

Authority SA/2958
By J NARA Date 4/10/87

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

1973-9-15, SS, Nixon, State
Tom McElhineyDr. Kissinger
Richard Campbell

TIME & PLACE

11:00 a.m., September 15, 1973
The White HouseMr. Kissinger: I'm trying to get a feel for State personnel. I

quite frankly didn't know there was such a thing as the Inspector General. As I have said publicly, I am hopeful that I can give greater vitality to the Foreign Service.

Mr. McElhiney: This office reorganized two years ago. At that time three offices were brought together. The Inspection Corps, which inspected foreign embassies and various functions, the Management staff, which did organizational and management studies, and the Audit staff, which did financial audits. I have now got it organized into 13 teams of officers. Eight teams inspect abroad and the regional bureaus, while five do organizational studies. This ~~is~~ allows us to look at all offices every two years.

Mr. Kissinger: Do you do this?Mr. McElhiney: I do it.

Mr. Kissinger: What does the Director General of the Foreign Service do?

Mr. McElhiney: He recruits, places people. My job is strictly

evaluation.

Authority EA/2958
By D NARA Date 4/10/87

Mr. Kissinger: If I want a list of the top 50 officers, do I come to you?

Mr. McElhiney: No. You go to him.

Mr. Kissinger: Well, does he then go to you to get the performance?

Mr. McElhiney: No, he probably goes to the supervisors.

Mr. Kissinger: I am told the supervisors never give a bad rating.

Mr. McElhiney: That's right.

Mr. Kissinger: Well, how do you get a good evaluation of someone?

Mr. McElhiney: That traditional system is not working well, you're

right. It should be scrapped.

Mr. Kissinger: I have always heard of the Foreign Service as a self-protective society. Why should you, as Inspector General, go around making trouble for people? Or why should your people go around making trouble for others?

Mr. McElhiney: The trouble usually occurs after we write the report. The rater has to show the report.

Mr. Kissinger: You mean they see the report?

Mr. McElhiney: Yes. We have done it both ways. We have alternated showing it to them and not showing it to them. We are now showing it to them, and the longer the period goes on during which we show it to them, the blander the reports get.

Mr. Kissinger: Then how do you get honest evaluations of people?

Authority SA/2958
By D NARA Date 4/10/88

Mr. McElhiney: Through these reports and corridor reputation.

Mr. Kissinger: Is it credible?

Mr. McElhiney: Yes, generally.

Mr. Kissinger: Every time I talk to a young FSO, he tells me I have to break up the "Old Boy" net. Is that true?

Mr. McElhiney: No. I've been in the Service for some time. I hear the description that the Foreign Service is an elite corps, but it's really not.

Mr. Kissinger: I sat next to Lloyd Henderson. I asked him what changes he had seen in the Foreign Service over his career and he told me that when he entered the Foreign Service it was the Foreign Service of the United States. It later evolved into the Foreign Service of the State Department. But now it was the Foreign Service of the Foreign Service. Do you think that's a fair assessment?

Mr. McElhiney: No. When Lloyd Henderson entered, it was in the 1920's. The main duties of Foreign Service officers was representation. There was very little negotiation. It's certainly not fair to say it's any more of an "Old Boy" club.

Mr. Kissinger: I took it to say that it was run for its own purposes.

Mr. McElhiney: There are morale problems within the Foreign Service. I think it's primarily due to the situation where responsibilities given to the Foreign Service officers do not match their authority. I think they could all perform better if they have the authority commensurate with their

Authority EW/2958
responsible By D NARA Date 4/10/87 a definition of their authority.

Mr. Kissinger: Do you think the personnel system is working? Are the best people getting to the top?

Mr. McElhiney: Yes. I'm sure it does not perform at its best all the time, and there is some patronage.

Mr. Kissinger: Patronage to whom?

Mr. McElhiney: To Personnel. They tend to appoint their favorites to the best jobs. I'm not saying that incompetents are appointed, but certainly more than merit is considered. If you wanted to pick the 50 best people, talk to as many people as you can. Different officers will see things different ways. In the Office of Personnel you need a rejuvenation. You must find someone with experience in the Foreign Service.

Mr. Kissinger: Isn't the Personnel Department run by personnel specialists?

Mr. McElhiney: No. Placement officers are line Foreign Service officers.

Mr. Kissinger: Is it true that an ambassadorship is the highest Foreign Service aspiration?

Mr. McElhiney: I don't think so.

Mr. Kissinger: Every Foreign Service officer I talk to wants an embassy more than working in Washington.

Mr. McElhiney: That's understandable. They certainly have more authority at an embassy. And you must remember that Washington is not a very pleasant place to live.

Authority 50/2958
By D NARA Date 4/10/88

Mr. Kissinger: I've never seen such a compulsion to get out of town.

Mr. McElhiney: The working environment is more profitable at an embassy.

Mr. Kissinger: But I don't know of any embassy where you can make anywhere near the contribution that you can make here in Washington.

Mr. McElhiney: But I would say that an assistant secretary has less authority than an ambassador. And don't underestimate the negative view of Washington.

Mr. Kissinger: Since I've been around Washington, I've heard FSO's complain that they have no impact on policy. Now, how can they expect to have an impact on policy if they don't work in Washington?

Mr. McElhiney: But it's a very high price they pay for that struggle. There's nothing of a lasting value. Nothing ever gets institutionalized; it's all changed by the time they get back to Washington the next time. And I'm not criticizing; maybe this is just the nature of running foreign policy.

Mr. Kissinger: My impression of the Foreign Service is that it gets the best people of any of the agencies in town. Do you think they are being used effectively?

Mr. McElhiney: I think you'll find good people and not so good people working in similar positions.

Mr. Kissinger: Who are your ideas of good people?

Mr. McElhiney: Bill Sullivan, I think, is outstanding. Tom Pickering, in Secretariat, I also think is very good. Dean Brown is very talented.

Authority 501/2958
By D NARA Date 4/10/88

6

Mack Toom, the present ambassador to Yugoslavia. But he may not be back here - he was very frustrated. Then there is a large group of lesser competents that are treated as competents.

Mr. Kissinger: You don't want to give an example?

Mr. McElhiney: Bill Hall, I guess, is working beyond his capability. I guess all of the deputy and assistant secretaries are good. I guess most of the regional bureaus are pretty good.

Mr. Kissinger: But if the objective is to have people with excellence, do you still stick with your list?

Mr. McElhiney: I think you should attract some people from the outside.

Mr. Kissinger: Are the present people outstanding?

Mr. McElhiney: I'd say 5 to 10 are not good enough, and an equal number are over-qualified. By that I mean, of course, they could do a better job at an embassy. By and large, I wouldn't say the top people are the best people. This is only part of my work. I don't think Inspectors are there long enough to judge the people.

Mr. Kissinger: What do you evaluate, then?

Mr. McElhiney: Organizations, projects, programs, various policies. We work mostly with the bureaus themselves.

Mr. Kissinger: One of the complaints I hear is that no one can read your reports.

Mr. McElhiney: You mean the political and economic reports from the field?

Authority 5012958
 By D NARA Date 4/10/88

Mr. Kissinger: Who reads your report?

Mr. McElhiney: The bureaus covering the post being inspected. We talk to the country director before going on the inspection, then talk to him again when we return. We do all this before a regional evaluation. What has taken some of the sting out of the report ^{are} ~~is~~ the grievance procedures. Supervisors are now afraid to make critical remarks for fear someone will bring a grievance procedure.

Mr. Kissinger: What is the role of AFSA?

Mr. McElhiney: They are the collective bargaining agent of the Foreign Service officers.

Mr. Kissinger: Effective?

Mr. McElhiney: They haven't done anything to date.

Mr. Kissinger: I find it odd that a professional corps of officers has a union.

Mr. McElhiney: Well, it's certainly better than the AFL-CIO.

Mr. Kissinger: That's not my point. I find it odd to have a union at all. How much do you know about them?

Mr. McElhiney: I'm excluded from what they do. They consider me a member of management.

Mr. Kissinger: Do you travel?

Mr. McElhiney: No, I haven't to date. I usually send teams. I plan to start traveling shortly though.

Authority 5012958
By D NARA Date 4/10/88

Mr. Kissinger: Could I see some of your reports?

Mr. McElhiney: Sure, I could send you some. Why don't I send you one from abroad. Maybe I should give you an inter-agency report. It's a fairly thick one.

Mr. Kissinger: Send one on a major embassy. Pick an area I know something about -- not Africa. Latin America I know a little more about, but I prefer Europe or East Asia. I appreciate it. It's hard for me to learn about the Department.

Mr. McElhiney: I'm going to inspect the Personnel system next year. Most officers don't understand how it works, and that's one reason they're so critical. But I'd recommend you see four or five people and compare your notes. Some people you know you can trust.

Mr. Kissinger: Do you think highly of Sullivan?

Mr. McElhiney: Yes.

Mr. Kissinger: Can you think of any others?

Mr. McElhiney: Well, it's hard to do in an off-hand way.

Mr. Kissinger: Try.

Mr. McElhiney: Well on potential, Marty Hillenbrand.

Mr. Kissinger: But I'd say he is realized his potential.

Mr. McElhiney: Yes, he is a little older. Gaylord Stone the DCM in Paris is certainly good. And Mac Tumn that I mentioned before.

Mr. Kissinger: What about Phil Habib.

Mr. McElhiney: Yes, I think he's good. He needs some help-- someone to help him organize things.

Authority EW/295
 M By D NARA Date 4/10/88

I't think he's a very good organizer.

Mr. McElhiney: Well, I just think that's one of his weaker areas.

Mr. Kissinger: What about Joe Sisco.

Mr. McElhiney: Sisco doesn't understand some of the obstacles that stand in the way of many things, but I think he'd be a supreme appointment. He doesn't put much of his own thought into things.

Mr. Kissinger: What about Nat Davis?

Mr. McElhiney: He seems pretty good, I'd say the top 10%

Mr. Kissinger: Is he as good as Sullivan or below.

Mr. McElhiney: Well he's not as energetic. He's not as an attractive an officer as Sullivan. Sullivan plays the role well.

Mr. Kissinger: Is that important?

Mr. McElhiney: Yes.

Mr. Kissinger: Who else is in the Sullivan category.

Mr. McElhiney: Dave Newsome--there are not many as good as Bill.

It is difficult to talk in abstract excellencies. It is easier to discuss a specific assignment--who would be good for this embassy or that embassy. I'd say Frank Malloy is good and Dean Brown.

Mr. Kissinger: What sort of person is Hall in Director General.

Mr. McElhiney: I think you need an exam entrant.

Mr. Kissinger: You mean someone who entered by taking the exam?

Mr. McElhiney: Yes, somebody who's worked his way up from the bottom.

Mr. Kissinger: Who was a good Director General?

Mr. McElhiney: Joe Palmer. [Mr. Kissinger asked his guest to leave while he takes a phone call.]

Mr. Kissinger: Well if you could give those reports to Dick Campbell

DECLASSIFIED

Authority 5012958
By J NARA Date 4/10/88
s familiar. Foreign service more influential. The only

challenge I can offer is for them to do good work. If they do good work, they will be much more influential around town.

Mr. McElhiney: I don't agree entirely. You deal with part of what is going on--the State Department goes on with many day-to-day operations that you never see.

Mr. Kissinger: How do you do it--give them more authority.

Mr. McElhiney: Someone's got to carry out all these little actions. you will never see. For these they need authority or the jobs simply don't get done. But I would certainly agree on major policy.

Mr. Kissinger: My experience with the Department has been that they don't put up their position. They start compromising right from the beginning and end up with a watered down result.

Mr. McElhiney: I've never seen the Department of State as it is now. Everyone is far too timid. I remember as an FSO 5 or 4 getting action starting on something I couldn't do even today.

Mr. Kissinger: How do I do it?

Mr. McElhiney: Well, you've got to back them. The timidity at the top will be reflected below.

Mr. Kissinger: Timidity is not one of my attributes.

Mr. McElhiney: I think it also reflects on what's going on over here.

Mr. Kissinger: But that's not true -- even in the areas where the White House has no interest, like Africa, the Department is very timid.

DECLASSIFIED

11

Authority 5012958
By D NARA Date 4/10/88

something timidity will prevail throughout all the areas, you can't just expect one area to be strong.

Mr. Kissinger: Once we get things understood, they will have backing.

Mr. McElhiney: You've got to delineate what the people on the seventh floor are responsible for.

Mr. Kissinger: If I get the time, I seem to have an awful lot to do. You know I am interested in substance also.

Mr. McElhiney: Well if you can't do it you are going to have to delegate it. You can maintain the policy, but you must delegate the management.
