

CRAMPING OUR FOREIGN SERVICE

At this time when every effort is being made to extend our commerce and the cordiality of our relations with our neighbors, it is strange indeed that the number of our Foreign Service officers—instruments of this important work—has been greatly curtailed, and this seems all the more extraordinary when we find that the fees received for services abroad for the fiscal year ending June 30, 1934, showed an increase of 11.3% over the preceding year, amounting to \$218,739.19. Since 1932 there has been a reduction of 47 consular offices, or 12%, and a reduction of 72, or 9.7%, in the number of Foreign Service officers. To this should be added a reduction in the clerical staff at foreign missions and consulates of 421 clerks, that is 20% of the whole number.

When we consider the volume and the importance of the work performed, it is remarkable that 38 out of our 54 missions have three or less clerks; eleven have four to six clerks and only five have seven or more. Of the 271 consular offices, 133 have three clerks or less; 77 have four to six clerks; 28 have seven to nine and 33 have ten or more. It is through this comparatively small personnel that fees amounting to over two million dollars annually are collected. Since the commencement of the period of curtailment no promotions of the five upper classes of Foreign Service officers have been made. This is not only an injustice to those men who have had long careers of faithful service, but it leaves the Service without the higher commands necessary for the most efficient handling of our complicated international relations. We need a sufficient number of generals to command the privates. At the other end of the line we find a stoppage no less unfortunate, for there are now some 43 names on the eligible list of those who have passed the examination and are waiting for appointment; yet no appointments have been made since early in 1932, and it is only thanks to a recent Presidential order¹ that these candidates have been continued on the eligible list for another year and a half. Without this executive order those who had failed to receive an appointment would have been automatically dropped from the list and required to take another examination before they could have been appointed. In addition, several hundred applicants are eagerly waiting to take the Foreign Service examinations, which have been omitted for over two years, that is, since September 26, 1932.

Notwithstanding the far-reaching reforms recently introduced in our Foreign Service, it is still true that a majority of those who receive appointments as minister or ambassador are non-career men. This is an American peculiarity and remnant of the spoils system. It is true that the Linthicum Act provides: "The Secretary of State is directed to report from time to time to the President along with his recommendations the names of those foreign service officers who by reason of efficient service have demonstrated special capacity for promotion to the grade of minister. . . ."²

¹ Executive Order No. 6950 dated Jan. 23, 1935.

² Sec. 14 of the Act approved Feb. 23, 1931.

The President is, of course, free to nominate whom he will, and when he believes that someone outside of the service will prove a better choice, he should pass over the names of the career men on the submitted list. He must, however, realize how important it is for the morale and efficiency of the whole Foreign Service that every officer in it entertain a reasonable expectancy that especially meritorious service will be rewarded by ultimate promotion to a Chief of Mission.

An examination of the record since July 1, 1924, when the Rogers Act went into effect, discloses that the proportion of career officers appointed as Chief of Mission was greatest on July 1, 1930, when 27 out of 52 were career officers — approximately 52%. Of the fifteen ambassadors serving at that time, we find seven were career men.³

On January 1 of this year the ratio of career appointments was 23 out of 49—approximately 47%. With sixteen ambassadors—one more than in 1930—there were six or one less career officers. Appointments still fall far too frequently from the patronage tree as plums for “deserving” political henchmen. The service has a real need for more career ministers and ambassadors, and it should also become the recognized practice to retain in active service those who attain the high rank of Chief of Mission until they reach the age of retirement. As it is now, an appointment as Minister or Ambassador may mean that the officer is made to walk the plank when a succeeding administration covets his position to placate a political protégé.

At present the lack of adequate representation allowances often makes it impracticable to promote an officer of the highest efficiency to certain ambassadorial posts, but political commitments or exigencies more frequently prove the obstacle. As a well-informed critic truly observes: “Men may still

³ CHIEFS OF MISSIONS IN THE AMERICAN FOREIGN SERVICE

As of	Political Appointees			Career Appointees			Total Political and Career
	Ambassadors	Ministers	Total	Ambassadors	Ministers	Total	
July 1, 1924.....	8	22	30	4	13	17	47
July 1, 1925.....	9	20	29	4	15	19	48
July 1, 1926.....	9	20	29	4	15	19	48
July 1, 1927.....	9	18	27	5	16	21	48
July 1, 1928.....	9	18	27	5	18	23	50
July 1, 1929.....	8	17	25	4	20	24	49
July 1, 1930.....	8	17	25	7	20	27	52
July 1, 1931.....	8	18	26	7	19	26	52
July 1, 1932.....	7	18	25	7	19	26	51
July 1, 1933.....	9	17	26	6	19	25	51
July 1, 1934.....	10	16	26	6	19	25	51
Jan. 1, 1935.....	10	16	26	6	17	23	49

be named as ambassadors on the basis of somewhat indefinite personal qualifications and very definite campaign contributions."⁴

Another injustice to the officers in the Foreign Service results from the unequal treatment which they receive in comparison with the foreign agents of other departments or agencies of the Government. For instance, Foreign Service officers have been unable to return home for their vacations and have been held several years abroad because no funds were available to pay their travel expenses, whereas other American officials abroad have had their expenses paid so that they could return to this country for a vacation. It needs no argument to show that such discrimination is disastrous to the morale of the Foreign Service. Certain Foreign Service officers were temporarily subjected to a treatment still more unfortunate. They were encouraged in the interest of efficiency to take quarters more appropriate to their mission, and relied upon the continuation of appropriations for additional rent allowance. In consequence, a number of them signed long leases, when to their discomfiture the appropriation was suddenly cut out and they were left to settle as best they could the leases which they were obliged to cancel. They were at this same time further embarrassed because their salaries had been reduced by the 15% applied to all government officials.

There are in the Foreign Service two women and 685 men, two of whom are Negroes. Many university teachers find that women students are eager to enter the Foreign Service, but the experience of those women who have been successful in securing an appointment makes one doubt whether they would find the service as attractive as they suppose. Of the six women who were successful in passing the examination and receiving an appointment as Foreign Service officer, three soon resigned to marry and a fourth resigned to go into business but married shortly after. The longest period of service of these four was five years, and the average length of service for all women appointed is less than four years. In no case has any woman as yet seen as much as eight years' service. The principal jeopardy to the Foreign Service career of these young women is not surprisingly found to be marriage. It is no wonder that young women attractive and gifted enough to secure the coveted appointment are sought in marriage. In view of the experience of these women Foreign Service officers, any young woman who desires to enter the Foreign Service should consider very carefully whether she is not likely to be disappointed even should she overcome the tremendous competition and secure the coveted appointment. Few attractive young women would like to rule out the thought of possible marriage, but when they do marry, under the present social conditions they can hardly expect their husbands to follow them about the world as they change from post to post.

After ten years we find that this country has a unified Foreign Service, which was the central idea of the Rogers Act of 1924. Every diplomat who

⁴Henry Kittridge Norton, "Foreign Service Organization," Supplement to Vol. CXLIII of the *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, May, 1929, p. 40.

has entered the service since that date has had consular experience, and recently a number of diplomatic secretaries were appointed Consuls General. In fact, at the present time there are not more than forty Foreign Service officers serving at diplomatic posts who have not had experience in the consular branch. This is very important for two reasons: first, because it has helped to put an end to the jealousies and rivalries which used to exist between the two branches of the service; and, second, because it lays emphasis upon the importance of training in the fields of economics, finance and commerce. The day of the old social type of diplomat is passing, to give place to officers who are familiar with commercial and other data upon which international intercourse is based.

It is a satisfaction to note that our Foreign Service has greatly benefited in those countries where we have constructed buildings for embassies, legations, and consulates. It was made possible to do this in an effective manner through an appropriation of ten million dollars, in a revolving fund which did not expire, as is usually the case, at the end of the fiscal year or session, but was made available year after year until the whole fund was exhausted.⁵ Unfortunately, that is now the case and it is hoped that Congress will not long delay in making another appropriation for the same purpose, and thus enable the Foreign Service Building Commission to purchase at a reasonable figure sites for other establishments abroad and to make all the necessary arrangements for their construction and furnishing.

Thanks to the efforts of successive Presidents and Secretaries of State, aided by Congressmen Rogers, Porter, Linthicum, and others, we have a Foreign Service second to none in the world. It should receive the grateful and sustained support of public opinion, instead of remaining any longer the stepchild of our Government.

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⁵ Foreign Service Buildings Act, approved May 7, 1926.