

(SC 128) *

TELECON

Mr. ~~W~~ Edward Littlefield/The Secretary

August 26, 1974

7:00 p. m.

L: Mr. Secretary.

K: Mr. ~~K~~ Littlefield. I wanted to talk to you about a conversation I had yesterday with Chuck Robinson about the position we are offering him in the Department. He has a very strong moral feeling that he wants to be sure you understand what we have in mind. He also took the liberty of telling me some of the concerns you had expressed to him. Could I make a few observations to you?

L: Sure.

K: In terms of hierarchal ~~k~~ position, Undersecretary of State for Economic Affairs is not the ultimate destination of Robinson. I think Robinson is a man who should be given Cabinet status. I think in terms of influence it is one of the two or three key positions now in the government.

Before I called you I talked to President Ford and Bill Simon to make sure, absolutely sure, my concept of the job coincided with theirs' and to make sure the President agrees with the approach. There are several things I need here. First, what I need here...I need someone to turn the State Department into a disciplined economic and political unit to deal with foreign policy implications in these areas. Rather than just a negotiating instrument that sort of waffles around the world trying to get along.

Secondly, I would think perhaps the most important political asset we have is economic power. In relation to the rest of the world we are extremely strong. We may be facing an economic crisis that will require the ~~best~~ best _____. This strategy cannot be developed unless the State Department takes concentrated interest in it. Since I have been down here there have been five or six major decisions which we took on strict economic grounds for which we could have requested corresponding political consideration. If we could have stipulated political considerations in return, we could have benefited greatly. When we permitted the Europeans to trade in gold, in June we did it strictly as a Treasury matter. We could have gotten a hell of a lot more for it than we did. This was something the French really wanted.

The problem then is how to relate this. With a good State Department person in economics we would figure out this oil situation. I am quite good in designing the foreign policy constructively. I have no idea how to relate economics here. I need someone here to turn over the

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economic side to. The only other Department he needs to worry about is Treasury. In relation to that he has an impact through me in these decisions, which is going to be absolutely decisive. I have discussed this with President Ford and he totally agrees with this and hopes we can persuade Robinson to come here.

I wanted to talk to you myself to give you some sense of how we saw this job. There hasn't been anybody of major substance in it since George Ball and before that Dillon.

L: While I appreciate your calling, I am not sure you know that I think Chuck Robinson is a top quality fellow and I think he is a fellow that would fulfill this job in very good fashion. I am not quite sure what you had hoped I would do to assist you in this regard.

K: The major problem I felt yesterday was that if he decided to do this you thought he was doing something important and wasn't giving up his responsibilities to his company for a second level job.

L: There isn't any real question in my mind that it is a first rate job. I thought he was a fellow who had Cabinet-level qualities. There are jobs, and this I would be quick to say is one of them, that have more impact on the scheme of things than some Cabinet jobs...which I won't name.

K: I said to the President this job is unfortunately more influential than Secretary of Commerce. And he agreed.

L: I think that is true. My good friend Fred Dent would agree _____ do not have much influence.

K: On foreign policy.

L: I think the problem with Chuck is that he does have a problem here on two scores. He has a problem on the particular state of affairs of a company and he has an obligation to others because we are not the single shareholders and he also has an obligation to the staff which he almost personally recruited and which doesn't really have in it the depth or strength _____. His other problem is personal...which I won't go into. I will not say anything beyond that. He and I did not discuss it this time but when he was thinking about this a year and a half ago it loomed large in his consideration. Whether or not it does today, I am not sure. I am not arguing this on the grounds that this position is insignificant. He and I have had a long relationship and I think he knows pretty much without my telling him what my thoughts are. I will only tell him Godspeed from myself when he makes his decision. The firm will not fare as well without him as with him.



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K: No, I know that is true.

L: You have hit him at a time that is not very good for him...in terms of all these things. Six months from now it may be different.

K: The problem I face is I have been holding off for months~~k~~ filling this position but now we are at a critical period~~n~~ in our relationship with the rest of the world. We have no prayer bringing off the oil problem if we don't have a top flight man in the job. I cannot wait six months.

L: I was not suggesting you should wait. In the last analysis Chuck Robinson is going to have to make the decision. He knows how I feel. I don't think he has discussed it with any of his other directors. He will have to weight this against what he thinks is right.

K: That I understand and real ly all one can ask of you is if he does decidex to do it, that you wish him Godspeed.

L: I have tried not to deaden the position.

K: The personal matter you mentioned. Is that something that is apt to come up in a confirmation hearing?

L: No, it is strictly^a personal family-type problem. Nothing that I think would be in any way embarrassing to him or to you.

K: In that case, if it is essentially private, there is no need to discuss it. I appreciate very much your discussing this with me and I will talk ~~to~~ to Chuck Robinson again and see where he comes out.

L: I will of course tell him you and I have talked and the essence of the conversation.

K: Of course. Have we ever met?

L: Yes, several times. Mostly through Dave Packard when you were at the Grove and then when I was Vice Chairman of the Venice Council. We were dinner companions at the Mayflower.

K: Yes, I remember very well.

L: It is mostly through Dave we have had contact.



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K: He is a great man. I will talk to Robinson again tomorrow after you have had a chance to talke to him. Good to talk to you.

L: Goodbye.

END.