

Levi Pennington

People

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Levi Pennington to John A Sullivan, February 5, 1966

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February 5, 1966.

John A. Sullivan, Executive Secretary,
814 Northeast Fortieth Street,
Seattle, Washington. 98105.

Dear Friend:--

Whatever did I do with my Personnel Policies Handbook? And whatever are you going to do without this material of yours? Life is full of problems, some of them even worse than that. Indeed I've got one on my hands that's worse than that.

Automation and cybernation, along with automatics and cybernetics, with other -nations and -atics and -tics may provide gigantic problems for us in the future, and I don't yet see just what the AFSC can do about it; but Viet Nam is a problem of right now on which we can do something, with at least some hope that it may have a favorable effect on the U.S.A., Viet Nam and the rest of the world. Robert Theobald is doubtless a wiser man than I am, but I feel that I have a much better chance of having some influence in the Viet Nam problem than in cybernetics. (My ^{latest} letter from the White House started with the words, "President Johnson has asked me to reply personally for him to your letter of the xteenth." I'm not excited with any idea that the president sat up nights to read and study my letter; but it is evident that he has instructed his force that letters are to be responded to individually and not by a printed form, *in this Viet Nam situation*)

I have read, at one sitting, all the material in that Personnel Policies document, and tomorrow I expect to read the pink sheets and the white sheets paper-clipped to the front cover, and then return the documents to you. I hope my copy of the Personal Policies Handbook may turn up somewhere. Now if I hurry I can get to bed while it is the 5th.

February 6.

Now I have completed the reading of the pink-and-white supplement to the main Personnel Policies document, and it will be on its way to you along with this letter.

The old adage says "Comparisons are odious", so I shall avoid some that might be odious and that ^{are} certainly obvious. It would doubtless be unkind to compare this document with the Constitution of the United States; but though it is much longer, it deals with a much greater area, the territory of the Pacific Northwest Regional Office being so much larger than all the Atlantic Coast states, including Vermont and Rhode Island. (Of course those coastal states on the shore of that little ocean compared with the Pacific have a greater population compared with the Pacific Northwest, but think what a pifflin' crew constituted the population there when the Constitution was adopted compared with the population of Seattle, Portland and Newberg, to mention no other of our cities, such as Anchorage and Metlakatla.) But as

I remarked before, I am determined to avoid any odious or odorous comparisons.

I was deeply impressed (I did not say depressed!) by the wealth of questions and topics that staff members and members of the Personnel Committee are supposed to handle. I should suppose that omniscience would make it easy to answer all those questions and handle all those topics, but without that omniscience on my part and on the part, I suspect, of staff members and members of the Personnel, we may have to leave some of the matters suggested to Philadelphia.

When I got into matters financial in the main document, salaries, time off without pay, time off with pay, hours of regular employment, overtime for underlings and undertime for overlings, sick leave, personal leave, leave of absence, vacations, holidays, fringe benefits (tattooing, crochet, knit, tasseled, etc.), service on project, pay-roll deductions, increments and ex -- wait a minute; some words have changed their meaning since Shakespeare's day), unemployment compensation, costs of living, and other matter, I did not get lost; I was like the Indian who turned up at a hunters' camp in a vast forest and asked the way to reach the part of the earth where his wigwam was located. "Lost, are you?" asked one of the hunters. "No", replied the Indian, "Injun not lost; Injun here; wigwam lost."

I could not avoid noticing one case of manifest discrimination in the matter of leave. Maternity leave was provided for women staff members, but none for the men, not even a day. Of course if the discovery of America by an offspring should occur on Saturday or Sunday or during vacation or on a national holiday the man might not need any leave for time off. I arrived on Sunday, I am told (I was too young to keep accurate check on the days of the week, but both my father and my mother were there and they agreed that it was Sunday when I made my advent into this vale of tears and cheers), and my father did not get even a day off. But perhaps this obvious discrimination can be obviated in actual practice.

If any of the things I have written seem to be in a more or less satirical vein or even flippant and frivolous, let me say that I realize that a great deal of thought and labor has been put on the document under discussion, and while there is some of it with which I cannot fully agree, if it should turn ~~margin~~ out that the document is right and I'm wrong, it won't be the first time that my judgment erred, and probably won't be the last.

With best wishes all the time,

Sincerely your friend,

Levi T. Pennington.