

PRIVATE & CONFIDENTIAL

8 June 1953

Dear Dr. Coigny,

Please refer to Dr. Ingalls' personal letter to you dated 14 May 1953 concerning her interview with a representative of the U.S. Civil Service Commission who was making inquiries about three members of the General Service staff of this office.

The same representative, Mr. Dullea, telephoned me today and asked whether I would see him so that he could make certain inquiries about two members of the staff. Before agreeing to this, I consulted Dr. Ingalls, as your Deputy, for instructions, and she advised me to agree to see this agent.

When Mr. Dullea came to my office and indicated that he was about to ask me questions about two individuals, one presently on our staff and one individual who is no longer on our staff, I told him that I felt obliged to preface any replies which I might feel able to make to his questions with the following remarks. I assumed that the two persons about whom he was inquiring had filled in U.S. Civil Service application forms and in view of that, I would be willing to give information in the same way that I would feel it proper to give had the inquiries come from any commercial organization or other prospective employer to whom my name might have been given by a staff member or former staff member as a reference. Any information other than such as I might normally supply to any inquirers regarding staff members or former staff members who wish to establish their eligibility for employment, for bank loans, charge accounts, etc., I would have to consider in the light of my obligations as an international civil servant, responsible to the World Health Organization.

Although he did not accept this limited interpretation, Mr. Dullea proceeded to ask me certain questions regarding the two persons such as the extent of my office contact and social contact with them, my opinion of their character and reputation, etc. These questions I considered proper and I replied to them as I would have done if the inquiry was being made by a department store, business firm, etc.

Dr. R. L. Coigny, Chief  
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Mr. Dullea then asked me for my opinion of the morals, sobriety, etc. of these people. I stated that I felt that these questions were difficult and perhaps even improper, as no universal standards had been accepted in these fields. In the case of "sobriety", for example, it required technical knowledge to determine where sobriety ended and where insobriety began; where insobriety ended and alcoholism began. However, I felt it entirely proper to point out that the entire staff of this office, and not only the two persons about whom this inquiry was being made, behaved at all times in an irreproachable manner, to the best of our knowledge, and that any improper behaviour would, under the existing Staff Rules and Regulations, result in disciplinary measures or even termination, depending upon the extent of the impropriety. It could therefore be said generally that the retention on the staff of persons employed by WHO in the New York Office indicated conscientiousness and good character.

Mr. Dullea then interrogated me about the "loyalty" to the United States of America of the two individuals in question. I stated that this question also caused me certain difficulties as no universal definition had been established, and I asked him to define his meaning when he used the term "loyalty". He stated that he used that word to mean allegiance to the democratic institutions of the United States of America. I stated that in that context I could freely reply that the people in question, to the best of my knowledge, had the deepest allegiance to the democratic institutions of their country. He then amplified his definition to include the lack of any affiliation with fascist, nazi or communist organizations. I replied that I had no knowledge of or reason to believe that either of these two people had any sympathy with any totalitarian system or concepts.

In the case of one of the persons about whom Mr. Dullea questioned me, he asked me whether I had any knowledge of this person's travel in certain countries of Europe. As this is an item of information that appeared on the application form of that person and which might be considered by this Organization and certain prospective employers as part of qualifications for a particular post, and as he already obviously knew that the person had travelled in the USSR many years ago and any evasion of this question might have seemed suspicious, I did reply, to the best of my knowledge.

I might add that the entire interview was conducted in a spirit of icy formality.

Yours sincerely,

Sylvia Meagher  
Liaison Officer