

About the middle of February William Hickey, the President of the United Corporation in New York, came to Mexico with his family unexpectedly. He had lunch with us at the house in Mexico City and I asked him if they could come to Cuernavaca the following day. They said they would be very glad to come but they were expecting Judge Burns and Mrs. Burns from Boston to arrive from Acapulco. I suggested that they bring them along. The Hickeys and the Burns had lunch with us on a Saturday in the middle of February at our home in Cuernavaca. I was very fond of Bill Hickey because during the study which the World Bank was making of the 26 million dollar loan that Mexlight had requested from the Bank Hickey had been asked by the Bank to make a study of our company and of the electricity situation in Mexico. He had spent several weeks here in 1948, I believe, and made an excellent study of the company and of the whole situation, which proved to be very helpful to the Bank and to the company. I always felt very grateful to Hickey, who is one of the broadminded utility men in the United States and a man of great vision and understanding. We saw each other casually from time to time during the years. Judge Burns I had never met but I knew of his distinguished record in the federal courts and of his great capacity as a lawyer and counsel.

After luncheon Judge Burns asked me if I knew why Stettinius had been made Secretary of State, or rather how he had been made Secretary of State. His remark was prompted by the fact that he saw a picture of Stettinius over the bookcases in the library. I said that the appointment of Stettinius by President Roosevelt as Secretary of State had always been a great surprise to many of us. I had known him very well and we were good friends, but I had no thought that the President would appoint him as Secretary of State. He said that everybody was just as much surprised as I was. He then went on to ask if I realized just how it happened, and I told him that I had no idea. He said, "Do you know that at the time the President was considering you and Mr. X (I shall have to ask Judge Burns who the other person was as I do not recall the name he mentioned) as the successor of Mr. Hull?" I told

Judge Burns that I did not know that the President was really considering ~~the matter~~^{my}. I knew from friends that there had been some talk of my succeeding Mr. Hull. I had never given it serious attention or thought. I was confident that the President would not appoint a/^{career} Foreign Service Officer to the post, no matter what regard he might have for him. I told Judge Burns that I had received these vague indications that the President was thinking of me in this connection but repeated to him that I had given them no attention whatever. I recall that at the time these indications were given to me, I realized that it was no post for me. I knew what the responsibilities of the post were and I felt that a man of more broad reputation and standing in the country should be appointed thereto. I did not consider that I had the many qualities which are necessary to fill that great post. Besides that, I was under the impression of the friendship and confidence which Mr. Stimson and Mr. Hull had extended to me and I thought that men of that caliber should occupy the post. In short, I told Judge Burns that I had never taken the matter seriously.

Judge Burns said that he knew from a friend that I should have taken it seriously at the time because the President was really thinking seriously about it. He said that he could tell me, and he had first-hand knowledge of this from one of those who participated in the conversation, that the President and a few friends were considering what should be done about the successor to Mr. Hull. The President said that he was thinking of me and Mr. X. Judge Burns said that those of the President's friends who were with him when this matter was under discussion seemed to agree that I was the person who should be named. While the conversation was in progress Harry Hopkins came into the room. When he learned what was going on he said to the President, "Why not appoint Ed Stettinius?", and Judge Burns said it was Harry Hopkins who was responsible for the putting up of Stettinius for serious consideration. Judge Burns said that after Harry Hopkins made this remark, the President said very pensively and with one of his broad grins, "Well, what with Messersmith and Eisenhower, people would wonder whom we were at war with."

Judge Burns tells me that he had this story at the time from one of those who was present at the conversation. I told him that it was all news to me. Whether all this happened as Judge Burns was told, there is no doubt from information which I had at the time that the President was seriously thinking of me for the post. Whether he did think of me or not, I am happy that I was not requested to take the post. I have no wrong impressions nor have I ever had any wrong impressions concerning my capacity, and I consider the post of Secretary of State as one that requires men of the best quality that we can produce in our country. In any event, whatever did happen at the time it is pleasant to think that the President, who had shown such friendship for me and such confidence in me, may have thought of me for such a post even though I was not fitted for it.

Incidentally, I should note here that Harry Hopkins, whom I had never met before, came to Vienna while I was Minister there and spent a number of days there. He spent practically all the time he was in Vienna with me. We had very interesting conversations. I know that when he returned to Washington and in reporting on his trip to the President, he spoke of his stay in Vienna and of me and spoke to the President in very high terms of me. The President himself afterwards told me this. In fact, Hopkins became I understand a sort of a booster for me and thought of me for all sorts of positions which the President told him was quite out of the question, as he wanted me in Vienna. I think the President was interested in continuing to receive the letters which I wrote from Vienna, in which I covered developments in Central and South Eastern Europe.

Hopkins and I afterwards became good friends after I went to Washington in 1937 as Assistant Secretary, and I shall refer to this in another memorandum.