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SPECIAL RELEASE

WE HONOR EXCELLENCE

Remarks by JOHN W. MACY, JR.
Chairman, United States Civil Service Commission

Before the Administrative Management Society's
Federal Paperwork Management Awards Ceremony
Washington, D. C. - September 28, 1965

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INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

John W. Macy, Jr., Chairman
United States Civil Service Commission

Congressman Olsen, Mr. Poole, * distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, it is a very great pleasure for me to be with you here this evening and to share in this wonderful occasion.

President Johnson has asked me to convey to you his high interest in the honors that are being granted tonight and to express his regrets that he could not be here personally. He has also asked that I extend his warm congratulations to each of the award winners for their exceptional achievements that will help to reduce the cost of paperwork in Government.

These outstanding accomplishments need to be identified and held up as examples that will inspire and encourage the efforts of others toward additional improvements and progress in paperwork management. We are very pleased in the Administrative Management Society's contribution to this objective and their initiation of this ceremony.

* International President, Administrative Management Society.

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"Everybody talks about the weather, but no one does anything about it" is a statement often attributed to Mark Twain. However, the research on my remarks revealed that the quotation is really from an editorial by John Dudley Warner in the Hartford Connecticut "Courant" in 1890. In any event, the statement was certainly true at the time it was made. Weather -- hot or cold -- wet or dry -- was something people accepted as a fact. Sometimes it was helpful, sometimes burdensome, but the individual had to make his own personal adjustment to it.

Today, however, the statement is no longer true. We still talk about the weather, but we are also doing a lot about it.

First of all, we have learned to make more and more accurate predictions of what it will be. Second, with the advent of air conditioning, we have won a real battle over one aspect of the weather. Many people now step from an air conditioned home, into an air conditioned car and ride to an air conditioned office. They have to read the newspaper to find out that a new heat record was set for the day! Now, in Houston, Texas, we have an air conditioned sports

stadium. I understand that the city of Boston is next on the list for one of these exotic buildings of our age of progress. Before long, we may have air conditioned domes over our city streets, and city children may grow up without really knowing the old-fashioned weather could be hot or cold or wet or dry!

Why do I call this current phenomena to your attention? My purpose is to draw a comparison with paperwork management in the Government.

For years and years it could be said of Government paperwork that "Everybody talks about it, but no one does anything about it." I am told that John Paul Jones, one of the founders of our Navy, complained that paperwork interfered with the working of his ships. We didn't go back any further with our research, but I'll bet that Napoleon had trouble with paperwork -- and Julius Caesar and -- well you can go back as far as you like.

If you go back far enough, you will find at least one bright spot. Our ancestors did not have problems with making ten extra carbon copies when they wrote their letters on stone tablets. But, on the other hand, I suppose they did have some of our current problems, such as:

- trouble in carrying the stone tablets from office to office to get the clearance initials,
- long delays in the mail, and
- lack of file cabinets large enough to hold the tablets.

To get back to my theme, everybody talked about Government paperwork for years and suffered with it until the first and second Hoover Commissions came along. The Hoover Commission reports described the problem in a way that made some influential people decide it was time to do less talking and convert some of that energy to fighting the paperwork colossus.

We are still in the early stages of the war on paperwork but a great deal of progress has been made. The National Archives and Records Service of GSA has laid out strategy and tactics for this war, trained cadres of troops, and put weapons in their hands.

My friend Congressman Olsen, through his series of hearings, has done a tremendous job in scouting the paperwork enemy, describing the fortifications, and marking the maps for the campaigns.

Our troops have been in battle and we have been winning some victories. Tonight the people on the home front, in the form of the Administrative Management Society, are going to honor some of the heroes of the past campaigns.

I am delighted to be with you, to join in this salute to our heroes, and to applaud them as they receive their decorations.

Let there be no lack of clarity about the excellence of these outstanding people we honor tonight. They have demonstrated great ingenuity and imagination in preparing their campaign plans against paperwork. They

have trained and inspired their troops and fellow campaigners. They have shown high courage and skill in leading the charges. They can wear their medals proudly.

I also want to express the appreciation of all the Government service to the Administrative Management Society for doing a great deal of work to identify the war heroes we honor tonight and for pursuing with conspicuous gallantry all of the problems of administration of the fine tribute and ceremony we are enjoying here. It is most appropriate that a respected national professional society, representing many years of experience and judgment in paperwork management be the sponsor of this award. We will be grateful for their continuing interest.

As we look toward the future, we know the war must go on. We have many campaigns ahead of us. We are right in the middle of the campaign for the computers. Some of them are firing paperwork at us with 1,000-line-per-minute, high-speed printers, but we've infiltrated their forces and already have won over many of them to our side. We have discovered that current paperwork systems should not be converted directly to computer operations. We have found that redesign of systems for computer use often shortcuts and makes unnecessary some of our current paperwork routines and even some of our reports.

We are making good headway on the Record Filing and Preservation Front and expect an early victory there. The turning point occurred a few months ago when the enemy was cut off from its supply of new filing cabinets.

There are still many battles and campaigns ahead of us on the "Creation of Records" Front.

Congressman Olsen's report tells us that Federal agencies receive one billion reports per year. In looking over his report, I find my own agency -- the Civil Service Commission -- listed among the ten largest paperwork agencies, and receiving 4,408,280 report responses annually. That's a lot of reports and I want to say to the Congressman that we have been working steadily in this paperwork area and we are making headway. We are very proud of the standardized statistical sampling process we developed within the last few years which gives us a base for accurately estimating various Federal statistics without asking for agency data on each and every personnel transaction.

We are also proud of the progress we are making with the establishment of ADP which is helping to reduce our paperwork requirements. In receiving statistical data from the agencies, we are striving for "systems compatibility." This means that a magnetic tape coming off one computer can be fed into another. Already, some agencies just mail us their computer tape and we feed it into our machine for processing. In the next step, agencies will send the computer information over the telephone lines and in the jargon of the trade "one computer will talk to the other." At that point -- presto -- the paperwork disappears. This won't happen tomorrow, but along with the other agencies in the ADP field, we are looking toward this development in the future.

Now in relation to the War on Paperwork, I am particularly interested in the Campaign against Gobbledygook.

As some of you may recall, this campaign was opened by President Johnson at a Cabinet meeting in February. The President expressed his concern about the responsiveness of Government employees to public inquiries and requests for services. He asked me to survey the policies and practices of agencies in their relationships with the public and to report findings and recommendations.

There is no mistaking the President's active and personal interest. He wants improvement in our communications with the public. This means improvement of service to the public, whether we communicate by mail or by telephone or in person. When we achieve these improvements we will also have advanced our war on paperwork. Better communications -- the first time -- means less prospective correspondence to originate, to file, to dispose of. Better service to the public means fewer complaints and, if you have ever handled complaints, you know how much paperwork they can involve!

Our surveys show that a great deal of good work has been started on improving communications.

- In Agriculture, Joe Robertson is waging his own one-man campaign to improve correspondence. His memos and bulletins are in line with the 4 - S letter writing principles -- Short, Simple, Strong,

Sincere. Everyone gets the message and the files are not cluttered up with pages and pages of obscure prose. Thirty thousand Agriculture employees are getting training in how to write better letters.

- Small Business Administration has been taking vigorous steps to upgrade the writing and the public contact work of its staff. Their program includes a review of their whole correspondence system and emphasis on employee ability to "meet and deal" when they consider their people for promotions.
- Interior is reviving its training in plain-letter writing.
- Post Office has an effective customer-relations program to monitor and improve service to its clients.
- HHFA has centralized its facilities for handling requests for general information on its wide variety of housing and urban redevelopment programs.
- VA has a time-tested, one-stop contact service that is being studied by other agencies. It provides for continuing inspection and feedback on the effectiveness and conduct of its public employees. Also, a regular spot-check survey of its visitors

to ascertain whether or not the customers feel that they were treated effectively and with courtesy.

- Commerce has been engaged in a systematic review of its publications to improve content, appearance, and readability.

These are just a few samples of steps being taken in the campaign against gobbledygook. All of these actions also help in the war on paperwork. They are aimed at better communications and service to the public, but as they reduce correspondence there will be fewer records.

Many of you here tonight are leaders in the paperwork management field. I call on all of you to enlist in the President's war on Gobbledygook. Don't wait to be drafted. Many of you have special skills in improving communications and service to the public. Your President is asking that your skills be used to the utmost. If you have uncompleted projects that will help fight the war on Gobbledygook -- simplification of form letters, training programs, informational leaflets, etc., this is the time to go to work with renewed energy -- with a new flood of enthusiasm. If you have useful projects that are stalled, now is the time to get them in motion.

Many of you have responsibility for internal directives. Now is the time to put into effect the improvements you've been thinking about -- improvements in readability, appearance, content. Your own employees, your own staff, are a primary public and your communications to them must

be clear and effective. They are a main channel of communications to other publics. Every study that we've conducted shows that a positive or negative attitude by the public toward the Government is significantly promoted by the attitude of our own employees with whom they come in contact. Improve your communications with your own employees so they will not need to use gobbledygook in talking about your agency's mission and operations. Their knowledge and attitude can have a "make or break" impact on the opinions of the public they contact.

I have received a number of constructive suggestions from officials of various agencies on steps that need to be taken in the war against gobbledygook. Some have already been put into practice. We are working on others. You can help with many of these:

- The first suggestion was that one top-level person in each agency be assigned the responsibility of improving that agency's communications and service to the public. This is a logical starting point and this step has already been taken in many agencies.
- Second was a suggestion for setting up "one-stop" information centers in major cities so a citizen does not have to wander around among a series of buildings and offices to find the answers to his problem with the Federal Government. A capital idea that will be very well received by the public, and we are working on it. We need your support.

Third is the idea that we need some special evening and Saturday office hours to serve the public. If the department stores can stay open all day on Saturday and several evenings a week, why shouldn't the Federal information offices be open one evening a week and a half day on Saturday? This idea raised a lot of eye brows when it was first mentioned -- but after a little thought the eye brows were lowered -- and now there are some people rolling up their sleeves and wrinkling their forehead to work out plans for special hours. I'm proud to say that the Civil Service Commission's central and regional information offices are now open for four hours on Saturday morning and the Washington office is also open until 8:00 p.m. on Thursday evening. I hope to see other agencies follow the Commission's example with similar pilot projects in the near future.

- Other suggestions covered items like improved selection of employees for their communications and public contact skills, additional training for employees in this work, special emphasis on awards for excellence in communications, and an interagency exchange of ideas on improving communications with the public.

Let me re-emphasize the last point -- we are looking for additional practical and useful ideas that will help fight our war on Gobbledygook. In

this audience there is a vast amount of brainpower and experience. I would be glad to have any specific suggestions you believe will be helpful.

In closing, I would like to bring your attention back to our 22 heroes of the battle of paperwork that we are honoring tonight and the six among them who are to receive the special honors.

Tonight is the night of glory for their achievements. We have a temporary lull in the battle to express our high appreciation for their great skill, their imagination, and their courage in overcoming the many obstacles we face.

And tomorrow -- refreshed by this magnificent interval -- let us take up our weapons again for the battles against paperwork and Gobbledygook. Let the bugles sound "Charge" and we will go forth to further victories!