

Walter Campbell

Dr. Gohsen
Mr. Rockefeller

REMARKS

VICE PRESIDENT HUBERT HUMPHREY

Sept 27, 1965
Sept 28, 1965

ROCKEFELLER PUBLIC SERVICE AWARDS

WASHINGTON, D.C.

DECEMBER 8, 1965

Every government in history has found ways to honor those who render outstanding service. But our own government has never completely solved the problem of how to pay tribute to men and women whose performance in public service has been exceptional.

In many countries this problem is solved by medals, orders of knighthood, and titles of nobility. But our ability to do this sort of thing has been limited by the traditional and Constitutional restrictions which are part of our democratic heritage.

Mr. Rockefeller and Princeton University are to be congratulated for the sensitive understanding which enabled them to see this lack of recognition for public service, and for the generous and imaginative way they have set out to fill it.

The effectiveness of their ideas is best proved by the fact that they stirred the government itself to belated action.

Originally, the Rockefeller awards gave a sabbatical year of travel to outstanding mid-career civil servants.

But Congress recognized a good idea when it saw one and passed the Government Employees Training Act of 1958 which, in effect, adopted the idea and expanded the program. The Rockefeller Awards were then changed in in nature, and converted into tributes to officials at the highest ranks of government service.

↳ This imitation should in itself be a source of pride to the sponsors of this award.

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nothing gives more pleasure than to see one's own
seedling nursed by others. (And on this basis, ~~may I~~
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↳ But, to get back to these public service awards: I
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at a time when federal employees were going through a
dark period of trial and tribulation.

∟ The time was 1950 and 1951, and we were hearing a great deal about ~~corruption~~ corruption in government. Calumny and scandal were being heaped upon hard-working federal employees. And the public was being led to believe that the federal civil service was a nest of spies and traitors.

∟ It was at this moment of our history that John D. Rockefeller, III, approached President Dodds of Princeton University and said something like this: "Our career officers in the federal government are far better than the public is being led to believe. Let's do something to tell the public the other side of the story -- to remind the nation that it has a dedicated, honest and able career service in its government."

and ∟ These awards are the result of that conversation.

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As a nation we are fortunate indeed in ~~the kind of~~ people who have devoted their lives to careers in government. The morale and spirit which pervades their ranks, and their dedication to public service, are precious national assets.

Administrative
Indeed, it is remarkable that the executive branch of our nation, which has accumulated both power and responsibility over the years, has maintained a tradition of humility and service -- and has erected stringent standards of honesty which have reduced corruption to levels far below those, ~~I must say~~, which exist in many non-public activities.

↳ To what do we owe this record? It is worth asking this question for a variety of reasons.

① ↳ In the first place -- if you will permit me to be coldly realistic -- we must cite the fact that our government employees are well paid in dollars.

↳ In some countries we hear people say, "The poor fellows are underpaid, you can't blame them for a little graft on the side."

↳ Happily, this kind of false governmental economy is not practiced here. ↳ On the whole, our federal staff is well paid. ↳ They are not so well paid, of course, that many of them couldn't work elsewhere at a higher rate.

↳ But they are well enough paid so that their families can maintain decent standards of living and their children can be well educated.

So income is at least not today so much a negative factor in government service.

But, more importantly, the government employee is doing what he wants to do. Deep down, every alert and intelligent mind longs to play a creative role in building a better world.

Indeed, many men work hard to accumulate a fortune just so they can perform public service later on.

Who in private life can share the satisfaction of knowing that, in the last 24 hours, he has been able to cut red tape that will help make it possible for man to reach the moon . . . or that he has devised a program that will enable 5,000 high school dropouts in a Western city to find a niche in schools or in industry . . . or has averted a minor war . . . or has added a few hundred dollars a year to the income of families who desperately need that income.

And, finally, there is the factor of power: power for change and constructive initiative.

Time and again I have seen the bright ideas of federal executives, often well below the top echelon, become major national programs.

Medicare, for example, is a concept which came to life on the desk of a junior executive some 25 years ago. It became a major issue for a few courageous liberals in the pre-war and immediate post-war years. It finally was approved by President Truman, espoused by President Kennedy, and led to enactment by President Johnson. That federal official is in the federal government today. Several universities and insurance companies would give him three times his salary. But ~~can you tell me that any compensation~~ *imagine the compensation* ~~could outweigh the~~ satisfaction that came to him in seeing a boyhood idea transformed into a reality?

↳ This, in short, is what the federal government can offer you! The opportunity to serve others, the opportunity to think far ahead, to think big, and to help a better world come into existence. If this is what you want in life, then federal service is your great opportunity.

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↳ The federal service, ~~as I have described it,~~ ^{can be and} is a dynamic service, an imaginative service, a service whose top executives should be intimately and courageously identified with the program and platform of their President.

↳ The Constitution of the United States ^{it} says very little about the vast executive branch, which has grown so numerous. The founding fathers put it all in one sentence: "The executive power shall be vested in a President of the United States of America."

That is all. The rest is merely a matter of appointment and delegation.

The President, in turn, embodies a program, a platform, and a popular will. It is the job of the government employee to support and effectuate that program. The civil service is not an end in itself. It is not permanent government which goes on serenely unperturbed behind a meaningless facade of electoral contests. It is an instrument available to the President to help him accomplish the tasks to which he is committed. ^{and} It is responsible, through him, to the American people.

Inevitably, federal officials at many levels will play a role in helping the President to understand and define those tasks, but they must never confuse institutional ^{status} ~~inertia~~ with government policy. The decisions which the people make at elections are real issues, and their decisions must be respected and effectuated.

And they must be carried out with efficiency and good management.

This is why President Johnson insists today that all departments and agencies subject their policies and programs to constant review and evaluation. And this is why the President himself, and his Bureau of the Budget, comb through each department and agency budget -- cutting away duplication, waste, and programs which have outlived their usefulness and may continue solely by inertia.

Woodrow Wilson, the great political scientist and President after whom your graduate school is named, Mr. Goheen, envisaged a dynamic role for the government administration. He saw the development of pressure groups representing special interests -- a development which has progressed by geometric proportions in the years since his death -- and he said, quite rightly, that the business of government is to mobilize the general interest against the special interest.

This, of course, is more easily said than done, because the government office becomes the honey pot which draws the special interest flies, and with the best of intentions, a government administrator may hear only one side of the story unless he makes a heroic effort to learn what is in the best interests of the vast unorganized public.

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∟ But, as I inferred earlier, the even greater danger
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∟ It is all too easy for the government official ~~to~~
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And, as he has recently made clear: He expects
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L Our guests of honor ~~tonight~~ ^{today} clearly fall within that class. I congratulate them on having survived the rigors of office. I thank their wives and families, who have missed their presence at many suppers and on many weekends ^{and} I am sorry, Mr. Rockefeller and Mr. Goheen, that you do not have "his" and "her" medals, because I know that behind every hard-working official is a wife who works even harder. And I congratulate the American people on their good fortune in having these award winners as their servants.

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But to get back to these public service awards: I think it is worth remembering that this idea was conceived at a time when federal employees were going through a dark period of trial and tribulation.

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ment policy. The decisions which the people make at elections are real issues, and their decisions must be respected and effectuated.

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is a wife who works even harder, And I congratulate the American people on their good fortune in having these award winners as their servants.

Thank you, Dr. Goheen, Mr. Rockefeller, Father Campbell, and my associates in government, those who have been honored today, the six exceptionally competent and able public servants, and a special word to Miss Arnstein, who I think has, in her selfless and humble and gracious manner, told you that these awards, while presented to an individual, or to individuals, truly represent awards to the whole field of service, the hundreds, and in some instances thousands, that are associated with that field of service.

Well, I couldn't help but think as I sat here what a happy day this is in government. It's almost as good as a pay increase -- not quite, but almost. I wish that I could have had this assignment offered to me a little earlier because there was a time when I had to talk to certain members of the Congress and some of the representatives of government employees and tell them that unless the pay package was within the guidelines it might not be signed. I think you remember that, John. And had I known how wonderful all this was going to be I would have told them not to even think about the pay, we'd just have this ceremony. And how happy the President could have been! And I suppose the taxpayer and all of us.

Well, I come here today in the presence of friends and associates who have heard me so often -- these exercises in which I indulge myself are only aspects, or I should say trials, of

development of character for my listeners. But I want you to know, Mr. Secretary, since you have gone through some rigorous experiences in recent hours, and George, since you always do over in the State Department, that you'll be able to take this in stride.

Every government has found, or at least tried to find, ways to honor those who are rendering outstanding service. But our government has never completely solved this problem of how to pay appropriate tribute to men and women whose performance in public service has been truly exceptional. Now in many countries this problem is solved by medals, orders of knighthood, and titles of nobility, but our ability to do this sort of thing has been severely limited by the traditional and constitutional restrictions which are part of our democratic heritage. Oh, once in a while a member of Congress gets a medal, and then the State Department says "you ought to put it in our custody and not go around wearing it," particularly, that is, if it is a foreign citation. And this is fitting and appropriate. But Mr. Rockefeller and Princeton University are to be congratulated, I am sure, by each and every one of us -- I know I speak for you -- for the sensitive understanding which enabled them to see this lack of recognition for public service and for the generous and indeed the imaginative way that they have set out to fill it.

Now the effectiveness of their ideas is best proved by the fact that they stirred the government itself to belated action, and that's no small task, and you accomplished it!

Originally, the Rockefeller Awards, as indicated by Mr. Rockefeller himself, gave a sabbatical year of travel to outstanding mid-career civil servants. But then, as I have indicated and Mr. Rockefeller has said, the Congress recognized a good idea when it saw one and it passed the Government Employees Training Act of 1958 which, in effect, adopted the idea and expanded the program of these merit awards. The Rockefeller Awards were then changed in nature and were converted into tributes to officials at the highest ranks of government service. This imitation should, in itself, be a source of pride to the sponsors of the awards. In the world of foundations, nothing gives more pleasure than to see one's foundation seedling nursed by others and come into the full harvest. And on this basis, Mr. Rockefeller and his family have had a very high batting average. For instance, one well might say, Dr. Shannon, that the great medical research facilities endowed by the Rockefeller family, were the forerunners of the national institutes of health. Any of us who have travelled abroad know the Rockefeller Foundation has been a bulwark of strength for medical research all thru the world.

But now to get back to these public service awards, I

think it is worth remembering that this idea, and I reemphasize it, was conceived at a time when federal employees were going through a dark period of trial and tribulation. The time was 1950 and '51, in case you have lost your point of reference, and we were hearing a great deal about Communism and corruption in government. Calumny and scandal were being heaped upon hard-working federal employees; there was hardly a day that went by that there wasn't another Congressional subcommittee that was investigating these "nefarious" characters in government. And the public was being led to believe that the federal civil service was a nest of spies and traitors. And it was at this very moment of our history that John D. Rockefeller III approached President Dodds at Princeton University, and I believe said something like this (I can only paraphrase it): "Our career officers in the Federal Government are far better than the public is being led to believe. Let's do something to tell the public the other side of the story, to remind the nation that it has a dedicated, honest and able career service in its government." And these awards are the result of that conversation and that dedication. Today, happily, the government employee enjoys a high public respect. But I think it is worth remembering that our benefactor came to us not in the band of a cheering multitude, but as a lone voice, a brave man. Those were, as we refer to them, the McCarthy days,

and they were sad days, not only for the federal employee but for this nation and for the ideals of this republic.

Now, as a nation we are fortunate indeed in the kind of people, the quality of people, who have been willing to and are devoting their lives to careers in government. The morale and spirit which pervades their ranks and their dedication to public service are precious national assets. Indeed, it is remarkable that the Executive Branch, in its administrative establishment of our nation, which has accumulated both power and responsibility over the years, has maintained a tradition of humility and service and has erected stringent standards of honesty which have reduced corruption to levels far below those which exist in many non-public activities.

To what do we owe this record? It is worth asking the question for a variety of reasons. In the first place, if you will permit me to be cold and realistic, we must cite the fact that our government employees are well paid in dollars. In some countries you hear people say, "Well, the poor fellows are underpaid; you can't blame them for a little graft on the side." Happily, this kind of false governmental economy is not being practiced here. On the whole, our federal staff is well paid. And I might suggest that one of the reasons for it is because federal employee organizations have insisted upon it! And this

has not only been of benefit to the employee but to the standards of the service, and I want to pay due respect. This is the only way that I know that you get good public service. They are not so well paid, of course, that many of them couldn't work elsewhere at higher rates. But they are well enough paid so that their families can maintain decent standards of living and their children can be well educated. So income is at least not today so much a negative factor in government service as it once was. But more importantly the government employee is doing what he wants to do. And I think this is what Miss Arnstein emphasized. Deep down, every alert, intelligent mind longs to play a creative role in the building of a better world. And most of us that are in government, whether we are elected or appointed, are here because we like it. And I'm always reminded as an elected official, and have been many times by my wife when I would growl and complain, that there was really no voice from heaven which said "We need Hubert!" As a matter of fact, I had a little trouble on occasion just getting a voice from anybody! Things have improved slightly. But I am sure that the reason we are in public service is because we find it richly rewarding in terms of our self satisfaction, the things that we like, being with people, working with people, and contributing to what we think is the common good.

Now many men work hard to accumulate a fortune, just so

that they can perform public service later on. I know many a man in this country that has accumulated a fortune through his brilliance, his ability, and his competence only to want to sacrifice it all for the opportunity of public service. Who in private life can share the satisfaction of knowing that in the last twenty-four hours, for example, that he was able to cut red tape that will help make it possible for man to reach the moon. Imagine the satisfaction now of some of those that in the NASA organization, Cape Kennedy, and the Manned Space Flight Center at Houston -- in industry too, as well -- in the spectacular achievements of our astronauts. And who in private life can share the satisfaction of knowing that he has devised a program that will enable 5,000 high school dropouts in a western city to find a niche in schools or in industry? Or has averted a minor war? Or has added a few hundred dollars a year to the income of families who desperately need that income? Those are real rewards. There isn't any payroll that can ever satisfy or meet those rewards.

And finally there is that factor of power, power for change and constructive initiative. Time and again I've seen the bright ideas of federal executives, often well below the top echelon, become major national programs. Medicare, for example, is a concept which came to life on the desk of a junior

executive in this government twenty-five years ago. It became a major issue for a few courageous liberals in the pre-war and immediate postwar years. It finally received the support and approval of President Truman; it was espoused by President Kennedy, and led to enactment by President Johnson. But that federal official is the one that really today has the reward -- and he, by the way, is in our federal government today. I am sure that several universities and insurance companies would give him three times his salary, but imagine that compensation, the intangible compensation and satisfaction that came to him in seeing a boyhood idea, literally, a young man's idea transformed into reality. And imagine the satisfaction he's going to have knowing that he has eased the burden by his idea in the lives of millions and millions of our elderly. What a wonderful, rewarding experience for anyone!

Now this, in short, is what the Federal Government has to offer you. The Federal Government offers an opportunity to serve, to serve others, the opportunity to think and to think far ahead, to think big, and to help a better world come into existence, and to help build a better America. Now if this is what you want in life, then federal service is your great opportunity. If it doesn't interest you, you're wasting your time in the federal service and you ought to get out. Because we

need people who are dedicated, dedicated to the noblest work in this country, serving the American people. Now the federal service can be and is a dynamic service, an imaginative service, a service whose top executives should be intimately and courageously identified with the program and the platform of their President.

I now speak to you as a refugee from a classroom. I once thought I was going to be a political science professor; I qualified temporarily. The pay wasn't as good, I might add, then as now, and other opportunities came my way, like the chance to run for office, and get defeated and then get elected. And I want to testify right here, winning is better than losing! I don't want any doubt in this audience on any of these matters. But now let me speak to you of at least my interpretation of the federal service and its relationship to the Presidency. The Constitution of the United States says very little about the vast Executive Branch which has grown so strong and numerous. The Founding Fathers put it all in one sentence: "The Executive power shall be vested in a President of the United States of America." That is all; the rest is merely a matter of appointment and delegation. The President, in turn, embodies a program, a platform and popular will. It's the job of the government employee to support and effectuate that program. The civil service

is not an end in itself; it is not permanent government which goes on serenely unperturbed behind a meaningless facade of electoral contests. It is an instrument to be available to the President to help him accomplish the path to which he is committed, to fulfill the legislative requirements that Congress gives to him, and it is responsible, through him, to the American people. Now inevitably federal officials at many levels will play a role in helping the President to understand and define those paths, but they must never confuse institutional status or even institutional inertia, with governmental policies. The decisions which the people make at elections are real issues and their decisions must be respected and effectuated. Now there is a way to change those decisions and that is at the ballot box, not within the civil service. You change them by the votes, not even by the promulgation of rules and regulations which even some elective officials have a hard time understanding. And, I might add, that these decisions must be carried out with efficiency and good management. This is why President Johnson insists today that all departments and agencies subject their policies and programs to constant review and evaluation. And this is why the President himself and his Bureau of the Budget, the strong arm of the Executive Branch, comb through each department and agency budget cutting away duplication, waste and programs

which have outlived their usefulness and may continue solely by inertia. And once again may I suggest that every civil servant has a responsibility to in candor and frankness and as a sense of personal and professional integrity, recommend up through the channels of government those programs that no longer serve a useful purpose, or where there is duplication or obsolescence.

Thank goodness for the many fine suggestions that have come. But we are going to have budget problems in the days ahead, and budget problems can be minimized by trying to get the most out of every public dollar that we have for public service. I said to a group yesterday in New York that we want to present a budget to this Congress that is noninflationary, and we want to be able to present a budget to the Congress, your President wants to present a budget to this Congress that will carry out the commitments of policy and to do so with the greatest efficiency and with the least amount of loss of effort and waste.

Now Woodrow Wilson was to me possibly the greatest political scientist that ever lived. Not only was he a great political scientist but a great President, after whom the graduate school in Princeton Dr. Goheen has named, and he envisioned a dynamic role for government administration. I suppose that I became interested in politics primarily because I used to read a great deal about Woodrow Wilson. He saw the development of pressure

groups representing special interests, a development which has progressed by geometric proportions in the years since his death, and he said, prophetically and quite rightly, that the business of government is to mobilize the general interest against the special interests. Now this, of course, is much more easily said than done because the government office becomes the honey-pot which draws the special interest flies. And with the best of intentions, and with every known safeguard that a man can put up, a government administrator may hear only one side of the story unless he makes a heroic effort to learn what is in the best interest of the vast, unorganized public. I remind you of that Scriptural admonition: "Seek ye the truth." It's not always readily available; you really have to look for it.

Now the regulatory agency which becomes, in time, the meek handmaiden of the regulated is an old story. It is seldom, at least in our government, a result of corruption or bribe. It is more often the result of laziness, of lack of interest, or of just being surrounded and just being pecked at day after day, which is a more serious danger to good government than demagoguery. But as I inferred earlier, the even greater danger to good government is the danger of inwardness, a feeling that each little subunit of government is a government unto itself. And I want to say right now that you have no representation in the United

Nations. Not a single Cabinet office, not a single department or agency of government, they are a part of the total sovereignty of the United States. So I repeat that it is all too easy for the government official to forget that ours is a government for the people, and that those in government are in public service and not self service. I guess this is another way for a former Senator to say that every branch of government of the Executive Branch that's out in the field should be as active in serving the constituency as a Congressman or a Senator. I know I've heard for sixteen years in the Congress that these Congressmen are just errand boys. And I've heard about how the Senators are always special policemen -- Well, you want to know why? Because too often the doors are closed to the people who want the answers to their problems. I could go through my correspondence in sixteen years and give you 100,000 -- 500,000 -- letters from constituents who couldn't get the answer in the field and finally had to appeal to a Senator. That is unnecessary and it ought never to happen. The answers ought to be readily available in this vast network of units and of regional and district offices which are all throughout the nation.

Now in undertaking any action, in considering any policy, there should be just one measure in this government of ours. Will this benefit the people? That's what we're here for; we're

not here to serve Congress, or to serve an Executive Branch -- we're here to serve the people; the constituency of the President is the nation at large. And it is this constituency which the Executive Branch must bear in mind. The needs of the nation will not always be reflected in Washington lobbys, in pressure mail, or even in newspaper editorials. Sometimes it will require great tenacity and curiosity to discover those needs. But it is the job of men and women who help the President bear the executive burdens to discover those needs. For the President is the people's lobbyist. He is the only nationally elected representative of the people, all the people. And he is the one that is the lobbyist for the people. And as he has recently made clear, he expects our departments and agencies to produce programs and proposals which they believe to be, to the maximum degree, in the interest of all of our citizens. He will determine what may be politically possible or difficult and that is the way it should be. Before he reached the White House, President Wilson once remarked, "Men of ordinary physique and discretion cannot be presidents and live. If the strain be not somehow relieved we shall be obliged always to be picking our chief magistrates from among wise and prudent athletes, a small class." Well, I am afraid President Wilson's admonition hasn't been very well served because the strain is still there on any President.

Now our guests of honor today clearly fall within that class of very, very able and exceptional people. I congratulate them on having survived first of all the rigors of office. I thank their wives and families who have missed their presence at many suppers and on many weekends. And I'm sorry Mr. Rockefeller and Dr. Goheen that you do not have "his" and "her" medals because I know behind every hard-working official there is a loved one, a wife, who works even harder. In fact, I've said to the Secretary of State, Secretary Ball, that in our foreign service I think that the government gets a wonderful bargain. I've witnessed overseas the tremendous efforts of our women, the wives of many of our foreign service officers. The government pays one salary and gets two extraordinarily able people. This is the best bargain I have heard of since I left the drug store. So, I leave you with a note of congratulations to those who are the award winners, but more importantly I want to congratulate the American people on their good fortune on having such capable and able public service, such an honest civil service, and in having these award winners as their servants. Thank you very much.



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