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**BAD DAYS ON
MOUNT OLYMPUS**

**The Big Shoot-Out
in Princeton**



BAD DAYS ON MOUNT OLYMPUS

The big shoot-out at the Institute for Advanced Study

by Landon Y. Jones, Jr.

The posse was made up of geniuses, mostly. Tried to run the sheriff out of town. Didn't do it, but they sure shot up the old Intellectual Hotel.

Spring of 1973 in Princeton, New Jersey.

André Weil is in a hurry. A slightly stooped figure in a baggy coat and trousers, he scurries along a walkway at the Institute for Advanced Study. Weil is considered by most scholars to be the world's greatest living mathematician. He has made fundamental discoveries in algebraic number theory and algebraic geometry. Now he and his colleagues are meeting to work on a different kind of problem: how to fire Carl Kaysen as director of the Institute for Advanced Study.

John Milnor's eyes have a distant look to them, as if he has just gazed into an intense fire. As an eighteen-year-old freshman studying mathematics at Princeton University, Milnor heard about an unproved conjecture of the Polish topologist, Karol Borsuk, concerning the total curvature of a knotted curve in space. Milnor worked out a proof and took it to his professor, saying, "I can't seem to find anything wrong with this, can you?" The professor could not. Neither could any of his colleagues. A year later, Milnor stunned mathematicians around the world by publishing a full theory

of the curvature of knotted curves, with the Borsuk proof as a mere by-product. Now a professor at the Institute, Milnor has joined Weil in the movement to get rid of Carl Kaysen.

Morton White wears tweedy sports jackets and smokes a pipe. His office, which fills half the top floor of one of the Institute's buildings, is flowing over with books, hundreds of books, stacked in shelves four deep around the room. There are books about philosophical schools—phenomenology, existentialism, pragmatism, and logical positivism. There are also books about philosophers—William James, George Santayana, John Dewey, and Alfred North Whitehead. White has written extensively on philosophy and American intellectual history. For nearly a year, though, White has been thinking primarily of removing Carl Kaysen from his job.

Carl Kaysen, in the microcosm over which he presides, has taken on the lineaments of the arch-enemy of the geniuses. In his eighth year as director of the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton, New Jersey, Kaysen has won the hostility of seventeen of the Institute's thirty permanent professors, who, though few in number, make up one of the most distinguished faculties in the world. Kaysen's Institute is caught in a power struggle of such intensity that for the first time serious questions are being raised about its purpose and survival.

When the discord at the Institute first spilled

over into the newspapers last spring, it appeared to be little more than a conventional academic cat-fight. Kaysen, who succeeded J. Robert Oppenheimer as director in 1966, had proposed one Robert Bellah, a sociologist at Berkeley, for a professorship in the Institute's new program in social science. A majority of the Institute's faculty, headed by a solid bloc of mathematicians, challenged Bellah's credentials and voted down the nomination. Kaysen, however, disregarded the faculty vote and sent Bellah's name on to the trustees, who approved it.

The mathematicians and several historians were infuriated, and at once unsheathed their long knives. With the cruel candor typical of so much of academe, André Weil explained: "Many of us started reading the worthless works of Mr. Bellah. I've seen poor candidates before, but I've never had the feeling of so utterly wasting my time." Harold Cherniss, a classicist, said, "It was clear as crystal that Bellah was not of the intellectual and academic quality of a professor at the Institute." The faculty dissidents also attacked Carl Kaysen publicly and eventually presented the Institute's trustees with an ultimatum: either Kaysen went or, they implied, they would. Taken aback by the rapacity of the scholarly attack, the trustees made a series of procedural concessions but stopped short of rescinding Bellah's appointment or firing Kaysen.

There was something undeniably titillating about the scandal—Mr. Chips goes on a bender. Here was the prestigious Institute for Advanced Study, former home of such super-savants as Albert Einstein, J. Robert Oppenheimer, and John Von Neumann, caught in petty bickering and backstabbing. The resident scholars, who had always been a bit holier-than-thou and a lot smarter-than-thou, were squabbling like schoolboys.

It is, of course, romantic to expect great scholars to be free of lesser emotions. Yet we persist in building myths around our brightest citizens, and at no place has the myth-making been more successful than at the Institute for Advanced Study. In its forty-three years, the Institute has presented a Disney version of the life of the mind that is more abundant in apocrypha than facts. There was the kindly Einstein, stopping on his walk home to help local Princeton schoolchildren with their multiplication tables; the gentle, wounded Oppenheimer, writing poetry in his study and carrying on a correspondence in Sanskrit—another genius, disappearing into the library only to emerge blinking, a year later, with a Nobel prizewinning thesis in his hand.

The Institute looks like a peaceful New England prep school. A Georgian building topped with a cupola dominates the square-mile

campus of grassy fields and woods, the scene in 1777 of what townspeople now refer to as "the first" Battle of Princeton. There are several two-story brick buildings, a modernistic glass-and-concrete library designed by Wallace Harrison, and a glittering new cafeteria and office complex. The Institute's housing project, tucked off in a stand of birches, was designed by Marcel Breuer.

The thirty full-time professors suffer no classes, no students, no paperwork, and no pressure to publish anything. In most cases, the only equipment they receive is a couple of blackboards, some chalk, and a secretary to ward off curious visitors. Whether they come to their offices for two hours a day or for sixteen hours a day is completely up to them. They sit, think, read, and write. When the system works, they create new knowledge. For their labors the professors are paid \$37,500 a year. Some people call it "The Institute for Advanced Salaries."

In addition to providing a home for thirty lofty intellects, the Institute also brings together each year more than one hundred and fifty "temporary members," for the most part young postdoctorate scholars chosen from universities around the world. About one-half of the visitors apply for the temporary appointments; the other half are invited by professors at the Institute who have detected promise in their work. "There is nothing so pleasant to me," says one of the permanent mathematicians, "as to think that whenever there is a man anywhere, be it in France, be it in Japan, be it in Scandinavia, whose work interests me, I do not have to go to him. I just tell my colleagues, 'This is an interesting man who is doing interesting work in such and such a field.' And then he is invited." The visitors generate most of the Institute's visible activity: they talk to one another during the Institute's daily tea hour, they attend informal lectures and seminars given by their colleagues, and they foster an unmistakable air of intellectual excitement.

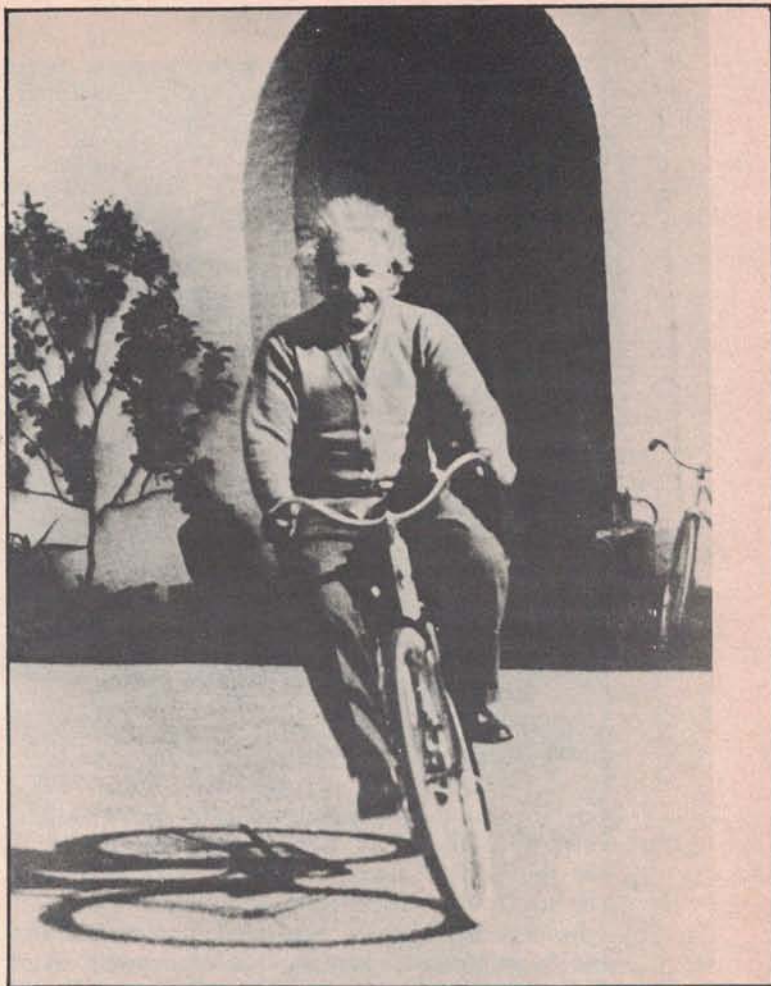
Yet what Oppenheimer once called "an intellectual hotel, dedicated to the preservation of the good things men live by" has been regularly shaken by internal battles of exceptional ferocity since the day it was founded. The current turmoil, far from anomalous, is only the latest skirmish in a long war of attrition that has driven two of the three previous directors from their jobs and now threatens to claim the fourth. The strife goes far beyond the kind of healthy intellectual jousting that, for example, Einstein waged with Niels Bohr over quantum theory. Rather, it has been marked by personality clashes, power struggles between the faculty and director, rivalries between disciplines, and an impressive record of intellectual arrogance. The only history that has been written of the Institute wound up unpublished in Oppenheimer's safe; this is characteristic.

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There is an episode in *Gulliver's Travels* in which Swift has Lemuel Gulliver visit "The Grand Academy of Lagado," where the academicians are engaged in such projects as extracting sunbeams out of cucumbers. Swift's rage was directed against what he considered the useless scholarship of his time—which happens to be the exact principle upon which the Institute for Advanced Study was founded. In 1930, Abraham Flexner, the educational reformer, persuaded two New Jersey department store heirs, Louis Bamberger and his sister, Mrs. Felix Fuld, to charter a new type of institution dedicated to "the usefulness of useless knowledge." A small, reverently chosen faculty of the world's greatest intellects and most promising young scholars would gather, "free from financial worry and concern," to charge ahead into the frontiers of scholarship. Since Flexner feared that "faculty government would distract scholars and might lead to internal and factional difficulties," he placed the authority for running the place in the hands of the director and trustees. In his most utopian moments, Flexner rhapsodized that the bountiful spirit of pure scholarship and fellowship would flourish, that "the mathematicians will informally lunch, smoke, chat, walk, or play golf with the director."

Louis Bamberger had originally wanted to build his Institute near his home in South Orange, just outside of Newark, New Jersey. But Oswald Veblen, the nephew of Thorstein and the leading mathematician at Princeton University, persuaded him that the university town, with all of the university's resources at hand, would prove to be more fertile soil for the Institute's growth. It is conceivable that the Institute might have had a quiet birth and uneventful life if not for one fact. Late in 1932, Flexner coupled the news of the Institute's planned opening in Princeton with the dramatic announcement that the first two faculty members would be Veblen and Albert Einstein, the most renowned scientist in the world.

Einstein did not accept Flexner's offer at once. He was also being vigorously recruited by Robert Millikan of the California Institute of Technology. His friends, convinced that Princeton was a cultural and scientific backwater, had asked, "Do you want to commit suicide?" Einstein originally asked for a salary of \$3000 a year; Flexner promptly countered with an offer of \$16,000. In the end, Einstein may have been won over because, as he explained, Princeton had been the first American university to become interested in his work. Not long after his arrival, though, Princeton's parochialism was equally apparent to Einstein. "Princeton is a wonderful little spot," he wrote to Queen Elizabeth of Belgium. "A quaint and ceremonious village of puny demigods on stilts. Yet by ignoring certain social conventions, I have been able to create for myself an atmosphere conducive to study and free from distraction."



Albert Einstein

Flexner decided to build his Institute on a single foundation, mathematics. It was "the severest of all disciplines," he said, and required little equipment, "a few men, a few students, a few rooms, books, blackboards, chalk, paper, and pencils." Flexner also knew that mathematics is one of the few disciplines in which there is a convergence of opinion about the identities of the top scholars in the field—a fact that would make it easy to select the first faculty members. After Einstein and Veblen, Flexner swiftly hired two American mathematicians, James W. Alexander and Marston Morse, and two brilliant Europeans, Hermann Weyl, the mathematical physicist, and John Von Neumann, who had already begun work on his theory of games. Adolf Hitler probably did more than any single man to give the Institute its dazzling start. It seemed as if Germany's best university, Göttingen, was being physically transported across the Atlantic. As one American educator put it at the time, "Hitler shakes the tree, and I gather the apples."

Flexner would quickly find out to his dismay, however, that while there was indeed a convergence of opinion about the world's best mathematicians, the mathematicians themselves often have a palpable contempt for disciplines not blessed with equal certainty. The existence of any contrary opinion about a scholar—in most fields the proof of a lively and inquiring mind—is enough to persuade most mathematicians that the man's work is not first-rate and therefore suspect.

Flexner's attempts to lead the Institute into new studies—economics, politics, and the humanities—were fought bitterly by the mathematicians and set a pattern that has lasted to this day. He finally did manage to prop up two new schools in 1935—a school of economics and politics and a school of humanistic studies—but the battle left him emotionally drained by the time he retired four years later.

Under Flexner's successor, Frank Aydelotte, a former president of Swarthmore College, the Institute outgrew the disparaging sobriquets of "Bamberger University" and "Einstein Institute." Harald Bohr, of the famous family of Danish scientists, called Princeton "the mathematical center of the world." There was a warm symbiotic relationship with nearby (but not formally connected) Princeton University. Nobel laureates such as Niels Bohr and P. A. M. Dirac made regular visits, working off their excess energy by chopping logs in the Institute's well-stocked woodpile. Einstein concluded that the acquiescent Aydelotte was the perfect director, "a very quiet man who will not disturb people who are trying to think."

In 1940 the Institute made an appointment second in importance only to that of Einstein. Kurt Gödel, a Czech working with symbolic logic, had succeeded in attacking one of the central problems in mathematics. At the age of twenty-five in 1931, Gödel demonstrated that there is no hope of constructing a proof procedure strong enough to cover all the truths of classical mathematics, or even of arithmetic, while excluding all the falsehoods. Gödel's proof showed the limitations of Russell and Whitehead's *Principia Mathematica*, and provoked a reappraisal of mathematical philosophies and, indeed, of philosophies of knowledge in general. Gödel's proof was so astounding that it single-handedly created a busy new branch of mathematics and is now considered one of the greatest intellectual discoveries of the twentieth century. Gödel is still at the Institute and remains its single most revered scholar. Although he is virtually unknown outside of academe, one indication of his stature is that the man to whom he is most often compared is René Descartes.

When Aydelotte retired in 1947, the Institute's trustees turned to the person widely regarded as the country's leading intellectual. Just two years earlier, J. Robert Oppenheimer had ended his successful tenure as director of the atomic laboratory at Los Alamos to return to teaching at Berkeley and Cal Tech. Like Einstein, Oppenheimer at first hesitated before accepting the Institute's offer; he was happy in California and knew that he did not get along with John Von Neumann, by then one of the Institute's brightest stars. After an earlier visit to Princeton, Oppenheimer had written sarcastically of the Institute's "solipsistic luminaries."

Oppenheimer's fears were soon confirmed. Not only were he and Von Neumann at odds, but Von Neumann himself was involved in an internecine struggle with the other mathematicians over what was called "the Von Neumann machine." The Institute has always been opposed to anything but pure, theoretical research; applied research, or anything involving hardware, was anathema. But the year before, Von Neumann had received \$100,000 from RCA and had talked Aydelotte into approving his electronic computer project. The purists fought the project vigorously, but Von Neumann and his engineers held on, and, at the end of six years, they built the world's first high-speed computer. By 1958, however, the computer was voted out; the engineers went to IBM and the Institute's computer patents were placed in the public domain. It is not the least of the ironies in Oppenheimer's life that the first major project run on the Institute's computer was the program for the thermonuclear bomb.

Oppenheimer had brought with him from Berkeley a group of five young physicists and immediately began a bustling physics program at the Institute. With considerable insight into the future of particle physics, Oppenheimer brought in George Placzek, whose work on separating slow neutrons from solids was a landmark of physics; Wolfgang Pauli, who had won a Nobel Prize in 1945 for discovering the exclusion principle governing the quantum state of electrons in an atom; and Tsung-Dao Lee and Chen Ning Yang, who would go on to share a Nobel in 1957 for disproving the so-called "parity laws." Later came Freeman Dyson, a seminal thinker whose work has ranged from quantum electrodynamics to mathematical physics and, most recently, speculations on extraterrestrial life; Tullio Regge, the father of a principle of particle physics called the "Regge Pole"; and Bengt Strömberg, the astrophysicist who now occupies the chair in Denmark once held by Niels Bohr.

By contrast, the Institute's school of economics and politics never recovered from the appointment battles of Flexner's years. The 1930s had been a particularly inopportune time to begin "pure" research in economics and politics—neither discipline was securely on its feet—and Flexner compounded the problem by making a series of weak appointments, including one of an economist fresh from Wall Street. By the time Oppenheimer arrived in 1949, intellectual dry rot had set in.

Oppenheimer's solution was to merge the failing school of economics and politics with the thriving humanities school and form a rechristened school of historical studies. The unquestioned star of the new school was Erwin Panofsky, who had been appointed in 1935 and was probably the world's most eminent art historian. Aside from Panofsky, whose interests ranged from antiquity to the Renaissance, most of the other historians were tightly concen-



J. Robert Oppenheimer and John Von Neumann at the Institute's computer

trated in the study of classical history. Benjamin Meritt, a Greek epigrapher, carried on his monumental deciphering of "The Athenian Tribute Lists" at the Institute. Homer Thompson, an archaeologist, was in charge of the Agora excavation in Athens. E. A. Lowe, a Latin paleographer, had translated some two thousand pages of Latin manuscripts.

After Oppenheimer arrived, the historians broadened the range of their school to include medieval history (Ernst Kantorowicz, Marshall Clagett), Renaissance history (Felix Gilbert), and modern history (Sir Llewellyn Woodward, Edward M. Earle). The most controversial of Oppenheimer's appointments was George Kennan, who is now probably the Institute's best-known professor. Using a special discretionary "Director's Fund," Oppenheimer brought Kennan to Princeton in the face of protests by some faculty that Kennan had been too political, too deeply mired in the struggles of his times, hence not a sufficiently pristine scholar.

Oppenheimer had hoped to nourish a warm and harmonious fellowship of the mind at the Institute. But despite Flexner's dream that the professors and director would strike up friendships on the golf course, Oppenheimer found that by the end of his tenure half of the faculty were not even speaking to him. Von Neumann and Deane Montgomery, both mathematicians, opposed him on appointments, arguing that Oppenheimer wanted to pack the Institute with flamboyant but unproductive generalists. Oppenheimer called Montgomery "the most arrogant, bull-headed son-of-a-bitch I ever met," and Montgomery took to referring to Oppenheimer's house, Olden Manor, as "Bourbon

Manor." Years afterwards, George Kennan wrote in his *Memoirs* that Oppenheimer could never understand why the "mathematicians and historians continued to seek their own tables in the cafeteria . . . this was for him, I am sure, a source of profound bewilderment and disappointment."

Weakened by his private and public defeats, Robert Oppenheimer finished his tenure alienated and isolated. His once proud physics program had carved out a separate school of its own but had nearly died in the struggle. Two of his Nobel prizewinners, Yang and Lee, had quarreled and both of them had left. Several other physicists had either retired or had moved on to other universities. Oppenheimer was ill, downcast, and he became increasingly withdrawn. When he finally stepped down in 1966, he had less than six months to live.

When Carl Kaysen arrived at the Institute, he found a residue of bitterness and a sentiment that the Institute had entered a new era. Einstein was gone; so were Von Neumann, Weyl, Veblen, and Pauli. Perhaps it was true, as some had said, that the Institute took in people only after their important work was behind them. It seemed a long way from such vintage years as 1948 when the faculty included men like Einstein, Bohr, and Von Neumann, and when T. S. Eliot and Arnold Toynbee enjoyed temporary appointments.

Kaysen took on the task of rejuvenating the Institute. He had earned the reputation of a trouble-shooter as one of Harvard's celebrated action-

intellectuals in the Kennedy Administration. Not that Kaysen himself was in the Kennedy mold. He grew up in a tough neighborhood in West Philadelphia, where his father was a wholesale diamond dealer, and he won a scholarship to the University of Pennsylvania. After a wartime job doing bombing analysis for the OSS, Kaysen went on to Columbia and Harvard for a Ph.D. in economics. He received the highest compliment Harvard pays to a young man, membership in the Society of Fellows, and he set a legal precedent by going to work as an economist "law clerk" to Federal Judge Charles Wyzanski, Jr., who was then hearing a major antitrust case. Kaysen's memorandum to Wyzanski in the crucial United Shoe Machinery case helped establish for the first time the force and credibility of economic analysis in monopoly law.

Kaysen joined Harvard's economics department in 1950, and by 1957 had risen to full professor. His book on antitrust policy was considered to be a definitive study. Kaysen's interests reached far beyond Harvard, however, to a string of consultancies: military planning and intelligence for the RAND Corporation; civil defense for MIT; weapons evaluations for the Pentagon; research for General Electric; and operations evaluations for the Navy.

One of Kaysen's friends from his junior fellow days at Harvard was McGeorge Bundy. So it was not surprising in 1961 when Bundy asked Kaysen to take a leave of absence from Harvard and to work for him at the National Security Council in the White House. The brilliant, incisive Kaysen proved to be indispensable. Averell Harriman took him to India in 1962 to monitor the border skirmishes with China and Pakistan and later took him to Moscow to help work out the Limited Nuclear Test Ban Treaty. Kaysen watched over the war in the Congo, worked on the balance of payments, and prepared cost-analyses of military spending. During the Cuban missile crisis, when his associates were preoccupied by this one situation, Kaysen was running so many things that his friends in the White House began to call him "the vice president in charge of the rest of the world." When he returned to Harvard after his two-year leave, Kaysen was no less energetic. He kept his contacts open in the Johnson Administration by working on presidential committees on arms control and foreign economic policy. His scholarship thrived, and in 1964 he became Littauer Professor in political economy. He read omnivorously and was widely known for his coruscating intelligence. John Kenneth Galbraith called him "the most perfectly informed man I have ever known." Carl Kaysen was just the kind of man for any number of university presidencies.

But all of Kaysen's striking personal qualities—aggressiveness, pragmatism, and political savvy—were loathed by many of the Institute for Ad-

vanced Study's ethereal scholars. They saw in his background hints that he might turn the Institute into a policy-oriented think tank, something like the RAND Corporation, where Kaysen had been a consultant for twenty years. They feared, also groundlessly, that he would hie off to Washington on weekends and would loan out professors to government projects. The contrast with the refined, introverted Oppenheimer was obvious. While Oppenheimer had been rejected by Washington, Kaysen embraced it. Kaysen's academic credentials themselves were criticized. Despite a distinguished academic career, he was known more as a brilliant practitioner of theory than as a seminal thinker in his own right. The names of the books Kaysen had written or co-authored—*The Demand for Electricity in the United States*, *Anti-Trust Policy*, *The American Business Creed*, and *United States v. United Shoe Machinery Corporation: An Economic Analysis of an Anti-Trust Case*—were not ones to set off rejoicing among the Institute's cerebral scholars. As Weil put it acidly, "I think he wrote his thesis about a shoe factory."

André Weil, who is one of the genuine giants in the history of mathematics, became Kaysen's most formidable and implacable foe. Thirty years ago he and a group of rebellious young French mathematicians caused a furor when they began writing a series of enormously influential articles under the pseudonym of "Nicolas Bourbaki." Weil and the other *bourbachiques* hoped to produce a comprehensive treatise on mathematics, starting with the most basic principles (they spent two hundred pages of preparation before defining the number 1) and ending with the most specialized applications. The impact of Bourbaki's work on mathematics has been something like that of the letters of St. Paul on the early Christian church. He provided the first systematic accounts of such abstruse subjects as general topology and multilinear algebra. Above all, Bourbaki's writings have been known for their comprehensive analysis and dogmatic insistence on the right way of doing things. There are quite literally hundreds of mathematicians around the world who have received the groundwork of their education from the published works of Monsieur Bourbaki.

Weil is the brother of the French religious mystic Simone Weil. Mathematicians are often not unlike mystics themselves; their work has given them a vision of absolute perfection, and the commonplace world around them has lost its allure. There are only several thousand working mathematicians in the world, and they mostly know one another. They go to the same meetings, read the same journals, and work on the same problems. When describing their work, they are likely to

sound like artists, using such words as “elegant” and “beautiful.” Mathematicians regard discovery not necessarily as a matter of logic but as the result of unknown, mysterious powers in which the recognition of beauty and truth play an important part. One of their favorite words is “unchallengeable,” which, as one Institute professor has pointed out, is a word that, if it can be used at all, can be used only to describe pure mathematics. It is typical of the mathematicians’ attitude that Freeman Dyson maintains that a physicist like John Bardeen of the University of Illinois, who has won two Nobel Prizes, would not be admitted to the Institute if the mathematicians made the choice because Bardeen’s work is tainted by real-life problems.

Because of their passion for clarity and perfection, which leads them to regard themselves as the thoroughbreds of academe, mathematicians inevitably look down on social scientists as dull plow animals, doing the necessary but hardly sublime work of social utility. When Weil and others in the Institute’s faculty heard of the appointment of Carl Kaysen, a man known and respected for his use of applied knowledge, they began to dig in for the fight.

It did not take long. Kaysen announced at once that, just as Oppenheimer before him had built up his specialty of theoretical physics, he would put his energy into his own specialty: the social sciences. Kaysen said that the trustees had charged him with creating a new faculty division, a school of social science, to be added on to the Institute’s three existing schools. He promised the apprehensive faculty, jealous of any competition for funds, that he would personally raise all the money needed for the social sciences. The reaction from the Institute’s traditionalists—all mathematicians and historians—was apoplectic. Here was Carl Kaysen, whom several of the faculty considered intellectually unworthy of a seat in their midst, planning to violate Flexner’s haven of pure scholarship. The social sciences suggested policy-oriented studies and researchers running around with questionnaires. Opposition to the trustees also began to rise to the surface. Many of the faculty members resented that they had not been formally consulted on the choice of a new director. Further, the trustees had decided on a major new direction in the Institute’s mission without consulting the faculty.

Some of the Institute’s professors feared that if Kaysen devoted most of his time to raising funds for his specialty, the social sciences, there would be less to go around for them. There were visible symbols of what they judged were Kaysen’s misplaced priorities. In order to make room for the social sciences, Kaysen built a spectacular new office building and dining hall that won several architectural awards but cost \$4 million. Antioch Mosaics graced the walls of the cafeteria, where a chef



Carl Kaysen (right) and Kurt Gödel

hired by Kaysen was serving some of the best and lowest-priced meals in the area. Kaysen’s enemies, however, saw the distinctive new building as evidence that he was squandering the Institute’s funds; some made the unsupported claim that the new building was the most expensive per square foot ever built in the United States.

Kaysen moved cautiously in the charged atmosphere. Initially, he concentrated on raising enough money to ease the fears of the faculty and to lubricate the new social science program adequately. The Carnegie Corporation and the Russell Sage Foundation gave \$500,000; Ford gave \$1.5 million; the 1907 Foundation contributed another million. Eventually Kaysen raised \$4 million for the social science program, enough to make him the Institute’s most successful fund raiser. (Oppenheimer had taken the job with the condition that he would *not* have to raise money.)

Kaysen hoped to avoid the annual war dances over faculty appointments by changing the nomination procedure. In Oppenheimer’s time, the entire faculty was called in to vote on appointments made to any of the schools. While the mathematicians were able, on the face of it, to follow the discussions about candidates for the other schools—and did not hesitate to comment—no one else could get past the first page of evaluations made of the mathematicians. The result at times was that the mathematicians had a unilateral veto power over appointments.

Under the new procedure, the individual schools would be able to select their own faculty; professors in the other disciplines would be able only to comment on the nominees. At first, the change worked well. The moribund physics school, finally freed from outside harassment, was able to sign on two young particle physicists, Stephen Adler and Roger Dashen, who are among the brightest in their generation. John Bahcall, an astrophysicist, also came to the Institute, along with Marshall Rosenbluth, the country's leading plasma physics theoretician. Altogether, a dozen new appointments were made under Kaysen's tenure before the trouble started.

Everyone agreed that the procedure for picking the new social science professors would have to be different. For one thing there was not an existing social science faculty to choose them. Kaysen could not nominate them, because some of the faculty regarded him so suspiciously. There was a compromise: an ad hoc outside committee of social scientists would evaluate the nominees and report back to the faculty. Then, the faculty would "express its opinion" before the nomination went to the trustees.

Kaysen waited until 1970 to make his first appointment: Clifford Geertz, a cultural anthropologist from the University of Chicago. Geertz, an informal, rumpled man whose chief interest has been the study of religion and culture in relation to social change, has a reputation among anthropologists that is as close as a social scientist can get to being unimpeachable. Geertz's writings and field studies of Islam cultures in Indonesia and Morocco have been deeply influential, and his nomination was approved unanimously by the Institute's faculty.

In 1971 Kaysen proposed the name of George Miller, a psycholinguist at Rockefeller University, to the new school but explained that he had not yet acquired full funding for the new professorship. He asked the faculty to let him use general funds to pay for the new man until he raised the necessary amount independently. The faculty, holding Kaysen to his earlier promise to pay for the social sciences entirely with new funds, said no. Kaysen, deeply disappointed, withdrew the nomination.

A year later, Kaysen and Geertz tried again. They put the name of Robert Bellah before the faculty. Bellah is a mild and gentle professor from Berkeley whose field, the sociology of religion, with a special interest in Japan, dovetails neatly with that of Geertz. Twenty years earlier, in fact, Geertz and Bellah had been good friends and colleagues together at Harvard's Department of Social Relations, where they had both studied under Talcott Parsons. (Their friendship would eventually draw from Bellah's antagonists the charge of "cronyism,"

an accusation Geertz bitterly denies.) Bellah himself was actually living in Princeton during the 1972-1973 academic year, having accepted a one-year temporary appointment at the Institute with the understanding that he would be proposed for a permanent professorship.

Bellah's Ph.D. thesis written for Talcott Parsons grew into his first book, *Tokugawa Religion*, in which he attempted to find in Japan's Tokugawa period (1600-1867) a functional religious analogue to Max Weber's Protestant Ethic theory in Western society. Although Bellah's work met some criticism from Japanese scholars—and Bellah himself has modified some of his original conclusions—the book remains a work of exceptional distinction by a young scholar.

The problem at the Institute turned out to be that *Tokugawa Religion* was Bellah's only book-length study. In the years since, he has written articles by the dozen and edited several collections. But he has published only one other book, *Beyond Belief*, a collection of essays ranging widely from a deep analysis of religious evolution to a talk he delivered before a church group. Even Bellah's most ardent supporters concede that several of the essays in *Beyond Belief* should not have been collected at all. There was also a question of conflicting intellectual styles. Bellah writes in an idiosyncratic, confessional style that uses first-person narration and deals largely in "soft" generalizations. He has done little field study and almost no quantitative work. His embracement of the counterculture and what he described as "the wide-open chaos of the post-Protestant, post-modern era" made some of the Institute's more traditional scholars uncomfortable. Others were openly contemptuous of Bellah's enthusiasm for what he called "poets and ecstatic aphorists" like Norman O. Brown.

Clifford Geertz, who led the counterattack, argued that Bellah is not a dilettante or a journalistic popularizer but rather "a sophisticated and powerful sociologist who combines a deep knowledge of a complex civilization with a first-rate sociological mind." Geertz believes that Bellah has an original and broad mind that is "far from routine"—which, in fact, may have been one of the qualities that got Bellah into trouble at the Institute.

That Bellah's nomination was in serious trouble became clear when the outside ad hoc committee reported its findings. Three of the outside scholars—Edward Shils of Chicago, Robert Merton of Columbia, and Edwin Reischauer of Harvard—enthusiastically endorsed Bellah; Joseph Kitagawa of Chicago noted a few reservations; and Stanley Cavell of Harvard was dubious. The lack of unanimity in the ad hoc committee confirmed the worst fears of many of the Institute's professors; their own informal ad hoc committee had voted unanimously against the appointment. For a growing number of the Institute professors the con-

clusion was inescapable: Bellah was not a "first-rate" scholar on the level of the existing faculty; he and Geertz would be joined by Kaysen to form a second-rate school of social science that would then be outside of the control of the faculty. The house that Einstein built would begin to slip off its foundations.

At first, Geertz and Bellah answered the faculty's charges by arguing that the dissidents were not competent to judge Bellah's scholarship. How can a mathematician presume to judge a sociologist? The only social scientists on the faculty—Geertz and Kaysen—as well as a majority of the ad hoc committee had ruled that Bellah was a scholar of exceptional depth and promise. Professors in other disciplines were "not competent" to question the judgment of the experts. The difficulty of that argument, as the dissidents were quick to point out, is that it is ad hominem; it did not answer the real doubts they had about Bellah's scholarship. As for the experts, some of the dissidents argued that the outside ad hoc committee had been stacked with Bellah's ideological brethren.

The real problem with appraising scholarship in the social sciences is not that mathematicians do not know who is a sociologist; it is that sociologists themselves cannot agree on who is a good sociologist. One Princeton sociologist believes that the Institute would be a "laughing stock" if Bellah had been appointed. Another one says that "while Bellah would be a welcome addition to any sociology department in the country, he cannot seriously be considered to be on the same level as men like André Weil and Kurt Gödel." If sociologists around the country were asked to draw up a list of the five leading scholars in the field, only two names would be likely to appear on most lists: Talcott Parsons and Robert Merton. It is not a coincidence that both men are *éminences grises* nearing the end of their active careers.

The question then becomes whether *any* working sociologist could live up to the dissidents' exacting standard, which is that he be widely recognized as a catalytic figure whose work has changed the landscape of his discipline. When the field is narrowed to comparative social change, the task of finding a candidate who can slip through the eye of the needle is even more difficult. If the scholar is genuinely original, he will have no lack of enemies. It may be that the only man universally acceptable at the Institute would have been Max Weber, who has been dead for fifty-three years.

The critical faculty meeting on the Bellah nomination took place a year ago, January 15, 1973. Shortly before the meeting, Morton White distributed to the faculty a detailed, fourteen-page brief attacking virtually every aspect of Bellah's scholarship. White mentioned that Bel-



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lah lacked originality, lacked analytical power, lacked control over his materials, and had not written a deep, substantive work since his Ph.D. thesis. White called the methodology and conclusions of *Tokugawa Religion* unconvincing and said that Bellah had borrowed Max Weber's ideas and Talcott Parsons' methods. Even Bellah's references to Plato were "pedestrian and pretentious beyond even the call of journalistic duty."

After a lengthy meeting punctuated with heated arguments, the faculty voted down Bellah's nomination, thirteen to eight, with three abstentions. All of the mathematicians and half the historians voted against Bellah; the physicists, perhaps remembering their earlier difficulties with the mathematicians, all voted for Bellah. After the vote, most of the faculty thought that the difficult matter was closed. They were then stunned to hear Kaysen say that he still intended to recommend the nomination to the Institute's trustees. Kaysen explained that he was intellectually convinced by the case for Bellah, that the relevant experts had approved the nomination, and that this was a "crucial moment" for the future of the program in social science.

The faculty majority, many of whom had assumed that their vote would be binding, was outraged. It was the first time in the Institute's history that the director had overruled a faculty veto of an appointment. They recalled that Oppenheimer had earlier withdrawn the nominations of two physicists in the face of faculty opposition. (The director and

trustees have also turned down scholars proposed by the faculty, usually for financial reasons.) After affirming their support of "a strong program in social science," the faculty voted, fourteen to six with three abstentions, to ask Kaysen not to send Bellah's nomination to the trustees. Kaysen replied, however, that the written procedures of the Institute required only that he seek the faculty's "advice" on appointments, not its "consent." He had considered their advice and would nominate Bellah anyway.

The trustees' meeting was scheduled for January 20, five days after the faculty meeting. On January 19, Kaysen circulated to the faculty a memorandum clearly intended as much for the trustees' eyes as it was for the professors'. Kaysen argued that there was no single meaningful answer to the question of the validity of Bellah's theories. Instead, he said, the critical question was, has Bellah given a more persuasive interpretation of the social process he studied than the competing ones?

Kaysen attached to his memo Geertz's answer to Morton White's criticism of Bellah. Geertz defended Bellah as a sensitive, stimulating scholar whose presence was critical to the success of the social science program, and said that White's judgment of Bellah was "preemptory and insulting beyond even the call of polemical passion." That afternoon, only hours before the trustees were to meet, White continued the war of memos by hastily preparing a rejoinder to Kaysen and Geertz and circulating it within the faculty.

At the trustees' meeting the next day, Morton White and four other professors appeared in person and angrily outlined their brief against Bellah. When they were finished, there was a long, embarrassing silence. The professors left the room. The trustees then approved the nomination of Bellah, explaining later that they had given "special weight" to the professional opinion of Bellah by Geertz and Kaysen and "great weight" to Kaysen's judgment that "the proposed appointment is crucial to the further development of the new program, and failure to move forward at this time would threaten its survival."

Several of the dissident majority then became quite literally desperate men. All the procedural means of redressing their grievances were closed. They felt threatened both by what they considered the deterioration of the Institute's standards in the social science program and by the usurpation of the faculty's power of appointments. The result was a decision to take their case to the press and thereby to the wider academic community.

The confidential letters sent by the outside ad hoc committee appraising Bellah's scholarship were passed out to reporters. So were the minutes of the faculty meeting. The three-way exchange between White, Kaysen, and Geertz was also copied and given to reporters and scholars at other universi-

ties. In interviews, the dissidents attacked both Bellah and Kaysen with extraordinary rhetorical violence:

Morton White: "This guy Bellah doesn't write in Chinese, in Japanese, or in mathematical symbols we can't understand. This wasn't a case of no spikka da English."

Kenneth Setton, a medieval historian: "It became my unpleasant duty to call a spade a spade. . . . The Institute must have only people at the absolute top of their lines, nationally and internationally."

Armand Borel, mathematician: "This is the first time that the faculty has been overruled in any way. This is an outrageous breach of procedure."

The public airing of the dispute did elicit letters of support from sympathizers, mostly mathematicians, who objected to the overruling of the faculty vote. But many other professors were appalled. They saw the leaking of confidential letters of the recommendation as a poisoning of the academic spring: no longer could confidentiality, so vital to the academic selection process, be kept sacrosanct. Further, they were shocked that mathematicians would cavalierly dismiss the work of a respected sociologist like Robert Bellah as "worthless."

With the Bellah case sealed by the trustees, the Institute's incendiaries transferred their animosity to Carl Kaysen. John Milnor had already drawn up a letter proposing that Kaysen be replaced by George Kennan. Now a group of fourteen professors asked the trustees to set up an outside commission "to evaluate the director's stewardship of almost seven years." The trustees rejected that course but, shocked by the cruelty of the attacks in the press on Bellah, agreed to meet with a faculty group to discuss their "current anxieties." Six weeks later, that effort too had fallen apart. The trustees had agreed to a number of procedural points—including a provision for the full faculty to take a binding vote on the next two appointments to the school of social science—but had failed to grant the faculty's demand that the director be enjoined from ever again overruling a vote of the faculty. More significantly, the trustees also did not yield to the demand by seventeen of the Institute's faculty that Kaysen be fired within one year. Instead, they expressed their confidence in Kaysen and, pointedly, asked him to stay on for another five years.

Frustrated, the faculty once again took its case to the press.

Deane Montgomery, mathematician: "We do not trust Kaysen's judgment, his fairness, or his word. He is essentially a politician with almost no interest in or appreciation for advanced study. He is eager for power but does not have the moral integrity or intellectual capacity to use it wisely."

(continued on page 51)

Armand Borel, mathematician: "His usefulness as a director is at an end, and the sooner he realizes it, the better. . . . There are 17 people who have lost confidence in the director. That the Institute can function under these circumstances is unthinkable. Our lack of confidence is such that we don't see the point of any agreement with Dr. Kaysen, since he might very well put it aside at his pleasure."

André Weil, mathematician: "When Kaysen goes he can take the money with him if he likes. Our dear trustees, if they put their hands in their pockets, would have no trouble making up the loss."

Some of the trustees were beginning to feel that they had been unwillingly cast as the spectators in *Marat/Sade*. Many of them are business executives, used to handling their differences with more delicate language. Their chairman, J. Richardson Dilworth, a patrician and a Yaleman who makes his living by managing the money of the Rockefeller family, sees the dissidents as "Samsons trying to pull the temple down around them. . . . They regard the director as a sort of janitor who cleans the buildings while they run the place. They're saying to us that they want the director's head on a silver platter." Robert Solow, a trustee and an economist from MIT, concluded that the real issue dividing the Institute was the faculty's demand for "the lynching of the director."

By the end of the spring term, the atmosphere at the Institute was bilious. The annual spring dance had been called off. Kaysen had canceled the prestigious Godkin Lectures he had been scheduled to give at Harvard. Professors were skipping meals at the cafeteria, and others were avoiding the daily 4-6 P.M. tea hour. André Weil told Clifford Geertz that they could no longer be on speaking terms; Harold Cherniss has rarely spoken to Geertz. Robert Bellah, bewildered and depressed by the acrimony, was beginning to see himself as "a pawn in some larger game." It is typical of the isolation among the Institute's schools that, even though he had been at Princeton for a year, Bellah had never met many of the men who were attacking him with such vituperation.

The current academic year has brought only a slight easing in tensions. The faculty, which normally meets twice a year, had already met twice by December and enacted several largely symbolic rebuffs to Kaysen. For the past three years, the director has written the minutes of the faculty meetings; this fall, the faculty named its own secretary and appointed a committee to rewrite the minutes of the meeting on the appointment of Bellah. The faculty also voted to allow five of its members to call full meetings of the faculty at their own initiative; the director would not preside at the special meetings. On the other hand, a joint committee of trustees and professors has been meeting quietly to discuss reforms in governance at the Institute. One

such reform will be to give the faculty a voice in the selection of future directors. It may well be that more professors would have rallied behind Kaysen if they had played a role in his selection. As it happened, many of the professors saw him from the start as an unwelcome overlord imposed on them from outside.

The faculty majority's demand for Kaysen's resignation remains the chief obstacle to harmony at the Institute—although that majority is beginning to show signs of slipping. Some professors are weary of the fight; others are nearing the Institute's mandatory retirement age of seventy. Three professors appointed this year were not involved in the controversy. The remaining opposition is largely sustained by two men, André Weil and Morton White, who believe that the trustees' strategy is to remove the crisis by forcing their most outspoken members to resign. Weil is fond of pointing out that Dilworth is also a trustee of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. "They've had a policy there of de-accessing and diversifying," he says. "They may decide here to de-access some mathematicians in order to diversify and acquire some social scientists." While Weil and the rest of the most militant faculty admit that the concessions made so far by the trustees are "not insignificant," he still says, "Unfortunately we have to go on fighting for the rest of the demands, especially for the prompt disappearance of Kaysen."

Did Carl Kaysen make a mistake? The answer to the question of whether or not he had the right to overrule the faculty vote on Bellah is simple. He did. The written rules of the Institute clearly permit such an act—even though Kaysen was the first director to make that choice. Kaysen's supporters in the faculty argue strenuously that Kaysen has never misled them or indicated that their vote on Bellah would be anything more than advisory. Still, while he was within his rights, it is curious that a politically experienced man like Kaysen would let himself be forced into the position of having to ask for the faculty's views and then to ignore them. Like the dissidents, Kaysen too felt threatened. He saw the dispute as a contest of powers: the faculty had already blocked one of his appointments to the social sciences; the arguments raised against Bellah may have convinced him that no other social scientist could slip through the gates. The future of the school of social science, his primary goal at the Institute, was endangered. He made his stand with Bellah because, he said, "I thought it was the right thing to do for the Institute."

The question of the "rightness" of Kaysen's decision turns on the acceptance of one or the other of two radically different concepts of what should be

the role of the Institute for Advanced Study in American scholarly life.

In the first model, Kaysen and the trustees could have simply sought out the most eminent theoretical scholars in all the social sciences and brought them to Princeton. Kaysen had his anthropologist in Clifford Geertz. They could have added other great sages—Claude Lévi-Strauss, Paul Samuelson, Erik Erikson—and arrayed them in lonely splendor in cubicles at the Institute. That model would be closest to Flexner's original goal of bringing the world's greatest thinkers to a quiet place where they could work alone with a piece of chalk in their quest for "useless knowledge." The *only* criterion for selecting a professor would be the unparalleled excellence of his work. Flexner himself had said, "If we are unable to find a first-rate mathematician, we will have no course in mathematics."

The fact, however, is that there is little reason to assume that social scientists of this exalted rank would necessarily want to come to Princeton. Many of them depend on a steady stream of graduate students to assist in their research; but there are no graduate students at the Institute. Most of the productive work in the social sciences in this country goes on in urban centers; the Institute's rustic setting might actually inhibit research. Further, it is increasingly apparent that one of the Institute's primary services is no longer unique. In the 1930s, research scholars in America, especially in the sciences, were a disheartened and downtrodden class: they were saddled with the burdens of teaching freshmen and handling departmental chores, while their European counterparts, many of whom had not so much as seen a freshman, were investigating the atom and carrying out the greatest scientific upheaval since Newton. By freeing America's thinkers to work as they pleased, unencumbered by administration, the Institute for Advanced Study was then performing a service that was not available anywhere else.

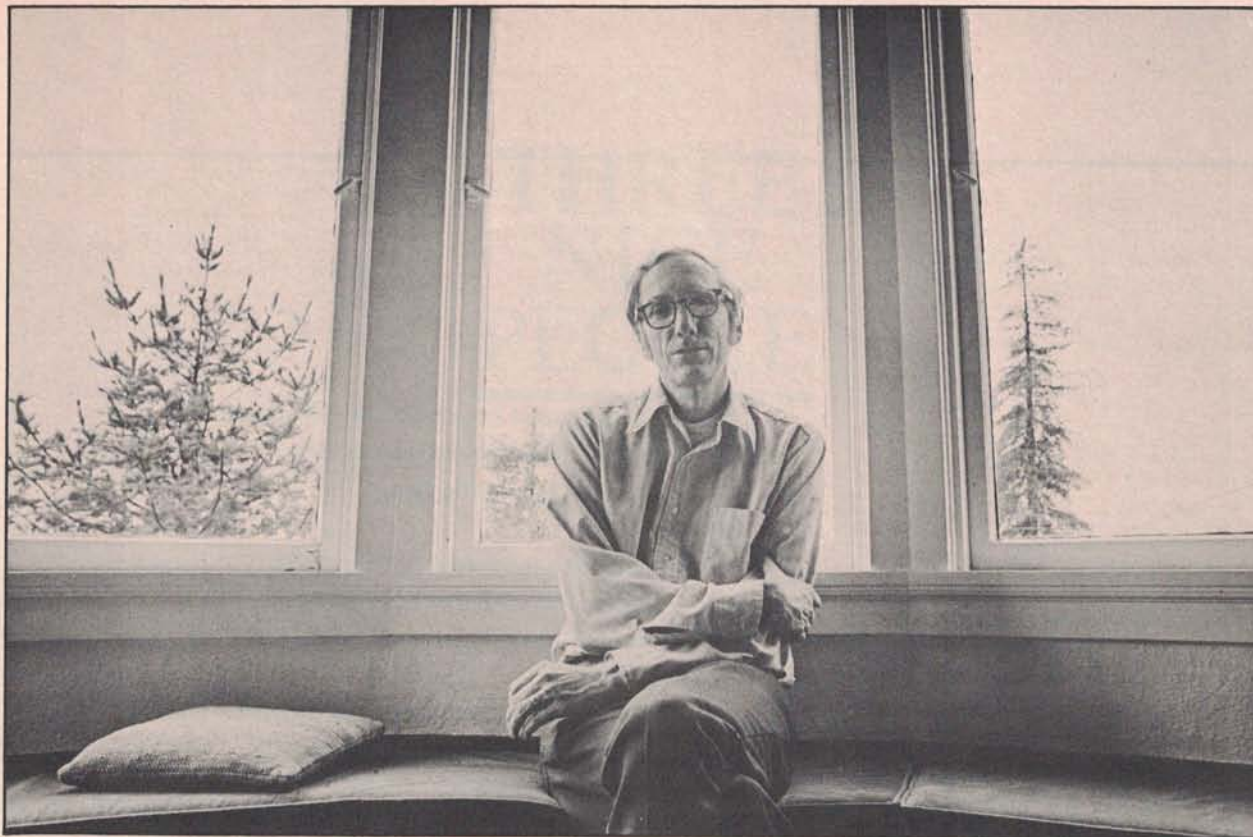
Now every university that can afford a football team can afford at least one showcase academic superstar set up in a well-endowed chair and carefully shielded from curious students. Flexner's guarantee of "the facilities, the tranquility, and the time requisite to fundamental inquiry into the unknown" is no longer an exclusive property of the Institute for Advanced Study. Scholarship in America is hardly the worse because C. N. Yang left Princeton to go to Stony Brook or because physicist Murray Gell-Mann is at Cal Tech instead of at the Institute. The only thing different about the Institute is that it exists *solely* as a temple of pure scholarship.

The other model for the Institute is the one that Kaysen and Geertz chose for their new school of social science. It is that each school will be a community of scholars. The professors will talk to one another, compare their researches, debate their

ideas. From this academic synergy will spring an abundance of new knowledge. It will be a cooperative effort, so it will be necessary to find scholars who can talk to one another and who are interested in one another's work. Clifford Geertz therefore needed to find someone with whom he could feel a kinship, someone who would share his interest in the influence of religious culture on history, someone whose ideas would sweep beyond national and cultural boundaries and include a profound historical overview. The two of them would make a difference, accomplishing more together at Princeton than either of them ever could have done working independently.

What all those considerations said to the Institute's traditionalists was that Kaysen and Geertz did not choose Robert Bellah because he was first and only a superior mind. New criteria were being injected into the selection process—that Bellah be able to work with Geertz, that they together fill a social need for new knowledge in the area of comparative social change, that the new program needed this particular man to succeed. This apparent backing off from the Institute's founding principle of genius for genius' sake led to the critical loss of faith in Carl Kaysen: the faculty majority thought that the Mephistophelian Kaysen was ready to sell their revered Institute down the river in exchange for the goal of "useful knowledge." When they realized that Robert Bellah was intellectually vulnerable, they saw their chance to check Kaysen, and to reassert the primacy of faculty control over the Institute's future.

If Kaysen and the trustees had chosen the first model—that is, built the social science program around a core of celebrated savants—then they might well have avoided the firestorm of the past year. Their decision to give the new program a specific mission, and then to make the unconvincing assertion that Robert Bellah had been chosen by using the same standards of scholarship applied to professors in other schools, made the conflagration inevitable. The crucial disagreement was over the way new knowledge is created in the social sciences. Kaysen and the trustees felt that the Institute could make a unique contribution to scholarship and, not incidentally, show that it had not outlived its purpose by bringing together active imaginative scholars with closely related interests into a critical mass that would generate new knowledge. Kaysen's goal was not to convert the Institute into a RAND-like bastion of relevance but rather to revitalize the Institute by bringing to it a thriving new area of research. "What you have here," says Freeman Dyson, "is a group of distinguished, older gentlemen who are very conservative academically. Kaysen came here with a mandate to start a new school. The real question is



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whether he's going too fast. I don't think so. It's important that we take risks, and I like the idea that the school of social sciences will make the Institute attractive to people who are interested in the modern world and what makes it tick."

The biggest risk Kaysen faced—and still faces—is that his decision to move ahead with the social sciences in the face of opposition from a majority of the faculty has seriously damaged the Institute's delicate watchworks. Some professors feel that the overruling of the faculty's vote destroys the ideal of the Institute as a collegium of scholars and makes it instead four completely independent fiefdoms. Michael Atiyah, an English mathematician, left the Institute last summer to accept a Royal Society Fellowship at Oxford, giving as one reason the unpleasant working environment. Armand Borel has told friends that he recently had an offer to go to Paris and wonders if he should have taken it. The publication of confidential letters of recommendation and the public display of animosity has certainly hurt the Institute's reputation in the academic community. If Carl Kaysen does leave the Institute under the cloud of the current rancor, it is hard to imagine that anyone would be eager to succeed him in superintending what could become an academic graveyard.

What the Institute for Advanced Study continues to do well, and what is not done on the same scale anywhere else, is to bring together one hundred and fifty visiting members, who are the brightest young scholars in the world, and get out of their way. The year or two of uninterrupted research has given such men as Albert Szent-Györgyi,

George Wald, and Hideki Yukawa (to name only Nobel laureates) the opportunity to consolidate their work at crucial points in their careers. In mathematics, the Institute operates as the world clearing house for new discoveries. Virtually every important mathematician in the world (with the exception of those in the Soviet Union and China) has come to Princeton at one time or another. It is difficult to measure how far the ripples begun at the Institute have spread, but it is revealing that one of the major new ideas of our times, Noam Chomsky's transformational grammar, received an assist when Chomsky came to Princeton for a year of study at the age of thirty.

So far, at least, little of the heavy furniture-moving by the intellectual hotel's permanent guests has disturbed the temporary visitors. This year visiting mathematicians are working on everything from differential topology to "discrete subgroups of real and p-adic Lie groups"; historians are working on Roman numismatics and modern European history; physicists are working on astro-, particle, plasma, and mathematical physics; social scientists are working on psycholinguistics and Buddhism and shamanism in Tibet. In other offices, however, there are still men sitting quietly, waiting for Carl Kaysen to make his next move. Ironically, Robert Bellah never took his hard-won professorship this year. His daughter died suddenly last April; that tragedy and the humiliation he had suffered at the hands of the Institute caused him to stay at Berkeley. Kaysen and Geertz are once again looking for another social scientist. This time the search will be harder. □