

Subject: Inadequacies of Stettinius as Secretary of State.

It was fortunate for us that the period of duty of Stettinius in the Department did not last longer than it did.

Stettinius headed our delegation to the meeting in San Francisco, out of which grew the United Nations. Secretary Hull was in the Naval Hospital in Bethesda. While he was suffering from various physical ailments his mental powers were in no way affected. It so happened that during part of the time and during the meeting at San Francisco, I was also a patient in the hospital and I had a corner room in the tower opposite to his. A direct wire had been installed between the Secretary's room and Stettinius' headquarters in San Francisco. Every evening around seven or eight Stettinius called the Secretary, Mr. Hull. Mrs. Hull, who was always most assiduous in her attentions to the Secretary and who spent a good part of the day with him, always came into my room before she went home in the evening and reminded me that the Secretary expected me about seven in his room. I was, therefore, there during these telephone calls which Stettinius had with him from San Francisco. Mr. Hull did his best to give guidance to Stettinius; it was not too easy. Whenever Stettinius proposed some idea which the Secretary found unsound and unwise, we used to speculate as to who was giving him these ideas and we came very definitely to the conclusion that it was Alger Hiss and we learned afterwards that this was so. This does not mean in any way that Stettinius had any predilection for Hiss or any special confidence or regard for him. It was the Departmental machinery which had been set up around Stettinius for the Conference in which Hiss played so important a part. The trouble was that at San Francisco as elsewhere, Stettinius was dealing with matters in which he had no adequate preparation and in which he had no background nor experience, and by the very nature of his position was required to make decisions.

During the meeting of the American states in Mexico City, Stettinius was also completely beyond his depth. He was depending very largely for counsel on Nelson Rockefeller. Fortunately we had on the whole an excellent representation at that meeting. A congressional delegation was headed by Senator Connolly, the Chairman of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, and by Senator/<sup>Austin</sup>~~Ralston~~, who was I believe then the ranking Republican member of that Committee. Representative Johnson of Texas represented the House Committee on Foreign Affairs. They stayed as our guests at the Embassy with their ladies. Senator Connolly, Senator/<sup>Austin</sup>~~Ralston~~, Mr. Johnson, and myself usually had breakfast together from which we went to the briefing meeting of the American Delegation which was, of course, presided over by Mr. Stettinius. It was a very constructive meeting. The leadership lay really with Senator Connolly and Senator/<sup>Austin</sup>~~Ralston~~. Dr. Ezequiel Padilla, the Mexican Minister of Foreign Affairs, gave the whole Conference unusually fine and constructive leadership. *Will* Clayton was there during the whole of the meeting and headed the economic side of the work of the American Delegation. To those of us who had seen the American Delegation lead at previous inter-American conferences by Secretary Hull, the contrast was really disheartening. Ed seemed to think that there was something mysterious about a meeting of this kind and that there must be certain things which he could not talk over. Although I was expected, as Ambassador to Mexico and as one of the members of the Delegation, to maintain direct contact with the presiding officer of the meeting, that is, of the Conference, Dr. Padilla, and with the leading members of the other delegations from the American countries, there were subjects which Stettinius did not mention to me at all. He seemed to be utterly unaware of the fact that the decisions with regard to the meeting were really being made by Connolly and Austin and Johnson and *Will* Clayton and a few of us work-

ing with them. As indicative of his complete lack of knowledge of background and procedure the following is indicative. Shortly after Stettinius became Secretary of State, I had word from President Roosevelt that he wished to see me and hoped that I would be able to go north shortly. I arrived by an Embassy plane early in the morning in Washington and, as the President had indicated that he wished to see me as soon as possible, I did not go to the Department as I usually would have done before going to the White House. It was my invariable practice not to go to see the President before first calling on the Secretary, and in case I knew the object of the visit to consult with him thereon. I informed the White House early in the morning of my arrival and was told that I should call shortly after nine o'clock. This would in any event have made it impossible for me to see Stettinius before going to see the President. The President wished to see me about a matter which had nothing to do with our relations with Mexico or my post there. It was a continuation of a conversation on certain matters in Europe which he had been discussing with me for some time. As I had no other business in Washington other than this conversation with the President, I told the President that it was my intention to return to Mexico City the following morning. When I left the White House I went to the Metropolitan Club in order to make some telephone calls. I found there a message, that I was to call Assistant Secretary of State, Nelson Rockefeller, on my return to the Club. Nelson was an Assistant Secretary of State. He still had his office in the Department of Commerce Building. I called him on the telephone and said that I'd received his message and that I would be over during the day. He replied that he wished me to come over immediately. Nelson and I had known each other for years and we had worked very closely in matters affecting the Office of the Coordinator on which he had been engaged for several years before becoming Assistant Secretary of State. His tone

was rather brusque and preremptory and I was somewhat amused. I said I would be right over. When I reached his office he received me rather coldly and rather formally. He said that he understood that I had seen the President that morning; I said that that was correct, that I had just seen him after my arrival that morning. He asked me if I did not know that there was a rule to the effect that no Ambassador or chief of mission was to see the President without the previous knowledge and consent of the Secretary or of himself, and that the new rule was that the Secretary or he would accompany any ambassador or chief of mission <sup>a call</sup> on/~~the visit~~ to the President. I asked Nelson who had made this rule. He said it was a new rule that was being put into effect by Stettinius and he was handling the details. He said: "You should not have gone to see the President without seeing Ed and me".

I was amazed; I knew of course that Nelson and Stettinius had little knowledge of Departmental and White House practice. I did not know what had led them to make this rule, which was so out of line with practice and tradition, but I could quite see that they might be annoyed about some chiefs of mission who went to see the President from time to time and did not keep the Secretary or the Department informed.

I told Nelson that he seemed to forget that in accord with the Constitution, the President was in charge of <sup>the conduct of</sup> our foreign relations and the Secretary of State was the officer delegated by the President to carry through these functions for him; ambassadors were not only the representatives of the Department and of our government but they were also the personal representatives of the President. When the President wished to see an ambassador or a chief of mission, it was not necessary for him to necessarily say anything to the Secretary of State. He would normally do so and in practice did/<sup>do</sup>so. I told him that my invariable

practice always was to tell the Secretary that I was seeing the President, even when the President had expressed the wish to see me directly. I thought he and Ed were getting themselves into a lot of unnecessary trouble; they had better forget about the rule. I hoped the President didn't know anything about this new rule because he would be very annoyed. Nelson was considerably upset by what I said. He said: "Ed wants to see you". I said that under the circumstances I wanted to see him.

I immediately went over to the Secretary's office and he received me almost immediately. He received me very much as the Secretary of State; he wanted to know what the President had talked with me about that morning. I told him very much what I had said to Nelson a few minutes before. I told him that he knew that I wanted him to have a successful tour of duty in the Department; I wanted to help him in any way that I could. I would ordinarily have come in to see him before seeing the President, although the President had sent for me directly. I told Stettinius that I could tell <sup>that</sup> Nelson had already spoken to him on the phone while I was on my way to his office. I hoped that this rule had not been reduced to writing and that it was not commonly known in the Department. I said it would make him and Nelson look ridiculous. I spent about half an hour filling him in <sup>the</sup> on/background and tradition of procedure in the White House and in the Department. Stettinius said that he "guessed that he and Nelson had proceeded a little bit too fast". He said they would forget about the rule. He asked me what the President had talked to me about and I told him that as it had nothing to do with my job, I thought it was better, if he wished to know, to ask the President himself. Nothing more was heard about the new rule.