters. Eisenhower, the army hero of World War II, received information from Bragdon, another retired senior army officer, about a major flood control project which was initiated and sponsored by the Army Corps of Engineers. It is also significant to note that General Lucius Clay, one of Eisenhower's most important advisors, had served in the Pittsburgh District of the Army Corps of Engineers in the 1930s and had been an early proponent of Allegheny River dam projects.  

Eisenhower, who had known Bragdon for forty years, had complete faith in his abilities and gave him substantial responsibilities in the White House. At a news conference in early 1956, the President, in answering a question posed by the journalist Sarah McClendon about water resources policies, claimed: "I have a man now in this work, I believe as deeply as administrative action can place him, General Bragdon." In interstate planning from 1956 to 1959, the Major General also had substantial influence. When Eisenhower needed a representative to serve on his Joint Federal-State Action Committee to demarcate jurisdiction and prevent costly overlap, Bragdon was one of the three to staff members to be appointed by the President. Although Bragdon's expertise was in engineering, Eisenhower increasingly gave him other responsibilities, including the area of federal-state relations. It is important to note that Bragdon's work on the Federal-State Action Committee brought him into contact with another committee member, George M. Leader, the Democratic Governor of Pennsylvania and proponent of the Kinzua Dam.  

Bragdon's handling of the Kinzua Dam controversy was the missing link to how the whole project came about. He and his two assistants, Floyd Peterson and Donald Bower, dealt with every aspect of the project from July, 1957, to the end of Eisenhower's Presidency. From the beginning, the Office of Public Works Planning assumed the project was a worthwhile and justifiable action. After reading about it while at his Gettysburg farm, the President ordered Bragdon on July 12, 1957 to
look into the ‘Kinzua (Allegheny) Dam Project.’ Six days later, Bragdon replied, already summarizing the reasons why the dam had to be built: (a) On the basis of available data, the project is justified by its widespread benefits. (b) Testimony in Congress to date is predominantly in favor of the project. (c) The problem of taking Indian lands is capable of a fair solution. (d) Paper mills, white objectionable, appear to be a matter for State regulation. (e) Safety of the dam is not a valid objection; there are many other larger dams and reservoirs in the east. Bragdon, however, raised one suggestion to Eisenhower: (f) Further investigation is needed of the feasibility and economics of possible alternatives prior to the start of any construction. This investigation is under way by the Chief of Engineers.  

In a major policy decision, Bragdon added that there was no reason to strike the project out of the proposed 1958 budget, that the $1 million was an acceptable amount for further design and for initiation of construction, and that congressional support was overwhelming for Kinzua. He clearly spelled out to the President that the “Attorney General has pointed out that the courts have ruled that the United States has the right to acquire Indian lands on payment of just compensation.” He continued by maintaining that the Indians, as in other similar projects in the past, would be liberally compensated, but all within economic limits. Moreover, the Army would secure a legal assessment and the Indians would retain subsurface rights to land flooded.

Bradgon’s letter of July 18 is significant in several respects. He assumed from the start that the dam was going to be built because it was a popular, politically expedient project that could be defused easily either through monetary compensation to the Indians or through favorable legal opinions in the federal courts about treaty violations and environmental damage. Perhaps, most significantly, he rationalized the inclusion of $1 million in the 1958 budget for the initiation of the project even while he was questioning the economics of the project. This line item in the 1958 budget was subsequently used by the federal courts to justify the breaking of the treaty of 1794 by so-called “congressional action.” In addition, Bragdon relied on the Corps of Engineers’ expert opinion from the beginning, portending the near-incestuous relationship between his office and the federal agency in the months to come.

On July 22, 1957, President Eisenhower met with General Bragdon about the dam. Major John Eisenhower, who was also in attendance at the meeting, insisted that his father believed that the construction of the “dam would be wrong if the Indians do not desire it, unless it is essential rather than merely desirable” and that it “is particularly essential that
our word be kept with the Indians.” The President told Bragdon to check with Secretary Seaton about “whether we are doing right by the Indians from the point of view of Interior.” Bragdon informed Eisenhower that the Attorney General had already given “his approval from a strictly legalistic viewpoint.” The three also discussed the Corps of Engineers’ estimate of costs and the recent alternative flood control plans set forth by Arthur E. Morgan, the former President of Antioch College, to save Seneca lands.16

Morgan, who had been chairman and chief engineer of the Tennessee Valley Authority during the New Deal, was instrumental in delaying the flooding of Indian lands. In 1956, Morgan, at the urging of President Cornelius Seneca of the Seneca Nation of Indians and members of the Society of Friends, was hired by the Indians as a consultant. With his associate, Barton M. Jones, who had been chief designing engineer of the TVA, Morgan developed a proposal to make use of a great glacial depression in the Conewango basin as a natural reservoir site and to divert Allegheny River flood water into Lake Erie. This so-called Conewango-Cattaraugus or Conewango plan had various alternative components. Morgan and Jones largely designed it to protect Indian treaty lands and provide, as he frequently insisted, more flood control protection along the Allegheny River than under the Army Corps of Engineers’ plan.17

The Senecas’ efforts to save their lands soon became intertwined with Morgan’s longstanding war with the Corps of Engineers. Morgan had clashed with the Corps of Engineers as far back as 1913, ironically because of the military’s early resistance to flood control reservoirs after the Dayton flood. During the New Deal, Morgan helped write the bill which created the TVA which had excluded the Corps of Engineers from planning, chairing, or being the chief engineer of the massive project. In the 1930s, Morgan, as head of the TVA, chided the Army for its faulty plans for dam sites and control of the Tennessee River, for overspending beyond reasonable limits, and for being politically allied with the Water Resources Congress, formerly the Rivers and Harbors Congress, a registered lobby group. These past battles did not contribute to Morgan’s ability to deal with the Corps of Engineers and its allies during the Kinzua fight.18

Morgan saw his alternative plan as his experiment to reshape yet preserve the cultural integrity of the Seneca Nation and counter the efforts of the Army Corps of Engineers, his historic foe. Morgan’s approach was totally against the Corps of Engineers’ tradition which
inevitably resulted in his opposing the Kinzua Dam. With little skill or interest in politics, he believed, as he later wrote, in the demands of "civilian human relations in planning and construction of public works program." To him, Army Corps of Engineers—West Point engineers were trained in war and military considerations which were "very different from the process of internal improvements" and had too little coursework in technical engineering required of civil engineering and flood control.¹⁹

On July 25, 1957, Bragdon reported to the President that Secretary Seaton believed that the United States had a "complete legal right to take the land" but in view of the "old treaty" the condemnation would be immoral without some consideration of substitute lands. Bragdon concluded that the Corps of Engineers were studying possible alternative approaches to the project and that when these studies were completed the Senecas' objections would be satisfied. After all, he insisted "Chief Seneca" had earlier "stated that the Indians would not stand in the way of progress if it [the Army's plan] is the only economic and engineering solution for prevention of floods in the lower Allegheny River Valley." Importantly, Bragdon once again recommended that the President not delete the $1 million line item in the 1958 budget "since this money can be used for needed further engineering."²⁰

By the late summer, the Army Corps of Engineers was systematically attempting to destroy various alternative flood control plans. At a meeting on September 6, 1957, at the Executive Office Building, Army Chief of Engineers Emerson C. Itschner and Assistant Secretary of the Army Dewey Short indicated to Bragdon that the dam project had overwhelming bipartisan support in Congress. They observed that "Indians usually obtain more generous allowances than most non-Indian landowners" do in condemnation proceedings for federal public works projects. The Army officials then went on to consider alternative plans for flood control. Chief of Engineers Itschner chided the idea of constructing a smaller dam and reservoir and insisted that this idea went "contrary to our national water resources policy" by not "developing sites to their maximum potential." He rejected the idea of a system of smaller dams as not feasible and opposed the construction of one other alternative plan, the French Creek Reservoir, as being not economically feasible because it would require very expensive relocation work for the Pennsylvania Turnpike. Because Itschner could not completely counter the final alternative, the Conewango plan proposed by engineer Morgan, and there was wide disagreement about its costs, Itschner suggested
hiring a consulting firm to make a systematic study of alternatives. Itschner had previously maintained that the Corps of Engineers had not undertaken a complete analysis of the Lake Erie diversion plan proposed by Morgan, arguing that “it was not customary to undertake detailed investigations and cost breakdowns until funds were on hand to start construction on a project.” Now, because of Morgan’s international reputation as an expert and his ability to generate headlines and support for his proposal, Itschner proposed hiring a consulting firm to make a six-month study at a cost of $70,000. Bragdon, Itschner and Short all agreed that “a study developed by an outside firm would gain better public acceptance than a restudy by the local Corps of Engineers’ office.” They also agreed that the Army and Interior Departments coordinate their efforts in dealing with the Indians about a satisfactory settlement with the Indians.\textsuperscript{21}

In mid-September, at the urging of Bragdon and under direct authorization from President Eisenhower, the Corps of Engineers hired the firm of Tippetts-Abbett-McCarthy-Stratton (TAMS) of New York City to conduct what Bragdon deemed “an independent investigation” to check the Morgan plan and the costs and feasibility of other alternatives.\textsuperscript{22} While the Senecas were fighting against the dam in courts, TAMS went about their research. Although both Morgan and the Army Corps agreed to and cooperated with this investigation, the independent judgment of the firm is suspect. Retired Brigadier General James H. Stratton, who had become a partner in the firm in 1949, had been director of civil works for the Army Corps of Engineers before his retirement. He had previously been in charge of engineering for water projects, such as the Dennison Dam, that had affected Indian lands. Thus, crossover employment, as was true in Bragdon’s background, produced conflicts of interest at every stage of the Kinzua Dam controversy. Congressman James Haley, Chairman of the House Indian Affairs Subcommittee, later pointed out to President Kennedy that this so-called “‘independent’ firm gets more business from the Army Engineers than from any other sources, and also that some of its principal partners were former Army Engineers.”\textsuperscript{23}

Even before the TAMS report was released to the press, Bragdon had written a memorandum indicating that the Morgan plan was feasible and that his (Morgan’s) estimate was accurate but “still largely in excess of the Corps’ plan.” He added that despite this fact confirmed in the TAMS’ draft report, the Corps of Engineers believed “that Morgan will die hard on this matter and continue to argue.” Bragdon continued by mentioning that the Corps of Engineers were now ready to proceed to
spend $5 million in the next year on the project but that a war was now brewing between them and Morgan and the Senecas that would delay the project at least another year.\(^{24}\)

On April 1, 1958, the Army Corps of Engineers, Ohio Division Office, in Cincinnati released TAMS' letter of transmittal to the press. This letter of transmittal was attached to the full consulting firm's report, which was not released. Although the TAMS' report did not express any preference for either the Kinzua or Conewango plan, the Corps of Engineers and its allies presented this letter as proof positive that the report favored its plan. Despite a limited budget of $70,000, a six-month time limit, and specific instructions that narrowed the focus of its research, the TAMS findings were presented as Scripture. In the summary of major finds, the report maintained: "There is no engineering or construction reason why either the Authorized Project or any of the alternative plans cannot be built, and either the Authorized Project or any of the alternate plans could be operated to meet the requirements established by the Corps of Engineers for flood control and low-flow augmentation in the Allegheny River." It conceded that Morgan's alternatives would store substantially more water by creating a pool 500,000 acre-feet larger than the Corps of Engineers' Kinzua plan and would be capable of producing cheaply an additional 115,000,000 more kilowatt hours by diverting flood waters to Lake Erie. Nevertheless, the TAMS' report concluded that Morgan's alternative plans would cost 25% to 38% more, would require 51% to 108% more land, and would dislocate 150% to 180% more people than the Corps of Engineers' Kinzua project.\(^{25}\)

The impression left from the report was that Morgan's alternatives were too expensive and too massive in scope, and that too many people, nearly all non-Indian, would be dislocated, unacceptable alternatives to politicians in Congress as well as to Eisenhower and his staff. Morgan had insisted that, since the storage capacity for the Conewango reservoir would be three times that of Kinzua, more people would naturally be displaced, but not without benefit to them. Four villages and a few small hamlets would be flooded, including Randolph, a town already seriously threatened by flooding because of severe rains. Morgan believed that the communities could have been relocated well above the water line, "where they would have been on the shore of a large lake with pleasantly sloping shores. They would become popular recreation centers."\(^{26}\) Perhaps naively, both Morgan and his supporters believed that a time-honored federal-Indian relationship and the sacredness of Indian land made the continued maintenance of the Cornplanter tract...
more important than several hamlets occupied by non-Indians. Charles Congdon, a city father and attorney in Salamanca, New York, perceptively observed in 1964: “Flooding the Conewango Valley would provide more water for Pittsburgh, but it would flood out white folks! They vote [unlike many Iroquois]. I told this to Arthur Morgan when he was at Cornplanter one summer and he became incensed. He simply did not understand.”

Long before anti-Kinzua Dam lobbying efforts had been organized and implemented, the hand had already been played by General Bragdon, his Office of Public Works Planning, and other Eisenhower staff members. They used the TAMS’ report to justify their already pre-determined leanings in favor of the Corps of Engineers’ plan. Realizing as he did earlier in March that Morgan and the Senecas would continue to protest even after the release of the report, Bragdon attempted to diffuse the criticism of the Corps of Engineers, the dam project and the consultants’ findings. Before Bragdon gave the Department of the Army a complete authorization for construction, he arranged for a meeting between General Itschner, “Chief Seneca” and Morgan in order “to avoid the possibility of his [Morgan] appealing to the President with the claim that they were not fairly considered before the decision was made.”

This meeting was finally held on July 29, 1958, at the office of Assistant Secretary of the Army Dewey Short. Morgan, Itschner and Short were joined by Charles Okey, an engineer and assistant to Morgan from his days at TVA, Seneca attorney Edward O’Neill, Floyd Peterson, Bragdon’s assistant, and two staff members from the office of Assistant Secretary of the Army. Morgan was allowed to present his case for the Conewango alternatives. Although Bragdon was not in attendance, Peterson reported the meeting in full, especially Morgan’s criticism of the TAMS study: “The objections to the report are that it was made in accordance with specific instructions by the Corps and treated the same way one would call in a consulting engineer to comment on a specific plan. It has the same defects as the Corps record, i.e., it didn’t study all the alternative plans.”

While the Kinzua Dam was being debated in this forum, the Senecas brought legal challenges to the dam’s construction. In the federal courts, Edward O’Neill, attorney for the Seneca Nation, argued that general legislation earmarking congressional funds for construction of an Allegheny Reservoir project was not sufficient to overthrow the sanctity of the Treaty of 1794. Although recognizing the power of Congress under federal law to break treaties, he insisted that specific legislation, not
pork-barrel appropriations, was needed for Congress to unilaterally change the federal-Indian treaty relationship. At the District Court level, Judge McGarraghy described the Senecas' contention: “The Seneca Nation does claim that the rights covenanted under such a treaty—especially one with an Indian tribe—cannot be destroyed by implication, innuendo, or unauthorized acts of the Executive. To destroy such rights Congress must specifically so say.” McGarraghy then went on to maintain that the congressional intent in passing the Public Works Appropriation Act of 1958 was sufficiently clear to set aside a treaty consummated 163 years earlier. On November 25, 1958, in what proved to be the last major rendering by a federal court in the Kinzua Dam matter, the three judges of the United States Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia unanimously affirmed McGarraghy’s decision and denied the Senecas an injunction against the Army. Citing congressional testimony throughout 1958, the courts clearly found that the Congress was aware of what it was doing to Indians and their lands when it passed the Public Works Appropriation Act of 1958. Yet, unbeknownst to Judge McGarraghy, or to O’Neill, Morgan and the Senecas, was that the White House was primarily responsible for the inclusion of the $1 million line item for Kinzua in the 1958 federal budget.

Before Bragdon and his Office of Public Works Planning could give their final stamp of approval and go-ahead for the Army project, the Congress, as a result of the actions of representative John Saylor, the only dissenter to the project in the 30-member Pennsylvania congressional delegation, put a temporary roadblock to Kinzua. In the fall, 1958, the House Appropriations Committee, at the congressman’s urging, restricted further expenditures—$1.5 million had been appropriated in 1958 and 1959—until the final settlement of the Indians’ court case. Because of Saylor’s action, Bragdon had to wait until the summer of 1959, when the Supreme Court rejected a writ of certiorari, before he could once again raise the issue of the Kinzua Dam. After this final legal appeal, Bragdon and his staff began to push the Corps of Engineers’ project. Even when the Corps of Engineers had temporarily suspended its lobbying efforts on behalf of the dam project, the Office of Public Works Planning resurrected it and encouraged cooperation between the Interior Department and the Army in order to get it going again. Peterson, on July 27, 1959, penciled on a memorandum to Bragdon: “General Bragdon. I think we ought to write a follow up letter to Dewey Short on this so that we can be prepared to act if House [sic] decides to withdraw from its contemplated study [of alternatives to Kinzua].”
Bragdon, a month later, reported to Eisenhower that the matter was now virtually closed after Congress included $1.4 million in the 1960 budget for the initiation of construction after "extensive consideration of Dr. Arthur E. Morgan's attacks against the engineering plans and estimates of the Corps of Engineers." Bragdon insisted that "I believe we should accept this as terminating that [Morgan's] line of argument." To ease Eisenhower's misgivings, Bragdon added that the Senecas were opposed to accepting substitute lands and that they would no doubt be handsomely paid by congressional legislation for their land loss. Bragdon then sealed the fate of the Cornplanter Heirs and their Pennsylvania lands. In language remarkably similar to that used by President John F. Kennedy eighteen months later, the retired Major General concluded:

The controversial aspects of this project have received extensive review and have been resolved by the decision of the Court and by Congressional action. There is now no reason why this project should not proceed subject to budgetary considerations. I believe the situation concerning this project has developed sufficiently that you may consider the matter closed.32

In letters to the President, in October, 1959, and to opponents of the dam that followed, Bragdon repeated this position and insisted that he did not know of any overpowering new information which would justify any further action by the White House at this time. Bragdon's office turned its attention to other matters, while opponents and proponents of the project continued to discuss this fait accompli. Perhaps as a result of his trusted advisor's influence, Eisenhower in 1960 added $4,530,000 to his 1961 budget request for the Kinzua project, which was passed by the House of Representatives on May 25, by a vote of 398 to 18.33

Throughout the controversy, Bragdon also served to buffer President Eisenhower from criticism concerning Ike's handling of the Kinzua Dam issue. When officers of the American Civil Liberties Union, in a letter to the President, condemned the proposed flood-control project, Eisenhower assigned the response to his Special Assistant for Public Works Planning. On November 9, 1959, Bragdon replied to the American Civil Liberties Union protest, reviewed the project's history, and insisted that the "President has taken a special interest in this problem and has had his staff looking into this question for some time with a view to seeing that the interests of the Indians as well as the Nation are protected." Bragdon maintained that Morgan had received fair hearing before representatives from the White House and the Bureau of the Budget and that Morgan's alternate plans had "been
carefully studied by the Army Corps of Engineers." Giving added
weight to the Corps' conclusions, Bragdon added that he was "advised
that the Chief of Engineers personally studied this [Morgan's] proposal
but found that the Allegheny Reservoir, as presently planned, would be
the most economical solution to the problems involved." He concluded
by stating that since the controversy had continued for several years,
there was now sufficient basis for arriving at a final decision in the
matter. Implying that the dam's construction was both inevitable and
imminent, Bragdon reassured the civil libertarians that the expropria-
tion of Seneca lands would be done "well within limits of existing law"
in order to "minimize the burden and inconvenience to the Indians." 33

After strong lobbying by Governor Lawrence and Pennsylvania
representatives, Congress released moneys for the dam's construction in
late June, 1960. On October 22, Governor Lawrence, the dam's major
proponent, delivered an address at the groundbreaking ceremony for the
Allegheny River Reservoir at Kinzua, Pennsylvania. He hailed the
project as the "first giant stride to bring flood protection to millions of
homes and thousands of industries in six states." He lauded Goddard,
the Pennsylvania congressional delegation, as well as the Army Corps of
Engineers "who have studied the project objectively and have acted, I
believe, with the interests of the citizens of this area at heart, at all
times." He concluded that the project "will some day stand as a living,
useful reminder of the first lesson of good government—the needs of
human welfare come first and those needs can be answered when we
work together and meet the challenge willingly." Yet, nowhere in his
speech did Lawrence acknowledge the key role that Bragdon and his
office played. 34

President John F. Kennedy, who had largely depended on the
Lawrence machine for his narrow election win in 1960, was in no way
going to antagonize the Governor or overturn a project whose construc-
tion had already started. Despite persistent appeals to halt the dam by
impounding congressional appropriations, Kennedy and his advisors
assumed the posture that the issue had already been determined. In a
widely-publicized letter to Seneca President Basil Williams in 1961, the
President insisted that impounding funds after long review by Congress
and legal determinations by the courts "would not be proper." In words
that echoed those used earlier by General Bragdon, Kennedy rested his
case by once again bringing in the expert opinion of the Army Corps of
Engineers and quickly dismissing Morgan's plans: "Moreover, I have
been assured by the Corps of Engineers that all of the alternative
proposals that have been suggested, including the so-called Morgan
Plan Number Six, have been thoroughly and fairly examined and are
clearly inferior to the Kinzua Project from the viewpoint of cost, amount of land to be flooded and number of people who would be dislocated.’’ Kennedy added by observing that further delay of the project would needlessly halt providing the ‘‘essential protection’’ for the people downstream on the Allegheny River.36

The Kinzua Dam became a reality in September, 1966; however, Eisenhower’s appointment of, his trust in, and his collaboration with General Bragdon had virtually made it a certainty for over ten years. Since this dam’s construction had been thwarted for nearly forty years and had been rejected by preceding Presidents, Eisenhower’s selection of a Pittsburgh-born Army engineer to ascertain the merits of a dam pushed by his hometown and his former employer, is highly suspect. Although Pennsylvania economic and political interests were especially strong and there were sweeping shifts nationwide in American Indian policies during the 1950s, Bragdon, the loyal aide serving his Commander-in-Chief, was a major force behind the decision, starting with the budgetary process in 1957 and continuing right through the end of the Eisenhower Presidency.

In one reappraisal of the Eisenhower Presidency, historian Elmo Richardson raised an important question, namely how Ike’s praiseworthy but deliberate style as President was translated into law? Richardson, seeing certain inconsistencies in the President’s political behavior, observed that Eisenhower’s concern for civil rights contrasted with his “apparent acquiescence in the termination of Indian reservations, a matter that also involved the social disruption and federal coercion he abhored.” Richardson added: “Can the difference in degree of interest be ascribed to the influence of his advisors?” This article answers Richardson's question in the affirmative. Although much responsibility for the construction of the Kinzua Dam rests with Congress, Pennsylvania industrialists and politicians, and the Army Corps of Engineers, the dam would not have been built without the advocacy of General Bragdon and his assistants in the Office of Public Works Planning.37

Eisenhower’s White House staff was the last necessary ingredient to make Kinzua occur. The President strengthened the White House staff by adding aides who had the ability and stature of department secretaries. He gave them cabinet-level status but demanded of them more responsibility than previous administrations. Eisenhower brought to the White House very definite notions of staff, largely based on his military experience. He made use of his staff skillfully, buffering himself from outside political pressures, and, at the same time, delegating more responsibilities to them than his predecessors. As in the case of General
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Bragdon's Ike's "delegation practices were informed by a well-developed sense of whom he could entrust with what amount of decision-making power and of the need to be vigilant about possible failures by line and staff officials to adhere to their chief's policies." Thus, Bragdon, a White House "functional professional" and "team player" with whom Eisenhower felt comfortable because of their lifelong association, became the key to the building of the Kinzua Dam.

NOTES

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3. For further discussion of White House staff and cabinet influences on American Indian policy, see Laurence M. Hauptman, The Iroquois and the Struggle for Survival: From World War II to the Emergence of Red Power (Syracuse, 1985), chapter VI. For the best full-scale discussion of postwar United States government Indian policies, see Francis Paul Prucha, The Great Father: The United States Government and the American Indians (Lincoln, Neb., 1984), II, 993-1086. For a study of the Army Corps of Engineers' and the Bureau of Reclamation's impact on American Indians in the postwar period, see Michael L. Lawson, Dammed Indians: The Pick-Sloan Plan and the Missouri River Sioux, 1944-1980 (Norman, Okla., 1982).

4. Public Law 88-533. 78 United States Statutes at Large 738 (Aug. 31, 1964). I was invited to participate and speak at the Seneca Nation twenty-year memorial. "Remember the Removal, 1964-1984," held on Sept. 29, 1984. The memorial included a 6.5 mile walk tracing the path of the Kinzua removal, addresses by Senecas and Quakers involved in fighting the dam, and a panel discussion on the history of the project. I saw adult Senecas, choked up with emotion, unable to find the words to speak about these horrible events. I have benefited immeasurably by speaking to the following American Indians involved in fighting the Kinzua Dam: Interviews of Pauline Seneca, Aug. 25, 1983, Cattaraugus Indian Reservation; George Abrams and Merrill Bowen, Aug. 26, 1983, Allegany Indian Reservation; George Heron, March 21, 1984, West Chester, Pa. and Sept. 29, 1984, Allegany Indian Reservation. I should also like to acknowledge the help of the following: Cornelius Abrams, Jr., Rovena Abrams, Wini Kettle, Jeanne Marie Jemison and Carol Moses.

5. See, for example, Alvin M. Josephy, Jr., Now that the Buffalo's Gone: A Study of Today's American Indians (New York, 1982), pp. 127-150.

6. Arthur E. Morgan, Dams and Other Disasters: A Century of the Army Corps of Engineers in Civil Works (Boston, 1971), pp. 310-312. George Laughlin (Jones & Laughlin) to Harold Ickes, Sept. 9, 1933, Frank C. Harper (Sec.-Manager, Pittsburgh Chamber of Commerce) to Brown, Sept. 6, 1933 with attached petition and to George Dern (Sec. of War), Sept. 6, 1933; I. Lamont Hughes (Carnegie Steel) to Brown, Sept. 1, 1933; Captain Lucius Clay to Hughes, Sept. 6, 1933; J. F. Drake (Gulf Oil) to Brown,
Sept. 2, 1933; Clay to Drake, Sept. 6, 1933; Nathan Strong (Allegheny River Improvement Association) to Brown, Sept. 1, 1933; Clay to Strong, Sept. 6, 1933; Senator James J. Davis (Pennsylvania) to Brown, Sept. 6, 1933; Brown to Davis, Sept. 12, 1933; John S. Fisher (President, Pittsburgh Chamber of Commerce), Aug. 31, 1933; Clay to Fisher, Sept. 5, 1933, Records of the Office of the Chief of Engineers, Civil Works, 1923-1942: Rivers and Harbor Files, Allegheny River, RG 77, NA Suitland, Md.


15. Ibid.


22. John S. Bragdon, Memorandum for Assistant Secretary of the Army, Dewey Short, July 23, 1957; and Bragdon, Memorandum for the President, Sept. 18, 1957, John S. Bragdon MSS., Box 51; Gerald D. Morgan (Special Counsel to the President) to Mr. (Cornelius) Seneca, D. D. Eisenhower MSS., Central Files, Box 837, of 155-E, 1957 (2), Eisenhower Library, Abilene, Kan.


29. F. D. Peterson Office Memorandum on Meeting on Allegheny (Kinzua) Dam Project to General Bragdon, July 29, 1958, John S. Bragdon MSS., Box 51, Eisenhower Library, Abilene, Kan.


31. F. D. Peterson to General Bragdon, July 27, 1959, pencil in note on memorandum from Walter G. Sutton to General Bragdon, July 23, 1959, John S. Bragdon MSS., Box 51, Eisenhower Library, Abilene, Kan. Sutton was still exploring the long-rejected idea of "substitute lands for Indians at Kinzua Reservoir."


34. J. S. Bragdon to American Civil Liberties Union, Nov. 9, 1959, Arthur E. Morgan MSS., Series VIII Seneca Indians/Kinzua Dam, File: Morgan Correspondence with White House, Antioch College, Yellow Springs, Ohio.

Interior and Insular Affairs, June 23, 1960, David Lawrence MSS., Box 40, Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, Harrisburg, PA.

