The Truman White House

Heller, Francis H.

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I was appointed administrative assistant to President Truman on August 6, 1947, and remained in that post until January 20, 1953, when I resigned at the end of his term as the thirty-third president of the United States.

In that capacity I was responsible to the president for personnel management within the executive branch of the federal government and for the recommendation of all those to be considered for presidential appointments—as well as termination—in the executive and the judicial branches. I was the president’s direct liaison with the U.S. Civil Service Commission and all departments including the FBI, the members of Congress, the Democratic National Committee (DNC), and others. Approximately two hundred appointments to the highest level were made annually and a far greater number of such appointments as federal district and appellate court judges, postmasters, collectors of internal revenue and customs, U.S. marshalls, and others. (Full field investigations by the FBI were first initiated by me as a requirement for all presidential appointments.) It was my responsibility to assemble and recommend appointees to boards, commissions, and courts established by law or Executive Order. In addition, at that time all appointments and promotions of regular officers in the military services required Senate confirmation, and these lists were also cleared through my office before being considered by the president.

Included in my responsibilities were those of director of the Liaison Office for Personnel Management, established by Executive Order; thus, I coordinated planning and policy in the personnel and personnel-management field for the executive branch (as distinguished from the examination, recruitment, and classification of employees subject to the Civil Service Act).

In my work with the Civil Service Commission, among other matters, I was responsible for the complete revision of the Classification Act in
1949, which set the grades and compensation of federal employees. The
revision was the first in many years and encompassed the establishment
of new grade schedules, the upward revision of salaries to $15,000, and
the addition of some two hundred new "super-grade" positions with a
top salary of $20,000. Designation of those positions was subject to my
approval.

I recommended—and by Executive Order President Truman pro­
vided for—the appointment of career administrative assistant secretaries
in certain of the departments to provide administrative continuity on a
nonpolitical basis.

Messages, Executive Orders, and addresses of the president relative
to the Civil Service and to employee organizations were also the respon­
sibility of my office.

The Economic Cooperation Administration and the Office of Eco­
nomic Stabilization, comprised of the Office of Price Control and the
Office of Wage Control, were organized and staffed by me prior to the
appointment of the administrators of those offices. This was subject, of
course, to their approval and to any changes they might make, thus
assuring a completely operational office and a quick start.

I was the president's representative in the acquisition of office space
for new agencies and in the transfer of agencies and offices to new
quarters insofar as the executive branch was concerned. I performed a
similar function for the Executive Office of the President, such as assign­
ing offices and conference rooms and locating the present White House
office dining room.

I was in charge of all advance work for the president's election
campaign, beginning in September 1948. These arrangements for the
president's formal public appearances generally involved close liaison
with the Democratic National Committee [DNC] and with local political
and civic bodies. An example would be the president's report to the
nation from the San Francisco Opera House after his Wake Island con­
ference with General MacArthur or his appearance in Detroit for the
celebration of the city's Centennial Exposition or his appearance at
Soldiers' Field, Chicago, for the Shrine Convention.

A great part of my duties were in the political field, as the direct
contact for the president with the DNC and local political organizations
concerning patronage, primaries, general elections, and organization. In
this sense, I was representing the president in political matters. I also
served as his personal representative to the 1952 Democratic National
Convention in Chicago and carried his instructions to Tommy Gavin of
the Missouri delegation, designating the president's choice of a presi­
dential candidate; this constituted the first public notification of Mr.
Donald S. Dawson

Truman's endorsement of Adlai Stevenson. During their terms as chair­
men of the Democratic National Committee, I worked very closely on an
almost daily basis with Bob Hannigan, Howard McGrath, William M.

After David Niles's death, his assistant, Philleo Nash, was transferred
to my office and continued the work relating to minority and ethnic
groups done under my supervision.

I was chairman of the White House Loyalty Review Board, which
reviewed any charges of disloyalty or derogatory information affecting
any employee on the staff of the Executive Office of the President.
General coordination and supervision of the Loyalty Review Program for
the executive branch was also my responsibility.

The president called on me for many special assignments of all
kinds—for example, to secure the necessary steel in time of shortage for
a new municipal stadium in one of our large cities (as requested by the
mayor) or to see that Mr. Truman's views were made known in the
redistricting of the Missouri congressional districts.

I was exceedingly fortunate to have the assistance of Martin L.
Friedman, with whom I had been associated in the Air Transport Com­
mand during World War II and who came to the White House from the
Civilian Personnel Division of the Office of the Secretary of War. He was
ideal for this work because of his broad technical background, practical
experience, and unusually keen judgment. The relationship was excep­
tionally fine and gratifying to me.