Morality and the Building

of

the Atomic Bomb

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In By the Bomb's Early Light, Paul Boyer writes that

> time and again in comtemporary accounts and later reminiscences, one finds evidence that for many scientists involvement in the Manhattan Project was a traumatic experience that turned their lives inside-out. Some were dismayed that the bomb had been used; others reluctantly approved. Nearly all shared an intense fear of what lay ahead. Out of fear, and in some cases guilt, came activism. Many scientists concluded after August 6, 1945, that it was their urgent duty to try to shape official policy regarding atomic energy.[1]

That these scientists became activists after the war is a remarkable development in view of the irrefutable fact that they bore major responsibility for creating the problem which caused them to become activists in the first place. It was through their labors that the bomb was built; therefore, for them to have subsequently expressed alarm over their own creation is a surprising about-face. In October 1945 Eugene Rabinowitch wrote: "Having helped man to make the first step into this new world, [scientists] have the responsibility of warning and advising him until he has become aware of its perils as well as its wonders."[2] Although commendable, this statement rings hollow. The nuclear scientists alerting the world to the danger posed by atomic bomb was equivalent to a gun manufacturer complaining that guns pose a threat to the society after hearing that one of their products had been used to shoot someone. Such a complaint coming from a gun manufacturer would be ludicrous. Not only would the gun manufacturer lack the moral standing to make such a complaint, his motives for making such a complaint would be suspect. Likewise with the nuclear

scientists. Like the gun manufacturer, they did not actually pull the "trigger", but they did provide the "gun". This is not to suggest that the nuclear scientists were insensitive merchants of death. To the contrary. The nuclear scientists were well educated and highly respected members of society who were engaged in important research associated with the war effort and were not vicious, malicious or irresponsible people. But the fact is that they built the bomb. If, as Boyer writes, the Manhattan Project was such a traumatic experience for these scientists, why did they stay with the project? If the nuclear scientists were so upset and concerned over the use of the atomic bomb, then how could they reconcile building an instrument of mass death and destruction with how they apparently felt about what they were building? Did they not understand or appreciate the consequence of building the A-bomb, namely, that once the bomb was built it could be used? These questions underscore the basic moral issue which confronted the nuclear scientists - the choice between self-interest and personal convictions. This meant either engaging in state-sponsored research to produce a horrible weapon of war or rejecting the decision to use the bomb based on moral considerations and severing their association with the project. How did the nuclear scientists resolve this moral dilemma? Did not their moral responsibility as members of the scientific community presumably dedicated to improving the quality of life for humanity take precedent over their responsibilities to the state as agents in the development of a weapon of mass destruction?

Some nuclear scientists did express concern over the possibility that the A-bomb would be used. Boyer writes that

> in the spring and summer of 1945, ... some Manhattan Project scientists at Chicago worked feverishly to delay the full military use of the bomb at least until a demonstration shot could be arranged. This last-ditch effort culminated in the so-called Franck Report of June 11, 1945, signed by James Franck and six other scientists. Also playing a catalytic role was Niels Bohr, a highly respected, even beloved figure in the tight little world of theoretical physics. First in his native Denmark and then from 1943 to 1945 in the United States, Bohr worked to alert the leaders of the wartime alliance to the implications of atomic energy, and to prod the social consciousness of his fellow scientists.[3]

But, as Boyer writes, "the Franck Report ... failed to prevent the obliteration of two Japanese cities."[4] That Bohr had "to prod the social consciousness of his fellow scientists" suggests that the level of social consciousness among the nuclear scientists was not high. Indeed, the evidence seems to suggest that the nuclear scientists were enthusiastic over the opportunity to develop the A-bomb. In The Irreversible Decision - 1939-1950, Robert C. Batchelder writes

> We have seen that the imagination and enthusiasm of a small group of nuclear physicists, centered around Enrico Fermi and Leo Szilard, were the primary factors leading to the decision to make an atomic bomb. These men did much more than simply give willing obedience to orders given them by the government. Although outside the government, they repeatedly took the initiative in urging government officials to take the possibility of an atomic bomb seriously. Official skepticism, inertia, and the countless administrative and technical obstacles that blocked the road to the release of atomic energy were finally overcome almost entirely by their determination and persistence. They

> instituted a precedent-breaking system of censorship of their own research; they dragged many of their American colleagues out of the isolation of their private research into the campaign to produce a weapon of mass destruction.[5]

Thus it was a small group of foreign scientists who initiated the drive to build the bomb, and this idea caught on. These scientists wanted to develop the atomic bomb out of fear that Germany would have it first. Batchelder writes that

> Einstein's letters specifically mentioned Germany's activities. Arthur Compton reports that [Eugene] Wigner's "lively fear that the Nazis would make the bomb first" caused him to plead with Compton "almost with tears" to establish an active bomb project in the United States. What finally convinced Compton, Conant, and Lawrence of the urgency of our making the bomb was "the evidence that the Nazis were making a major effort" to do so. "We could not afford to let the Nazis beat us to the making of atomic weapons. This would be inviting disaster."[6]

And even if they were not enthusiastic about building the bomb, they were still attracted to the program. In Oppenheimer, Victor F. Weisskopf writes:

> Many physicists were drawn to this work by fate and destiny rather than enthusiasm. A threat hung over us - the frightening possibility of finding this new and incredibly powerful weapon in the hands of the powers of evil - but there was no doubt that we were also attracted by the unique challenge of dealing with nuclear phenomena on a large scale, with taming an essentially cosmic process.[7]

Thus the decision to build the atomic bomb also afforded the nuclear scientists the opportunity to tame "an essentially cosmic process."

However, according to Batchelder, after the capture of

Strasbourg in November 1944, documents were found which

> provided conclusive evidence that the German atomic research project was not ahead of the American but, rather, was far behind. Germany "had no atomic bomb and was not likely to have one in any reasonable time." The Germans had been unsuccessful in their attempts to separate U-235; neither had they succeeded in constructing a chain-reaction uranium pile. By mid-1944 they had reached about the point where the Americans had stood in 1940![8]

Yet, after this discovery, work on the atomic bomb did not stop.

But not only were the nuclear scientists eager to build the atomic bomb, they supported its use. Batchelder writes that President Truman

> appointed a highly secret group known as the Interim Committee. Mr. Stimson was its chairman, and Mr. Byrnes acted as the President's personal representative. Mr. George L. Harrison, President of the New York Life Insurance Company, who was a special consultant to Secretary Stimson, served as chairman in Stimson's absence. The other members of the committee were Ralph Bard, Under-Secretary of the Navy; William L. Clayton, Assistant Secretary of State; Vannevar Bush, Director of the Office of Scientific Research and Development; Karl T. Compton, President of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology; and James B. Conant, President of Harvard. Assisting this committee was a Scientific Panel whose members were Enrico Fermi, Ernest O. Lawrence, J. Robert Oppenheimer, and Arthur H. Compton - all of whom had been actively engaged in the development of the atomic weapon. A panel of industrialists was also appointed to inform the Interim Committee on the engineering and manufacturing aspects of the atomic bomb project.[9]

According to Batchelder

> the Interim Committee's assignment was to advise the President regarding the various questions raised about the conduct of the

> war by the imminent readiness of an atomic bomb, and also to suggest plans for the longer-term development and control of atomic energy.[10]

The leading members of the scientific community involved in the development of the atomic bomb participated in the decision to use the atomic bomb. The opinion of the Scientific Committee was solicited by the Interim Committee concerning the use of the atomic bomb. In Decision of Destiny, Walter Smith Schoenberger writes that

> the May 31 and June 1 meetings of the Interim Committee were pivotal in understanding its approach to use of the atomic bomb. At no time was the question of use widely discussed. The important questions, if there were such, were where it would be used, how it would be used, and when it was to be used rather than whether it should be used. After accepting the suggestion that the bomb be used against Japan on a war plant surrounded by civilian homes and without prior warning, the committee left the questions of when and how to employ the weapon to the War Department. After recommending that use occur as soon as possible, it left the timing of delivery to the military.[11]

On May 31 the Scientific Panel was asked by the Interim Committee to consider an alternative to military use. Schoenberger writes that

> Oppenheimer recalled that the panel had been assigned two tasks. It had been asked to produce a plan for a peacetime atomic energy organization and "... to comment on whether the bomb should be used." He considered the second task to be "... quite slight."[12]

The panel's report concurred with the Interim Committee's recommendations concerning the use of the atomic bomb. Schoenberger writes that the panel's report

> suggests that the panel was primarily influenced by considerations of saving American lives and by international relations following its use. It had reviewed the position taken by scientists in opposition to use and had rejected it. Although recognizing the gravity of its choice, it could propose no alternative. It was, in effect, substantiating a position which the Interim Committee had already taken.[13]

This is corroborated by Barton J. Bernstein who, in "The Atomic Bombings Reconsidered," writes that the Scientific Committee concluded: "We can propose no technical demonstration likely to bring an end to the war; we see no acceptable alternative to direct military use."[14]

At least one member of the Scientific Committee, however, had reservations. Bernstein writes that Arthur H. Compton had "raised profound moral and political questions about how the atomic bomb would be used."[15] According to Bernstein, Compton said:

> It introduces the question of mass slaughter, really for the first time in history. It carries with it the question of possible radioactive poison over the area bombed. Essentially, the question of use ... of the new weapon carries much more serious implications than the introduction of poison gas.[16]

Thus, the leaders of the scientific community involved in the development of the atomic bomb had an opportunity to formally oppose the use of the atomic bomb, but with the exception of Arthur Compton, who at least voiced concern over the implications of their findings, failed to do so and as a result acquiesced in the decision to use the bomb. In view of their failure to take the lead in this area, did these nuclear scientists who

helped to build the atomic bomb still have the moral right to warn anyone about the danger of atomic weapons? They could have rallied the scientific community in opposition to use of the atomic bomb but chose not to do so. Instead they decided to tow the official line and as a result exhibited moral cowardice, i.e., failure to act in accordance with one's convictions. Perhaps this judgment is harsh, but the evidence seems to point to this conclusion.

How the leaders of the scientific community could have acquiesced to the use the atomic bomb despite their reservations may be better understood by examining the experience of the Germans after World War Two. In The Psychology of Dictatorship, G.M. Gilbert writes of "the extraordinary shock and humiliation of many Germans, when they awakened to the realization that what they had been saying had actually come to pass."[17] Gilbert notes "the blindness of so many Germans (and others) to inhuman behavior they could not have possibly condoned"[18] and asks

> How could such men [the comparatively "normal and respectable" members of Hitler's entourage - the diplomats, businessmen, militarists, Junkers, and such identification groups] have participated in a movement which violated some of their own basic values? How could the same men subscribe to humanitarian values and condone persecution, believe in peace and prepare for war, be pagan and Christian, fascist and democratic, chauvinist and cosmopolitan, all at the same time?[19]

The German reaction to mass murder is comparable to how the nuclear scientists reacted to the use of the atomic bomb; therefore, the questions Gilbert asks about the Germans are applicable to the nuclear scientists who built the atomic bomb.

How could a group of people who were presumably decent individuals have participated in the construction of a weapon that they knew would cause mass death and destruction? Gilbert attributes this kind of inconsistency to "a conflict between hostile-ethnocentric and humanitarian ego involvements"[20] and cites as examples the reactions of various Nazi leaders to what they had done. Gilbert writes that

> a man like Ribbentrop, who freely emulated Hitler in verbalized aggression that amounted to collusion in murder, ... broke down when the full realization of actual extermination finally penetrated his consciousness. Similar reactions were found on the part of Von Papen and Schacht, who blamed their lack of insight into Hitler's warlike intentions on the fact that Hitler was "a pathological liar"; while General Keitel claimed that a "veil has suddenly been taken away from my eyes." Economics Minister Walther Funk kept repeating, "We were blinded - not blind, but blinded!" after evidence had been presented that bags of gold teeth and wedding rings had been deposited in his banks. Hans Frank described it best: "Don't let anybody tell you that they had no idea. Everybody sensed that there was something horribly wrong with this system, even if we didn't know all the details. They didn't want to know! It was too comfortable to live on the system, to support our families in royal style, and to believe that it was all right.
>
> After the deluge - insight.[21]

The scientists at Los Alamos who built the atomic bomb certainly were not Nazis, but their reactions to the use of the atomic bomb were similar to that of the Nazis when confronted with the consequences of their acts. This should not be surprising, especially if the use of the atomic bomb is viewed as the culmination of "an atrocity-producing situation"[22] as

described by Robert Jay Lifton and Greg Mitchell in Hiroshima in America. Just as the Nazis employed various euphemisms, such as "the final solution," "special treatment," and "relocation" when referring to the genocide of the Jews, those involved in the development of the atomic bomb used terms that were equally indirect and evasive. Lifton and Mitchell write that

> even for knowledgeable scientists and political and military leaders, the weapon quickly brought about considerable degrees of psychological numbing. It was infinitely more comfortable to focus on the bomb's technical requirements and strategic military use than to permit oneself to imagine the awesomely grotesque effects it would have on other human beings. In his diary, Stimson referred to the weapon as "the thing," "the gadget," "the dire," "the dreadful," "the terrible," "the awful," "the diabolical," or "S1" (its sometime code name) or "the secret."[23]

According to the movie Fat Man and Little Boy (Paramount Pictures), the personnel at Los Alamos were required to refer to the atomic bomb in euphemistic terms.

Although not openly apologetic, many of the nuclear scientists clearly regretted having built the atomic bomb. According to Boyer, Leo Szilard talked about the role of the scientists "in constructing a doomsday weapon that had killed more than one hundred thousand people."[24] Boyer quotes Szilard as saying: "It is remarkable that all these scientists ... should be listened to. But mass murders have always commanded the attention of the public, and atomic scientists are no exception to this rule."[25] Boyer also writes of the lectures organized by the Federation of American Scientists which included a cartoon

filmstrip ~~which showed~~ showing "the world's statesmen ... happily [shaking] hands above a fresh grave where the atomic bomb lies safely buried."[26] A particularly dramatic instance of a nuclear scientist expressing regret over his participation in the development of the atomic bomb occurred in November 1945 when, according to Lifton and Mitchell, Robert Oppenheimer told President Truman: "Mr. President, I have blood on my hands."[27] Oppenheimer must have felt deeply troubled to have made such a statement.

Bernstein writes that "administration leaders did not seek to avoid the use of the A-bomb."[28] However, although their involvement in the Manahttan Project may have been a "traumatic experience" according to Boyer, it is hard to imagine that the nuclear scientists would have voiced moral indignation if the atomic bomb had been dropped on Germany. Many of the nuclear scientists were refugees from Nazi Germany and victims of Nazi persecution. Luckily for the Germans, they surrendered before the atomic bomb became operational. Otherwise they would have become the first victims of a nuclear attack, and it is doubtful that the nuclear scientists would have protested. In fact they would have probably wholeheartedly approved.

It can also be argued that the building of the atomic bomb is an example of the moral strength of the nuclear scientists who were willing to put aside their personal convictions in order to do what had to be done to stop a vicious war and bring peace to the world. That is, it can be said that the nuclear scientists had a dirty job to do which they did not like but

knew had to be done in order to bring peace to the world. They knew that the atomic bomb would cause massive death and destruction and spread radiation, but it would also end the war without costing additional American lives and would spare the Japanese people the trauma of invasion. If the fighting in the Pacific could be used as a guide, then this argument could be seen as having some merit. Presumably, an invasion of the main islands of Japan would have resulted in a bloodbath and that the casualty figures would have been enormous. Therefore, viewed within this context, the use of the atomic bomb could be perceived as having been an acceptable means to end the war, especially in view of Japan's apparent unwillingness to surrender. In "The Decision to Use the Atomic Bomb," Henry L. Stimson, who was the Secretary of War, writes that

> Japan, in July 1945, had been seriously weakened by our increasingly violent attacks. It was known to us that she had gone so far as to make tentative proposals to the Soviet government, hoping to use the Russians as mediators in a negotiated peace. These vague proposals contemplated the retention by Japan of important conquered areas and were therefore not considered seriously. There was as yet no indication of any weakening in the Japanese determination to fight rather than accept unconditional surrender. If she should persist in her fight to the end, she still had a great military force.[29]

Stimson also writes that

> As we understood it in July, there was a very strong possibility that the Japanese government might determine upon resistance to the end, in all the areas of the Far East under its control. In such an event the Allies would be faced with the enormous task of destroying an armed force of five million men and five thousand suicide

> aircraft, belonging to a race which had already amply demonstrated its ability to fight literally to the death.[30]

Moreover, as Stimson points out, the Japanese government had rejected the Potsdam ultimatum, "announcing that it was 'unworthy of public notice.'"[31] Therefore, according to Stimson, the Japanese were still willing to fight and would have put up stiff and bloody resistance if their home islands had been invaded. Thus, under these circumstances, the nuclear scientists can viewed as having done the world a favor by building the atomic bomb, the use of which shortened the war and thereby forestalled the bloodshed that would have resulted if the war had continued.

This argument can be taken one step further. Not only did the nuclear scientists help to end the war, it can be further argued that they were instrumental in insuring world peace through the construction of a superweapon that made another world war untenable. But this argument is fallacious. Instead of making the world a safer place to live, the introduction of nuclear weapons exacerbated international tensions and left the world with a pervasive sense of doom fed by the possibility of a nuclear disaster occurring. Such a disaster would not necessarily be limited to that caused by a nuclear explosion. There are hundreds of nuclear reactors in operation around the world and each reactor could cause widespread enviromental damage through the escape of radioactive material into the earth, water or atmosphere. Such disasters, in fact, have already occurred, with Three Mile Island and Chernobyl perhaps being the most

well known. And even if every nuclear reactor is shut down, there is still the problem of removal of nuclear waste.

In conclusion, the nuclear scientists who helped to build the atomic bomb willingly participated in building a weapon of mass destruction. Yet as scientists they had a responsibility to question the morality of what they were doing and to act on their convictions. Merely speaking out against the use of the atomic bomb was not enough, for if actions speak louder than words, then by helping to develop the atomic bomb, the nuclear scientists demonstrated their commitment to the project.

Maybe it is unfair to compare the nuclear scientists to the Nazi medical doctors who perpetrated barbaric criminal acts under the guise of medical research and wartime necessity, but there are some similarities which warrant consideration. Both groups consisted of members of the scientific community who were interested in conducting scientific research; both groups were involved in research which was fully sanctioned by the state; the research activities of both groups were fully endorsed by eminent members of their respective scientific communities; both groups were active during time of war; and both groups engaged in research that was harmful to the health and safety of others. This is not to imply that the nuclear scientists had Nazi mentalities, i.e, mentalities characterized by a callous disregard for human life and a depraved indifference to the consequences of their acts. Rather, this comparison shows how easily a group of presumably refined, thoughtful and honorable people who were working to rid the world of the scourge of Nazism

could become part of a project which could make them look as bad as the Nazis. In Oppenheimer, Victor F. Weisskopf writes that

> Obviously, scientists such as those at Los Alamos would be deeply concerned with the ominous implications of their work. Long before the great test, the political and moral implications of the bomb were in the foreground of interest. Oppenheimer and Bohr started many discussions about the dangers of atomic weapons and about ways and means of turning this new discovery into a constructive force for peace.[32]

The fact that the nuclear scientists were able to appreciate the political and moral issues associated with the development of the atomic bomb clearly sets them apart from the Nazi medical doctors whose views were completely shaped by Nazi racist ideology. But despite their reservations, they still built the bomb.

The holocaust is arguably the most egregious example of genocide in history, but the Nazis were not the only group capable of committing such a crime. In Indefensible Weapons, Robert Jay Lifton writes:

> There [referring to the example of the Nazi doctors] one could observe (in a very different kind of situation to be sure) how very ordinary men and women who were in no way inherently demonic could engage in demonic pursuits; how professionals with pride in their professions could lend themselves to mass murder; how in fact the killing process itself depended on an alliance betwen political leaders putting forward particular policies and professionals making available not only technical skills but intellectual and "moral" justifications.[33]

This statement can be used to describe the nuclear scientists as well. As private individuals the nuclear scientists were

essentially ~~peaceful~~ decent individuals, but once that "alliance" was forged between the scientific community and the government in pursuit of "particular policies," these ~~peaceful~~ decent individuals became galvanized, with far-reaching consequences that threaten mankind's survival to this day.

The nuclear scientists who helped to build the atomic bomb may not have been emotionally stilted buffoons like the Felix Hoenikker, the character in Kurt Vonnegut's novel, Cat's Cradle.[34] Nonetheless, the nuclear scientists could be compared to another character in the book, Frank Hoenikker, who seeks to avoid ~~assuming~~ responsibility for his acts through subterfuge. In Vonnegut's novel, the narrator of the story becomes the President of the Republic of San Lorenzo and seeks advice from Frank Hoenikker, who is Minister of Science and Progress for the Republic of San Lorenzo and who had urged the narrator to become President. But Frank, who is Felix Hoenikker's son, refuses to give the new President advice, telling the narrator: "However you want to handle people is all right with me. That's your responsibility." The narrator then "realized with chagrin that my agreeing to be boss had freed Frank to do what he wanted to do more than anything else, to do what his father had done: to receive honors and creature comforts while escaping human responsibilities. He was accomplishing this by going down a spiritual oubliette."[35] Though fiction, this scene from Vonnegut's book dramatizes how the scientific community abdicated their moral responsibility in the building of the atomic bomb.

Their abdication of moral responsibility is not surprising.

At some point, the nuclear scientists who helped to build the atomic bomb must have experienced the same blocking of feelings that Susan Griffin ascribes to Heinrich Himmler in A Chorus of Stones.[36] Otherwise they could not have possibly proceeded with building such a horrendous weapon. Under such circumstances, questions of right and wrong became blurred as the trappings of "duty" and "mission" took precedence over any other considerations. But regardless of what their frame of mind may have been, it was only a matter of time before the nuclear scientists would have to confront the morality of their involvement in the building of the atomic bomb.

Footnotes

1. Paul Boyer, By the Bomb's Early Light - American Thought and Culture at the Dawn of the Atomic Age (Pantheon Books, New York), 1985, page 49.
2. Ibid., page 50.
3. Ibid., pages 49-50.
4. Ibid., page 50.
5. Robert C. Batchelder, The Irreversible Decision - 1939-1950 (Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston), 1962, pages 24-25.
6. Ibid., page 25.
7. Victor F. Weisskopf, et al, Oppenheimer (Charles Scribner's Sons, New York), 1969, page 23.
8. Batchelder, page 29.
9. Ibid., page 51.
10. Ibid., page 51.
11. Walter Smith Schoenberger, Decision of Destiny (Ohio University Press), 1969, page 138.
12. Ibid., page 142.
13. Ibid., page 143.
14. Barton J. Bernstein, "The Atomic Bombings Reconsidered," Foreign Affairs, Volume 74, No. 1, January/February 1995, page 145.
15. Ibid., page 143.
16. Ibid., page 143.
17. G.M. Gilbert, The Psychology of Dictatorship - Based on an Examination of the Leaders of Nazi Germany (Greenwood Press, Westport, Connecticut), 1979, page 276.
18. Ibid., page 278.
19. Ibid., page 274.
20. Ibid., page 276.
21. Ibid., page 278.
22. Robert Jay Lifton and Greg Mitchell, "Making and Defending the Decision: Harry Truman's Tragedy," manuscript selection from their forthcoming book, Hiroshima in America, page 1.
23. Ibid., page 4.
24. Boyer, page 61.
25. Ibid., page 61.
26. Ibid., page 63.
27. Lifton/Mitchell, page 69.
28. Bernstein, page 150.
29. Henry L. Stimson, "The Decision to Use the Atomic Bomb," Harper's Magazine, Volume 194, No. 1161, February 1947, page 101.
30. Ibid., page 102.
31. Ibid., page 105.
32. Weisskopf, page 27.
33. Robert Jay Lifton and Richard Falk, Indefensible Weapons - The Political and Psychological Case Against Nuclearism (Basic Books, Inc., New York), 1982, page 12.
34. see Kurt Vonnegut, Jr., Cat's Cradle (Delacorte Press/Seymour Lawrence, New York), 1963, pages 9-12.
35. Ibid., pages 158-159.

36. Susan Griffin, A Chorus of Stones - The Private Life of War (Doubleday, New York), 1992, page 153.

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Sometimes you simply summarize a book and do not insert it into a historiographical tradition. The best example is your conclusions about Starobin. The point is that the CP was never the expression of the majority of workers. Workers rejection of Communism is not equivalent to a rejection of class conflict. The literature of postwar world gets more specific than the simple polarities capitalism and socialism. You need to articulate more clearly what labor's position was. Here, Lichtenstein and Brody would refine your discussion. Keynesianism itself implied that simple capitalism would not produce propserity.
Similarly, you need to document not the changes of the South,, but its signficance for postwar history. Yes, you are right that it was an industrial policy, but one which benefitted some, not all. Do not jump too quickly to Boston from the migration. First, explain what happened. Then need some discussion of history of school desegregation before jumping into reactionary populism. What was the white situation in Boston.
On race liberalism and civil rights. Doesn't Hamby make same point as M? Is Weir making the same point as M? She also criticizes War on Poverty? Need to analyze the thinking more.
Again, need to distinguish those who stress the economic failings of liberalism and those the social (race) failings. In analyzing M. and Keynesianism, which you criticize later, stop and think for a while what his position represents. After all, he is writing in the 1980s when the attack on K. was full-blown. Yet his discussion does show that there was opposition to it, that there were differences among Keynesian thinkers, and that perhaps it would be judged on its results.
p.11 Then you have a tendency to revert to "and there was another change." Why not in your discussion of Bluestone and Harrison say something like, postwar liberalism with its stress on racial justice and opportunity for all was therefore mortgaged to economic prosperity. But during the 1970s, the economy collapsed..... People like Bluestone and Harrison, would stress the economic, not social failings of liberalism.
p.12 Then you go back to Weir. This paper reads more like a list of books, not an essay. You need to think beyond the specifics of each book. What is the relationship between W. and Edsall?

There is little discussion of time here. What were the important turning points?

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