

Remarks of The Honorable Robert Murphy

at the January 1954 Association Luncheon

I deeply appreciate the honor which the American Foreign Service Association does me today. It has not been possible for me during a great many years, due to my absence from Washington, to attend these luncheons and I am especially glad now to have a chance of seeing so many dear friends. Years ago I would have referred to "old" friends; but since passing fifty I find the word is of increasing sensitivity. So, on advice from Dale Carnegie, I omit the words "old fellow" and "old man" from my vocabulary. But I do want friends of years' standing to know how pleased I am to be with them, and I am happy to get to know the younger men and women of the Service. The future of the Foreign Service and this Association, of course, is in their hands.

This is my first regular assignment to Washington since 1930. Of course, I have been here for brief periods during the interval, but I have enjoyed a number of interesting assignments to the foreign field where I think the direct interest of most Foreign Service officers naturally is engaged.

Apart from the sentimental aspect of renewing contacts and seeing something of Service friends, it seems to me that this time there is a special opportunity for constructive work to be done in behalf of the Service by members of our Association. Perhaps the opportunity has been there for a long time. I believe it has. But my case perhaps is typical of a good many Foreign Service Officers: they have been too preoccupied with the immediate things of urgent interest which they were doing in the field of foreign affairs to pay much attention to Service matters. I admit to an uneasy sense of guilt over my neglect of these matters. Perhaps I am not alone in this respect. I know that many—like myself—have assumed that somewhere, somehow, a kindly *deus ex machina* was guarding over the interests of the Service and the welfare of its officers. Like myself, many have been inclined to pass the buck to the intangible somebody and to hope for the best.

Well, my conclusion is that such a line of easy-going conduct does not meet modern day conditions. This is a world in which constant struggle is of the essence. If Foreign Service Officers themselves are inert or indifferent to the practical needs of an effective Foreign Service and especially to their standing with the American community, even the most sympathetic Secretary of State and the most kindly Departmental staff will not be able to develop conditions most of us would want to see prevail.

I know that I for one had become completely absorbed in the foreign field and was not conscious of a trend of opinion in the American community which seems to be unfavorable—if not at times even antagonistic—to the Foreign Service. This sentiment has various degrees of refinement depending on the individual or group with whom one talks. But there are doubts about the Foreign Service on the part of a good many Americans. Some of these doubts are inspired obviously by the insistent drumfire of headline news regarding loyalty to the United States, "giveaway" policies and mistakes of political judgment. The old and threadbare clichés

about "cookie pushers" and "striped pants" continue to be used to a point where I wonder at times whether our Service really has a friend. I do not want to exaggerate. However, I find that the curve of popularity of the Foreign Service on the chart of American public opinion is down low. It seems to me that, if it is not falling off, it is also not showing much of a rise. If that is true, it is a serious state of affairs which we cannot afford to ignore. We are, it seems to me, better understood in many foreign countries than we are among our own people. That condition, if I have stated it correctly, must not be permitted to continue. Most of you have put too much sweat and too many tears into a devoted Service to take such a situation lying down.

If you agree with the estimate which I have given very briefly and inadequately, what is it, if anything, that the members of this Association can and should do about it? Just the other day I heard a reference to this Association as the "Cookie Pusher's Union." It was not a friendly reference. This Association of course is not a union. It is, however, an Association of men and women who have the best interests of the Department of State and the Foreign Service—and more especially our country—very much at heart. They have at heart the high tradition of the American diplomatic and consular services. Even in the days when our country was not a great world power, and certainly since it became one, it has long been recognized that the President and the Secretary of State are not able to carry out the foreign policy of our country without a corps of experienced men and women both at home and abroad. These people are expected to be specialists in the several international areas and to be experts from whom our Government expects support in the achievement of its foreign policy aims. There is no doubt that a man who may have been brilliantly successful in business or a profession or politics in the domestic field usually finds it necessary to have the assistance of a career officer to advise him in the many intricate details of diplomatic practice abroad. Many non-professional diplomats who have disdained such assistance at the advent of their work abroad have been happy to resort to it before they returned to private life.

Going way back to the youthful days of our Republic, there has been a Foreign Service tradition of high standards and able performance associated with the names of Benjamin Franklin, John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, Silas Deane and John Jay. I know the members of this Association want to perpetuate that tradition.

I have mentioned criticisms of the Service, but in fairness it should be said that there is also recognition of good qualities and able performance. Bruce Lockhart in his book *My Europe* recently paid a fine tribute to American diplomats. Doc Matthews quoted a passage of the tribute at a luncheon meeting of the Association prior to Doc's departure for The Hague.

But the suggestion I want to make is that the members of this Association, in addition to doing the best job we can

in the duties which fall to us, can, as individual Americans make a greater effort with the American community to acquaint them with our problems, the policies with which we work, and the conditions abroad which affect all of us. We need to persuade them that we are their business representatives. They should know the truth of the old saw that an able diplomat is worth more than an army division. We all realize that our duties often do not permit of advertisement. We know that in the case of a military victory there is no hesitation to acclaim publicly the commanding officers and the men who participated in the victory. In the case of a diplomatic victory it would often be against the national interest to proclaim it. For example, a victory in a negotiation which resulted in very substantial monetary gain for our Government usually cannot be shouted from the house tops, nor can advantages gained in a secret agreement even be mentioned without danger of nullifying the advantages. A diplomat may succeed in avoiding a military clash or civil commotion but that effort, which may be very exhausting and at times, dangerous, is not spectacular, like winning a battle, and is often a matter of public indifference.

In some of the older nations such as Great Britain the diplomatic and consular services are better understood perhaps than by our own public because Britain has been involved in world affairs as a great power so much longer than we have. The average British soldier, I noted during the past war, understood what his Foreign Office did; but I found a number of American soldiers who had never heard of the Department of State.

Therefore, I believe that it is up to us as members of this Association to do a little fighting in behalf of our Department and Foreign Service. I believe that on appropriate occasion, when individuals apply language such as "cookie pusher" we should start pushing that kind of a cookie around. I think we should individually spend more time with members of Congress, not in an effort to obtain personal advantages, but to raise the congressional estimate of our Service, and to let the members know us, as individuals, and what we stand for. In addition to contact which we might have on the Hill in our official capacities each of us also has two Senators and at least one Representative to whom we can have access. I believe they would welcome our approach, if it is done with due consideration of the heavy load most of them carry. And I believe there are many organizations here at home—forums, press and radio people, chambers of commerce, world affairs group and influential clubs and the like—where a plug for the Foreign Service will be welcome. We should transmit to them some of the pride we feel as members of a Foreign Service which is second to none in the world both in the quality of its personnel and its policies.

And finally I think we should try to exploit the interest which even some of the criticism of our Service has engendered to work for a constructive program for the Service. We should fight for a better, far better, training program for our officer corps, and we should have, in my opinion, a more effective interchangeability for the officer corps. All of the armed services of our Government have elaborate and expensive educational systems. In addition to the Military and Naval Academies, the President now feels that the Air Force should have its separate institution. They all have an enormous amount of special and refresher courses all through their careers. The Foreign Service

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on the other hand, which is certainly part of our first line of defense in this respect, is treated like a redheaded stepchild. We should work for adequate training provisions for our officers.

This is not intended to be a gripe session and I do not intend to develop a good many other features which I am sure have engaged your thought. I would just like to leave with you the idea that individually the members of the Association should take a more positive approach to promoting a better understanding of the Department and the Foreign Service on the part of the American public. Under the direction of an exceptionally able and knowledgeable Secretary of State, we can and should influence the American community to become our ardent supporters.