PS for 12/7/89

Right On, President Bush, With Political Appointments

The liberals in Congress and the media are bent out of shape because President George Bush has appointed friends to political jobs. Editorializing on the front page, the *New York Times* starts with an accusatory question in the headline, "How Many Is Too Many Friends as Ambassadors?", and then proceeds to ridicule some of Bush's appointees.

Meanwhile, Capitol Hill liberals staged a hearing so that an old Nixon appointee, Elliot Richardson, could express shock about the alleged "serious strain" between Bush's political appointees and career civil servants. Democrat committee chairman Gerry Sikorski said that Bush's political appointees have "poisoned" the relationship with 2.1 million career civil servants.

Now, let's get some perspective on this issue. George Bush was elected President by a decisive margin, and those voting for him expect him to carry out his promises and appoint personnel to implement his policies. That's what being elected means.

The idea that the unelected, unaccountable, virtually anonymous bureaucracy should be able to co-opt and control the policymaking jobs of the Federal Government is simply unacceptable in the American system. This nameless bureaucracy already controls most federal jobs anyway.

Political appointees account for less than two-tenths of one percent of federal civilian employees. During the Reagan Administration, the number of political jobs (call Schedule C jobs) fluctuated between 1,046 and 1,742. Currently, Bush has made about 1,100 Schedule C appointees out of 2,100,000 federal employees.

The Democrats never permitted civil service to impede their political objectives. Presidents Roosevelt, Truman, Kennedy, Johnson and Carter used every possible tactic to get rid of Republican jobholders and replace them with Democrats.

For example, when President Harry Truman wanted to find federal jobs for his pals in the Pendergast machine, he just peremptorily closed some agency offices elsewhere, reopened them in Kansas City, and hung out the Help Wanted sign for new hires with proper political credentials.

Likewise, John F. Kennedy abolished the entire federal agency dispensing foreign aid, thus eliminating all the Eisenhower appointees. Kennedy then immediately created a new foreign aid agency under a new name and hired a new staff of all Kennedy supporters.

The State Department is the last bastion of entrenched bureaucracy and has always been a policymaking and personnel enclave to itself, accountable to no one. Through many changes of administration, the foreign service "party" continues to run things.

If the election of Dwight Eisenhower in 1952 meant anything, it meant a promise to fulfill this Party Platform plank: "We shall eliminate from the State Department and from every federal office, all, wherever they may be found, who share responsibility for the needless predicaments and perils in which we find ourselves. We shall also sever from the public payroll the boards of loafers, incompetents and unnecessary employees who clutter the administration of our foreign affairs."

Eisenhower's Secretary of State was never able to make a dent on the army of government employees who were running our foreign policy. The State Department personnel who had lost China and announced that South Korea was outside the U.S. "defense perimeter" remained virtually intact, and one of the unhappy results was Fidel Castro.

Eisenhower's Ambassador to Havana, Earl E.T. Smith, was never deceived by Castro and sent back accurate reports that Castro was a Communist and should not be aided by the United States. Those reports came into the hands of a Truman holdover named William Wieland who pigeon-holed them and never passed them along to his superiors.

The lesson is that, not only should Bush appoint a loyal Republican friend as Ambassador, but he should make sure that all the upper echelons in the State Department are also filled by loyal Republican friends so that he receives accurate information.

Senator Paul Sarbanes (D-MD) is complaining that, of 87 ambassadors selected by President Bush so far, 48 are Bush's friends and supporters. So what! Why aren't all our ambassadors Bush's friends and supporters?

In shocked, horrified tones, the *New York Times* says that seven new ambassadors each contributed more than $100,000 to the Republican Party in 1988, and several

others raised large sums of money. A businessman who built a business, met a payroll, and was successful enough in our private enterprise system to be able to contribute $100,000 to the party of his choice is a lot better qualified for dealing with foreigners than being a paper pusher in Foggy Bottom for 20 years.

The job of an ambassador is to be the personal emissary of our President and to explain America to the natives in the country to which he is sent. We don't want our ambassadors to be the mouthpiece of the State Department, which usually has a foreign policy of its own, and is often not the same as the President's.