

PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT AT THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
(Transition to Conservative/Republican  
Control Under President Nixon's Management.)

December 5, 1968.

SOME GENERAL COMMENTS:

Skilful management and pruning of personnel resources at the Department of State will be required to provide President Nixon with foreign policy machinery the reliability of which is beyond question. Low morale within the Department of State and the tendency to forecast any well-intentioned Republican reforms as "McCarthyism", a "purge" or a "witch hunt" suggests that the long-overdue personnel clean-up will have to be performed with skill, tact, and, most importantly, with meticulous regard for due process and the legal rights of persons affected. (The Otepka case is evidence that such due process has not always existed in the past several years.)

The Foreign Service personnel system's autonomy will have to be the major focus of any reform program that hopes to get off the ground. This autonomy--long presented as essential for preserving the integrity of the Foreign Service--in fact has produced the opposite effect. Only those in critical areas where it is possible to fight arbitrary actions by personnel manipulation have tenure. This has led to a self-promoting and interlocking group of cliques which can only be broken up by a superior authority from outside the Department of State. It is a reform that can be accomplished without injury to individuals and with great benefit to the national interest.

SPECIFIC SUGGESTIONS:

1. Immediate Implementation of a Three-Phase Program.

Such a program for ensuring control of key personnel and functions in the Department of State was submitted on November 11 to the Republican Key Issues Committee. A Copy of that paper is attached as Appendix I.

2. Creation of a Permanent Foreign Service Board of Review.

It might be claimed that such bodies exist (e.g., 22 CFR 7.1 (1968) .) In fact such as do exist are subordinate to the whims of the Department of State authorities and their authority in law and in practice is very limited. What is needed is a board in continual session which is required to sanction all major internal personnel actions at the Department of State. Control of the Board would be tightly held in the hands of the White House. No one could advance

in the Foreign Service or be dismissed from the Service without first coming before the scrutiny of this board-- in person, if possible. At the present time there is no mechanism whatsoever to insure that uniformly high standards are applied service-wide. Regulations are often at cross-purposes, complex and as a result the most critical personnel functions of foreign policy often are in the hands of self-serving cliques who have no way of measuring the impact of their decisions upon US policy (at best) or who use personnel manipulation as a way of achieving a policy goal (at worst), that can not be defended on its own merits. If the national interest is served by the present system it is often by accident.

The primary function of the new Board, a kind of watch-dog for the President over State Department personnel, is to insure that--in addition to being technically qualified-- our diplomatic officers are the kind of representatives of the United States we want serving abroad. The Board would have wide authority to enforce standards believed vital (Note Appendix II, for example, which illustrates the low language levels of higher officers being promoted in the service.) Above all the Board would guarantee that an American character is retained by the US Foreign Service.

3. Re-Study Current Foreign Service Promotion List. The submission of the Foreign Service Officer promotion list for Congressional approval should be delayed pending re-examination by the incoming Republican Administration of the Department's entire personnel program, policies, and practices. To fail to suspend action will cost the new Nixon administration an entire year of impact upon the Kennedy/Johnson establishment--during the first and most critical year. On the other hand, if the new Administration makes it clear immediately that it intends to take an active interest in personnel matters, the effect upon foreign service attitudes will be great. In "normal" years, the list is published in March, but this year rumor has it that the outgoing administration will make the list public prior to January 20 as a "farewell present" to those who have served it faithfully.

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