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Personal and  
Confidential

December 5, 1938.

Dear Mr. Stebbins:

I have your letter of November 24, 1938 and I am glad that you have written me about this matter. I can quite appreciate your concern and the reasons for which you have written me. You will please consider what I may say in this letter as entirely personal and confidential for you. It is a matter on which I am not conducting any correspondence as I feel that I should not do so for the present, but on the other hand, as I realize that this matter is one of deep personal concern to you, I feel that I should write you at least briefly for your personal information.

Both I and you know that even under the coordination agreements we have not been able to arrive at that full measure of cooperation between our Services in the field that the best interest of our Government and of the interests which we serve makes essential. If we could get along under this unsatisfactory state of affairs in the past the time has come in my opinion, and I believe in the opinion of practically all of those in and out of Government who have viewed this matter in an objective way, when we must do something to put our foreign representation on the most effective basis possible. I need not tell you that in the situation which we have to face in the foreign field now and with the problems which we have to handle in our foreign relations, it is absolutely essential that we should have the most effective machinery that can be devised for the conduct of our work abroad. I have long felt myself, and I have always approached the problem as purely one of our Government as a whole and not that of a department, that the only solution is a unified Foreign Service under the direction and control of the Department of State. I am told that the President has arrived at this same conclusion. Certainly everyone in the Department of State, I believe,

has

Henry E. Stebbins, Esquire,  
Office of Commercial Attache,  
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has reached this conclusion. I am inclined to believe that the Department of Agriculture has reached this conclusion. So far as I know the great majority of the Foreign Service officers of Commerce are of the opinion that the best interests of all would be served through a unification of the Service under the Department of State. It is my understanding that the President is giving this matter very careful thought and that it is probable that appropriate legislation will be introduced into the Congress during this next session which has for its object the unification of the Foreign Services of Commerce and Agriculture into that of State. So far as I know, the President will reach a decision in this matter in the near future and it is my hope that when the legislation goes to Congress it will go with the approval of the Departments of State, Commerce and Agriculture and with the blessing of the President. Under these circumstances I need not tell you that it is almost certain that the legislation will become effective without much difficulty.

It has always been the thought of this Department that if there is such unification of the Foreign Services of Commerce and Agriculture into that of State, that the present officers of Commerce and of Agriculture should be brought into the Department of State career service on an entirely equitable basis as to rank and salary. So far as I am concerned, I would not be in favor of any arrangement which does not take into proper account the present officers of Commerce and Agriculture. As I see it, the unification of the Services under State would be a very great advantage not only to our Government and to the interests which we serve, but to the present officers of Commerce and Agriculture. By being absorbed into our Service in State they would get immediately the same status and the same rank and privileges of the present officers of State. In addition to this personal advantage which involves, as I need not tell you, also greater stability and opportunity, there is the very distinct advantage that the officers of Commerce and Agriculture would be able to work in a wider field than that which they at present have under our statutes and it would give them greater opportunities for service.

I am very much pressed these days and I need not tell you that the days are not nearly long enough for some of us to carry through as we should like our responsibilities. I therefore cannot go into this matter at length in this letter. What I do wish to say is that I quite understand your personal concern and wish to tell you that so far as this Department is concerned, any consolidation of the Services could only mean distinct advantages for the present

officers

officers of Commerce and Agriculture. I think, therefore, if I were you I would not contemplate any change in my present plans. I think this matter will be settled during the coming session of the Congress and I believe it will be settled in a very satisfactory way. I think it is generally recognized now in this country that the activities of the Department of Commerce can be most effectively confined to this country through the strengthening of the Bureau of Foreign and Domestic Commerce and its district offices as the means for digesting and disseminating information in this country. Just as the domestic field should be that of the Bureau, so it is believed that the activities of our Government abroad should be carried on through a unified service of the Department of State. This is the way in which it would be done in business and it is the way we should do it in Government.

It is my conviction that those persons who are opposing the consolidation are doing so on entirely personal and departmental grounds which should have no place in the public interest. It is just because it is so much the right thing to do that I believe that it will be done. For an officer like yourself who is really devoted to the Government interest, and who is viewing these problems from the broad point of view of service, the solution through a unified Service could only aid your happiness and your greater opportunity. No matter how distasteful may be certain conditions under which you have to work for the present, I think you would wish to do the best you can awaiting a solution which I believe will not be long in coming and will be in the right direction.

I would appreciate your keeping this information personal and confidential for you know that in this Department we always try to do things in a very correct way. We are not making any propaganda, but we are endeavoring to help the President to work out a program which is designed solely in the public interest. I feel, however, that as you have approached me so frankly I should write you as I have.

Believe me with very good wishes,

Sincerely yours,

G. S. Messersmith

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