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September 14, 1938.

Personal

My dear Colonel Bankhead:

I have your letter of August 31 with regard to the discussion which there has been for some time of the consolidation of the Foreign Service of the Department of Commerce into that of the Foreign Service of the Department of State. I can quite understand that what has appeared in the press in the early part of this year and that such consideration may be under consideration would give a certain amount of concern to the officers of the Foreign Commerce Service. I think it is quite natural that under such circumstances there should be a good deal of misapprehension as to what our Government may have in mind and as to what may be done. We are all naturally interested in our future.

I believe you know that my own personal feeling has been for some time that the only solution of the problem involved in our foreign representation is the unification and consolidation of our Foreign Services under the direction of the Department of State. Under the Constitution and our statutes the conduct of our foreign relations is vested in the President and in the Department of State as the immediate and direct organ therefor. My own 24 years experience in the field has led me to the conclusion that, in order to have the most effective machinery for the conduct of our foreign relations, we can have only one Foreign Service under the direction of the Department charged with the conduct of our foreign relations. I hope I need not tell you that in reaching this conclusion, I have been wholly objective and have not been governed by any departmental or personal considerations. In this almost a quarter of a century of service in the field, I have always considered these problems from the point of view of our Government without

regard

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regard for the interests of Departments or individuals. My conclusion, therefore, with regard to a consolidated Service is one which is based solely on what I believe to be the best interests of our Government.

I think that most persons in this country who are interested in the conduct of our foreign relations, and consequently in the machinery for the conduct of those relations, have come to a similar conclusion and there are quite a number of reasons why action towards this consolidation of the Services should be no longer delayed. In the first place, we have been in difficult seas for some time and we cannot look forward to smoother ones in the foreseeable future. The nature of the relationships between States has become very much changed and this has involved a change in the content of foreign relationships. It means that problems affecting our trade and commerce have become necessarily of vital importance in these major relationships and will be in the future. It means that these problems enter more and more into the major aspects of political relationships and they necessarily become the subject of conversations between Governments which must be conducted by officers of the Department of State as the sole organ for the conduct of our foreign relations.

Then too, I think all of us realize that direct trade promotional efforts as such, and some of which have been so effective in years past, have lost a good deal of their importance as a result of this changed world situation. The future of our trade and of our economic relationships with other States depends no longer on actual marketing efforts abroad for particular articles, but depends more specially upon the efforts of the officers of our Government in keeping open the channels of trade and in creating new ones. These activities will have to be carried on largely through diplomatic channels. This does not mean that the commercial, economic, industrial and financial reporting becomes of less importance in some respects but it does mean that its form and content will be a good deal changed and that new considerations of perspective and relative value will control.

Then too, I think we have learned that to achieve the best results in matters of commercial and economic policy, as well as in other questions of policy, we must have a unified approach within this Government to these major problems and a single approach to other Governments. I believe that anyone who examines this question objectively in the light of the conditions which we have to face today,

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and which we must increasingly face in the future, must be led to the conclusion that the time has come when we must have a unified Foreign Service.

I believe that these are the reasons why our Government is beginning to formulate a policy towards this end. It is my opinion that, if our Government is planning a unification of the Services, it is on this basis only and on no other, and I believe that every forward-looking officer in our Foreign Services can only be in sympathy with such a progressive step in the direction of efficiency.

I need not tell you that, although I have held this view that there should be this consolidation, I also believe that this view is shared by the responsible officers of the Department of State. We have not taken the initiative in this matter for we believe that in matters of this kind involving basic policy it is for our Government to reach a decision. I am, therefore, not in a position to outline to you at this time any plans or recommendations which this Department would make whenever consolidation is presented to the Congress. I think the initiative will undoubtedly come from the President and, when he requests us to do so, we will of course formulate in this Department such considered views which we may have which may be of assistance in the formulating of appropriate legislation. What plan this Department may advocate, I am therefore not able to state at this time, and you will quite appreciate why I am not in a position to do so. The views of other responsible officers of this Department as well would be considered and the views of this Department when formulated would have to be first presented to the President. I believe, however, that I can tell you that this Department would not finally formulate as its policy any views which would not be in accord with those decided upon by this Government, for it is after all a matter of Government and not of Departmental policy which is in question.

As I said at the outset, I quite appreciate that there must be a certain amount of disquiet among some of the officers of Commerce concerning the future. I venture the belief that this is without any basis for I personally could not conceive of any consolidation of our present Services which would not involve bringing into the consolidated Service, on entirely equitable grounds, the officers of Commerce now in this field. Certainly this Department has, I believe, always shown an understanding of the administrative problems involved in the successful conduct of a well-equipped, permanent and effective career Foreign Service. I believe that in case there is

consolidation,

consolidation, it is not likely that this Department would have any ideas in mind or make any recommendations which would not keep in consideration the personnel factor which is fundamental to the realization of any effective Foreign Service administration.

Personally, I cannot therefore understand why Foreign Service Officers of Commerce should have any real fears as to the effects of consolidation upon them from a personal point of view. If the Foreign Service Officers of Commerce are brought under the Department of State and into its Foreign Service, it would seem to me that their position in every way would be improved and that certain factors which are involved in a stable career Service, and which are now lacking in the Foreign Service of Commerce, would be found in the well-established practices of the Foreign Service of State.

I wish that I could write you more definitely at this time but I think you will quite appreciate that this is a matter in which my personal view can only receive appropriate consideration in the Department and, as the views of our Government have not been expressed, I am not in a position now to say anything definite or authoritative. If, however, you should be in Washington at any time during the next months, I hope that you will call on me and I will be very glad to talk over with you any details which may be of special interest to you.

I would prefer that you consider this letter as a personal one to you as for obvious reasons I am not conducting any correspondence on this matter and do not wish to do so until our Government has formulated its policy and announced it.

Believe me, with very good wishes,

Sincerely yours,

G. S. Messersmith