

W. Post
6/13/71

How to Win Friends on Capitol Hill

The formidable House Subcommittee on Appropriations for the Department of State, Justice, and Commerce, the Judiciary and Related Agencies holds sway in the spring of the year, sometimes stern, sometimes benevolent, magisterially granting or withholding assent in regard to the diverse hopes and projects put before it by its subject satrapies. Woe betide the supplicant who rubs the subcommittee the wrong way. Yet what munificence awaits the more fortunate bureaucrat whom the subcommittee chairman, Rep. John J. Rooney of New York, has taken to his bosom.

Tuesday, March 16, found the subcommittee in a misanthropic mood. At the end of a not particularly auspicious day of hearings, there came before it, along with others Shiro Kashiwa, Assistant Attorney General in charge of the Land and Natural Resources Division of the Department of Justice, and Walter Kiechel Jr., Deputy Assistant Attorney General. After a fairly brief colloquy about the division's request for a program increase of \$679,000, Rep. Cederberg and Rep. Rooney interrogated the witnesses as follows:

Mr. Cederberg: How many attorney vacancies do you have now?

Mr. Kiechel: We hope we will be just about at the limit.

Mr. Cederberg: How many vacancies do you have now?

Mr. Kiechel: As to the people in the pipeline—

Mr. Rooney: He asked how many vacancies you have.

Mr. Kiechel: We are up to strength, sir.

Mr. Cederberg: Which is what?

Mr. Kashiwa. 213.

Mr. Rooney: You actually have that number on board now?

Mr. Kiechel: Or committed.

Mr. Rooney: Never mind committed—actually on board?

Mr. Kiechel: We are going to hire some others, sir.

Mr. Rooney: Look, we have been sitting around here too long to be kidded with this nonsense.

Mr. Cederberg: I want to know how many you have on board and then you can tell me how many are in the pipeline. How many are working and are on board today?

Mr. Kiechel: 198.

Mr. Cederberg: And you have authorized strength of 213?

Mr. Kiechel: That is correct.

Mr. Rooney: There are 15 vacancies.

Mr. Cederberg: There are 15 vacancies as of now, as of today?

Mr. Kiechel: Yes, sir, including those vacancies—

Mr. Rooney: Why did you not want to tell us that?

Mr. Kiechel: I merely wanted to explain—

Mr. Rooney: You know, we don't get many witnesses from the Justice Department that try to dodge our questions.

Well, that's how the subcommittee can hector a witness with whom it doesn't feel in full rapport. But consider by comparison the reception given to the Director of the FBI, one J. Edgar Hoover, who came before the subcommittee requesting \$44 million more than the amount appropriated to date for the current fiscal year. "We are pleased to have with us the distinguished Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation," Chairman Rooney announced as though introducing a literary lion. "Although there are certain communications media and some people taking potshots at him, unfairly in my estimation, I know that he has the complete confidence of every member of this subcommittee, and we know that the job that he does is one that is well justified in so far as his appropriations are concerned. The rises in his appropriations are not due to the fact that he is trying to build an empire, which could be inferred from some of the statements we see in the press, but because of the fact that the Congress year after year bestows or demands new duties from the Federal Bureau of Investigation. Is that a correct statement?"

Mr. Hoover acknowledged that it was, and Mr. Rooney went on to say, "You may proceed in your usual fashion, Mr. Director. Of course, a great deal of your testimony is always taken off the record. You have always been fair with this committee, and we have never violated your confidence and you have never violated ours. It is a pleasure to have you with us again."

Somewhat later in the festivities, Rep. Bow, a member of the subcommittee, remarked, somewhat irrelevantly, it seemed, "Mr. Director, I again appreciate your testimony. It is a pleasure to have you here. We have great confidence in you and your associates. I think we sleep a little better at night because of your efforts." This prompted Mr. Rooney to say, "I don't think he has slowed up in his number of words a minute in the least, and he has not even put his finger on that glass of water yet." Mr. Hoover responded: "I don't need it."

There seemed nothing much more to say after that, so Mr. Rooney brought the ceremony to a close by saying: "Mr. Director, I believe there are no further questions at this time from any of the committee members. We owe our deep thanks to you for a highly interesting and informative session."

Not a single, serious question as to how the bureau functions, whether it is over-staffed, whether the director really needs five armored automobiles or whether his concepts of "subversion" are wholly valid. It was as though Mr. Hoover held the subcommittee in thrall. Maybe he does.