One of my duties as Assistant Secretary of State from 1937 to 1940 was to be the Administrative Officer of the Department, having as such charge of the budget of the Foreign Service and the personnel of the Department. It included also being head of the Foreign Service of our government. We had a board known as the Board of Foreign Service Personnel. Every so often under the law this board had to draw up a list of promotions to be transmitted to the President, and by him to the Senate for approval. These promotions were made with great care. It was a time consuming job for the members of the Board of Foreign Service Personnel, but the matter was so important not only for our government but for the Officers concerned and their morale and their usefulness that the work was done with the greatest care. The Department had many ways of knowing the performance of its Foreign Service Officers in the field and in the Department. It is on the basis of the many records available to the board that these recommendations for promotions are made.

The President almost invariably when he received such a list of promotions from the Foreign Service Personnel Board gave it his O.K. and sent it to the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations.

I do not recall exactly when it was but it must have been in 1938 or 1939 that the President held on his desk for weeks a very important list of promotions. When we made inquiries we could get no reply, except that the list was under consideration by the President. Finally, as the head of the Foreign Service Personnel Board, I became as much concerned as my colleagues on the delay in the White House in acting on this list. I thought it best first to talk it over with then-Under Secretary Sumner Welles, who while not a member of the Personnel Board, was very familiar with the personnel in the service. When I brought the situation to the attention of Welles and the long delay he was very much concerned and said that something would have to be done about it because he quite appreciated what effect it was having on the morale of the service that these lists were not going to the
Senate. He also realized that the long delay in the White House affected seriously the promotion procedure in the service which would in the end have a demoralizing effect. He therefore proposed that we call together on the President, which we did. The President had the list in a drawer in his desk. He got it out. He said, "I haven't done anything about this list," and looking at me he said, "Because there are some names on it that shouldn't be on it." With all the admiration and respect that I had for the President, I felt a good deal disturbed and quite unhappy about this remark, which I told him I did not think could be justified and I told him about our procedures in making up these lists. He said he thoroughly understood that but that he had information with regard to certain men on the list. He then asked me to join him by the desk and he ran through the list. The first name on the list was an officer whom I knew quite well, and the President said, "He is drinking too much, and any man in such a post as he has who drinks too much is responsible and will talk too much." I told the President that it was correct that this man had in a certain period taken too much liquor, and that he had been severely reprimanded, but that he had stopped drinking. I said he was a very useful officer and deserved promotion. The President said, "As long as he is drinking he is a bad example and I can't approve of his being promoted". We ran through the list, which had perhaps over a hundred names in it. The President, as I recall, objected to five or six or seven of the names. In each case he had a specific reason for the objection, which if correct would be valid. I remember the name of one of the officers, who was also a well known and very capable officer, and the President said, "His wife talks too much and she calls me unspeakable names in front of foreigners, and no Foreign Service Officer and no wife of a Foreign Service Officer should speak critically in this way and in such terms of the President of the United States and of his superiors. If he is that kind of a man, he is not fit for the job he holds.

Welles and I were very much disturbed. We knew that the President was a very just man. We knew that if what he said was correct, that these men should not be
promoted. On the other hand I told the President frankly that I did not think his information was correct. He said, "I have my sources of information too, and in this case I think mine are better than yours." I told the President that we would immediately go into these names and have an investigation made by an inspector of the Department. Welles and I were a good deal disturbed about the matter because we felt that the President had probably received gossip from some people who came in to see him and was holding up very important promotions just on this basis.

On my return to the Department I immediately took the necessary steps to see that inspectors from various parts of the world where they happened to be went to the posts where the individuals in question were stationed. In every single case what the President had told us was verified to be a fact, and these names had to be eliminated from the promotion list and the new list sent, which the President immediately forwarded to the Senate. I have said elsewhere that the President, that is President Roosevelt, was one of the best-informed Presidents we have ever had. I always marveled at the way in which he was informed. This was another instance where it showed how wide and how correct his sources of information were.