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THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

September 6, 1976

ADMINISTRATIVELY CONFIDENTIAL

MEMORANDUM FOR: H. JAMES FIELD
FROM: JAMES E. CONNOR *JEB*
SUBJECT: Letter from Ambassador William B. Macomber of August 19, 1976

The attached letter was returned in the President's outbox with the following notation:

"I wouldn't give Amb. M. a substantive response -- thanks plus our record which is good."

Please follow-up with the appropriate action.

cc: Dick Cheney

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

Dick Cheney

Both should
be answered.

I wouldn't give
Amb. M. a substitute
response - thanks plus
our record which is
good.



EMBASSY OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Ankara, August 19, 1976

Dear Mr. President:

I am writing to make a suggestion for the coming campaign which I hope you will think has merit. It involves jettisoning the quadriennial practice, inherited by all modern Presidents, of using Ambassadorial posts as a patronage area for rewarding personal and party supporters.

It is a practice that has long marred our national performance. It has meant that the effort to eliminate the spoils system from the American diplomatic service has been allowed to continue to lag significantly behind similar efforts with respect to many other elements of the Federal Government. (A career civil service was enacted by the Congress forty years before we had the beginnings of a career diplomatic service.) It has resulted in generations of American diplomatic missions abroad, not to mention long-suffering host governments, too often being critically burdened by Ambassadors who have been sub-professional and occasionally far worse. Moreover, to the extent this has tended to produce a disproportionate number of wealthy appointees, it represents a repugnant projection of an earlier aristocratic model of government where wealth was a requirement of holding public office.

But the key risk is sub-par performances, and the world has become far too dangerous, and the American diplomatic role within that world far too important, to permit this to go on. It is basically on the grounds of national interest, therefore, that I urge you to come out in the course of the campaign for an unequivocal end to this practice. I would also hope that this would be good politics as well. I cannot believe in the first post-Watergate Presidential election campaign that such a policy statement would not be very favorably received.

The President
The White House
Washington, D.C. 20500

Putting an end to patronage appointments in the American diplomatic system does not mean that all non-career appointments should be ruled out. On the contrary, any President and his Secretary of State must continue to have the right to go outside the career service to choose particularly able and experienced persons for situations requiring special backgrounds and qualifications, and any campaign statement should carefully make this point. A judiciously limited number of well-chosen outside appointees can broaden and enrich any diplomatic service. In fact, along with the clunkers and light-weights (and worse) that have entered diplomacy through the spoils system have come some of our finest diplomats, historically perhaps our finest. But these outstanding appointments have been relatively rare, and logic and experience both strongly suggest that Ambassadorial positions in most instances are better filled by men and women who, through lifetimes spent in professional diplomacy, have been trained to assume them. It is patently unfair to these men and women, and very damaging to the essential health and morale of any diplomatic service, to pick persons from the outside -- even relatively good persons -- who are less qualified to do the job. And it is against our national security interests to do so because in these days in no instance (including in our small posts) can we afford to go with anything but the best we have.

After years of watching the system at close range, I have come increasingly and strongly to the view that while there should always be some outside appointees, generally these should be limited to not more than five percent of the total. But this is a personal view and a controversial one, and not the key question in any event. The key question is how to assure that non-career appointments, regardless of their number, involve persons who have, in fact, special qualifications needed for special situations -- qualifications not equally available from within the ranks of the career service. In other words, how can the needed flexibility be preserved to make judicious non-career appointments without reopening the doors to the political patronage system?

To deal with this problem, my suggestion is that you announce during the campaign that you will create an advisory committee whose role with respect to prospective Ambassadorial appointments will be similar to the American Bar Association's role concerning prospective judges. This committee could be composed of several former Ambassadors, career and non-career (and any other distinguished persons whose judgments you think would be respected). It

would be charged with indicating to you and to the Congress its views as to whether proposed non-career Ambassadorial candidates meet the special standards noted above. The committee would have no legal authority; it would not initiate nominations; it would pass only on those names you presented to it; and its views would be recommendatory only both to you and to the Congress. Hopefully, however, its judgments would carry considerable weight in both quarters. Hopefully, too, it would be an effective device for insulating you and the Secretary of State from the intense pressures that are often mobilized in behalf of unqualified candidates.

You might wish to ask such a committee to pass on career candidates as well. For just as non-career appointments are not per se unacceptable, neither, experience has shown, are all career appointments appropriate. In the case of career candidates, the review panel could be asked to assure itself that their professional capabilities have been developed to a point which places them in the front rank of their profession, and that having achieved this place, they have not subsequently run out of steam or otherwise slipped significantly past their peak.

It is not essential, of course, to come up with a review machinery exactly in this form. Perhaps your staff can devise something better. What is essential, I am convinced, is a strong policy statement at this time backed up by the announcement of some kind of a credible and workable monitoring system. I would hope that this would be good politics for you in the coming campaign. But good politics or no, I hope you will do it in the national interest.

Good luck. I believe our country is much in your debt.

Respectfully,



William B. Macomber



THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

September 6, 1976

ADMINISTRATIVELY CONFIDENTIAL

MEMORANDUM FOR: JOHN RATCHFORD
FROM: JAMES E. CONNOR *JEC*
SUBJECT: Letter from Harlon B. Carter
of September 3, 1976

The attached letter was returned in the President's outbox.
Could you please ensure that Mr. Carter received an
appropriate response.

cc: Dick Cheney



THE PRESIDENT HAS SEEN . . .

NATIONAL RIFLE ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA
INSTITUTE FOR LEGISLATIVE ACTION
1600 RHODE ISLAND AVENUE
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20036

HARLON B. CARTER
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

September 3, 1976

RESIDENCE:
P.O. Box 606
GREEN VALLEY
ARIZONA 85611

Dear Mr. President:

On behalf of more than one million National Rifle Association members, I urge you to sign H. R. 12261 to extend for two more years congressional authority over gun control legislation in the District of Columbia.

Without passage of H. R. 12261, the first partial prohibition of handgun ownership in the United States can become a reality in January, establishing a deplorable precedent for the nation and disparaging the rights of thousands of decent and responsible firearms owners in the District of Columbia.

Regardless of any unresolved legal questions, it is impossible to posture this matter as a home rule rather than gun control issue. A veto of H. R. 12261 would seriously impair the credibility of your stated opposition to harsh and unreasonable gun control laws.

It is my sincere hope that your action on this bill will be favorable.

Yours truly

Harlon B. Carter

The Honorable Gerald Ford
President of the United States
The White House
Washington, D. C.