

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20590

(64)

REMARKS BY SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION, ALAN S. BOYD, BEFORE THE
ADVANCED SECRETARIAL TECHNIQUES SEMINAR AT THE CIVIL SERVICE COM-
MISSION (Room 1347) IN WASHINGTON, D.C., ON WEDNESDAY, APRIL 24
9:15 A.M., 1968

I THOUGHT A GOOD WAY TO BEGIN THIS TALK WOULD BE TO
SAY I'M DELIGHTED TO BE HERE - AND I REALLY AM. BUT ON
SECOND THOUGHT IT OCCURRED TO ME THAT MIGHT BE A REFLECTION
ON MY SECRETARY - SINCE SHE'S THE ONE WHO TOLD ME WHERE IT
IS I'M SUPPOSED TO BE AT 9:00 A.M. THIS MORNING, AND WHAT
GROUP I'M SUPPOSED TO BE TALKING TO, AND WHAT I'M SUPPOSED
TO SAY.

I ADMIT ALL THIS BECAUSE I KNOW PERFECTLY WELL THAT IF
THERE IS SUCH A THING AS A CREDIBILITY GAP - IT CERTAINLY
DOESN'T EXIST BETWEEN A MAN AND HIS SECRETARY.

AFTER EXHAUSTIVE RESEARCH, ONE OF MY STAFF DISCOVERED
THAT THE ORIGINAL - AND, ACCORDING TO WEBSTERS, CURRENTLY
OBSOLETE - MEANING OF THE WORD SECRETARY WAS (AND I QUOTE)
"ONE ENTRUSTED WITH SECRETS." WHICH JUST GOES TO SHOW HOW
OBSOLETE WEBSTERS IS.

SO WHILE IN THE BEST SENSE OF THAT WORD I AM DELIGHTED
TO BE HERE - I DO HAVE SOME MISGIVINGS. FOR ONE THING, THERE

ISN'T ANYONE IN THIS ROOM WHO HASN'T BEEN A SECRETARY LONGER THAN I'VE BEEN.

AND I'M NOT SURE MY PUBLIC IMAGE IS EVERYTHING IT OUGHT TO BE - DESPITE THE BEST EFFORTS OF MY SECRETARY TO SEE TO IT THAT I KEEP PUTTING MY BEST FOOT FORWARD, AND TO MAKE SURE I KNOW WHICH ONE IT IS.

ONE OF THE BRIGHT YOUNG WOMEN IN MY DEPARTMENT, FOR EXAMPLE, TELLS ME SHE WAS WATCHING TV ONCE WITH HER YOUNG SON WHEN I APPEARED ON THE SCREEN. SO SHE POINTED TO THE SCREEN AND SAID, "THERE SON, SEE, THAT'S ALAN BOYD, THE SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION." HER SON LOOKED AT THE SCREEN, AND IMMEDIATELY BEGAN GIGGLING. AND WHEN SHE ASKED HIM WHAT IN THE WORLD HE WAS GIGGLING ABOUT, HE ANSWERED - IN BETWEEN GIGGLES: "WELL, HE SURE SOUNDS LIKE A GIRL WHEN HE ANSWERS THE TELEPHONE."

I WISH THAT WERE THE END OF THE CONFUSION. BUT THERE'S MORE.

TO GIVE YOU ANOTHER INSTANCE, WE'VE HAD SOME TROUBLE AT OUR OFFICE BECAUSE SOME PEOPLE HAVE GOT THE IDEA THAT SINCE OUR OFFICES ARE IN THE FEDERAL AVIATION ADMINISTRATION WE ARE PARTIAL TO THE AIRLINES OVER OTHER FORMS OF TRANSPORTATION.

WE'D PROBABLY FIND IT A LOT EASIER TO CONVINCING PEOPLE OTHERWISE IF I COULD JUST CONVINCING MY SECRETARY TO STOP ASKING GUESTS IF THEY WOULD LIKE SOME COFFEE, TEA, OR MILK.

I IMAGINE THERE WILL BE A GREAT DEAL WRITTEN AND SAID THIS WEEK ABOUT SECRETARIES - ALL OF IT, IN ONE SENSE TRUE, AND IN ANOTHER SENSE FALSE.

WHAT I MEAN BY THAT IS THIS: OVER THE PAST YEAR AND MORE WE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION HAVE BEEN GOING AROUND THE COUNTRY SAYING ONE BASIC THING ABOUT URBAN TRANSPORTATION WHICH IS OUR MAJOR AREA OF CONCERN. [AND THAT IS THAT YOU REALLY CAN'T TALK ABOUT URBAN TRANSPORTATION IN A NATIONAL SENSE - YOU HAVE TO TALK ABOUT IT ON A CITY BY CITY BASIS, BECAUSE BOTH CITIES AND THEIR TRANSPORTATION SYSTEMS AND NEEDS DIFFER SO MUCH, YOU SIMPLY CAN'T TALK ABOUT ONE WITHOUT RELATION TO THE OTHER.]

AND IN THAT SENSE A SECRETARY IS SOMETHING LIKE A TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM: YOU SIMPLY CAN'T GENERALIZE. A SPECIFIC SECRETARY CAN NO MORE EXIST WITHOUT A SPECIFIC BOSS THAN A SPECIFIC BOSS CAN EXIST WITHOUT A SPECIFIC SECRETARY.

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN A BOSS AND A SECRETARY IS SUCH A UNIQUE AND ELUSIVE BLEND BETWEEN THE PERSONAL AND THE IMPERSONAL THAT ALMOST EVERY GENERALIZATION YOU MAKE IS ABOUT AS INVALID AS IT IS VALID.

WHAT A SECRETARY CAN AND CANNOT DO DEPENDS AS MUCH ON HOW MUCH HER BOSS WILL LET HER DO AS IT DOES ON HER OWN ABILITY. AND BOSSES DIFFER - IN PERSONALITY, IN APPROACH, IN A THOUSAND AND ONE WAYS.

AND I'M SURE MY OWN SECRETARY CAN VOUCH FOR THE FACT THAT EVEN THE SAME BOSS CAN VARY FROM DAY TO DAY - DEPENDING WHICH SIDE OF THE BED HE GOT UP ON IN THE MORNING.

SO ALL I CAN GIVE YOU IS ONE MAN'S VIEW, BASED ON ONE MAN'S EXPERIENCE.

AND MY OWN FEELING IS THAT, IF MY SECRETARIES HADN'T BEEN AS GOOD AS THEY HAVE BEEN, I'D BEEN OUT OF A JOB A LONG TIME AGO.

FOR ONE THING, I WOULDN'T HAVE BEEN ABLE TO DO MY JOB - FOR THE SIMPLE REASON THAT I'D HAVE HAD TO SPEND MY TIME TAKING CARE OF THE MILLION AND MORE DETAILS THAT MUST BE TAKEN CARE OF IF I'M TO DO MY JOB, BUT WHICH, IF I'M TO DO MY JOB, I HAVEN'T THE TIME OR ENERGY TO DEAL WITH.

I READ RECENTLY WHERE SOME SURVEY OR OTHER SHOWED THAT WHAT SECRETARIES WANTED IN THEIR BOSSES WERE THE SAME QUALITIES THEY WANTED IN THEIR IDEAL HUSBANDS.

I CONFESS I DON'T QUITE UNDERSTAND THAT. BECAUSE IT SEEMS TO ME THAT THINGS AT THE OFFICE ARE IN MANY WAYS A COMPLETE SWITCH FROM THE WAY THEY ARE AT HOME.

AT HOME, THE MAN'S SUPPOSED TO KNOW HOW TO FIX EVERYTHING - WHILE AT THE OFFICE HE'S SUPPOSED TO STAND AROUND LOOKING HELPLESS WHILE HIS SECRETARY FRAMES HIS PICTURES.

AT HOME, HE'S GENERALLY IN CHARGE OF ITINERARIES AND OUTINGS - WHILE AT THE OFFICE, AT LEAST MY OFFICE, HIS SECRETARY TELLS HIM WHERE TO GO AND WHERE TO GET OFF.

AT HOME, HE MAKES OUT THE CHECKS - AT THE OFFICE, HIS SECRETARY DOES.

THE TRUTH IS, I SUPPOSE, THAT A SECRETARY AT ONE TIME OR ANOTHER - AND SOMETIMES, I SUSPECT, ALL AT THE SAME TIME - HAS GOT TO FULFILL SUCH AN ENDLESS ARRAY OF ROLES THAT TO ITEMIZE THEM IS TO UNDERScore HOW IMPOSSIBLE IT IS TO INCLUDE THEM ALL. SHE IS TYPIST AND STENOGRAPHER, SWITCHBOARD OPERATOR AND RECEPTIONIST, EXPEDITOR AND NAY-SAYER, MOTHER AND MAIDEN AUNT, INTERIOR DECORATOR AND TRAFFIC COP, PSYCHIATRIST AND SIMON LEGREE.

SHE FRONTS FOR HER BOSS AND BACKS HIM UP, SHE BLAZES TRAILS FOR HIM AND COVERS HIS TRACKS.

SHE, IN SHORT, MORE THAN ANYONE IS RESPONSIBLE FOR FREEING HIM AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE - AS MUCH AS SHE CAN AND HE WILL ALLOW - OF THE DETAILS OF HIS JOB SO THAT HE CAN SPEND HIS TIME AND HIS ENERGY ON THE REALLY SUBSTANTIVE MATTERS.

AND I DON'T KNOW OF ANY JOB THAT REQUIRES MORE TACT AND TALENT THAN THAT.

I COULD GO ON - BUT IN SPEECHES, AS IN TRANSPORTATION, IT'S IMPORTANT TO KNOW WHEN TO STOP.

AND IF I KEEP GOING ON LIKE THIS MY OWN SECRETARY
WON'T STOP REMINDING ME OF WHAT I SAID.

BUT I STAND BY ALL I'VE SAID. AND WHAT I'VE SAID CAN
BE SUMMED UP VERY SIMPLY: LONG LIVE THE SECRETARY. - WITHOUT
HER NO BOSS WOULD SURVIVE.

(WOULD YOU PLEASE READ THAT BACK TO ME?)

SHE... BACKS... TRACKS.

SHE... RESPONSIBLE
FREEING... AS POSSIBLE - AS MUCH AS SHE CAN
HE WILL... OF THE DETAILS OF HIS JOB SO THAT HE
SPENDS... HIS ENERGY ON THE REALLY SUBSTANTIAL
MATTERS.

OF ALL... THAT REQUIRED
AND...

BUT... SPEECHES, AS IN...
IT'S... TO STOP.