

The Society of American Archivists

SAA Extra

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In order to provide every SAA member with an update on the situation at the National Archives, SAA Council, at its late January meeting, authorized the preparation of this special *Newsletter*.

ARCHIVIST OF THE UNITED STATES: IS IT A JOB WORTH HAVING?

Amid widespread concern that under the present circumstances no individual of sufficient stature to serve successfully as Archivist of the United States will accept the position, the selection process is progressing. Since the fall 1979 resignation of James B. Rhoads, James E. O'Neill has served as Acting Archivist.

In a December 19 meeting, a qualifications review panel composed of archivists, historians and others established criteria for their subsequent evaluation of individual candidates (see *SAA Newsletter*, January 1980, p. 1).

At the close of this meeting, panel members were furnished with the names of the 20 persons who had applied for the position. The list included only several applicants the panel members believed to be qualified. Since applications were still being accepted, panel members left Washington determined to solicit additional candidates to apply.

This effort appears to have been successful. In its next and final meeting on January 15, the panel approved a roster of eight candidates which they ranked as "highly qualified"--only two of whom had appeared on the December 19 list.

At press time, interviews were being held with these candidates by an Executive Selection Panel chaired by Deputy GSA Administrator Ray Kline.

The *SAA Newsletter's* contacts with several of the candidates indicate that they share a common profound concern about accepting the position unless given assurances that the Archivist's professional prerogatives will be respected.

GSA Administrator Rowland Freeman, the official who will name the new Archivist, told the National Archives Advisory Council in December that he intends to seek understandings about the operations of the National Archives with the new Archivist in advance of the appointment. He added that he intends to "delegate" to the Archivist but that he would not take his own hands off the operation of NARS.

NATIONAL ARCHIVES THREATENED

In the several months since Admiral Rowland Freeman became Administrator of General Services and James B. Rhoads resigned as Archivist of the United States, the potential for harm to the nation's documentary heritage inherent in the subjugation of the National Archives and Records Service to the General Services Administration has been strikingly demonstrated.

Until the appointment of Freeman, the Administrators of GSA have, for the most part, been content to concentrate on problems of other parts of GSA and have let the Archives make its own professional decisions. Unlike his predecessors, Admiral Freeman has made clear his determination to change radically the direction, mission and program of the Archives. In an August 16, 1979, memorandum to the Acting Archivist, written before he had been to Washington's National Archives Building, Freeman gave NARS officials 15 days in which to develop plans and alternatives for a major realignment of priorities: "The first priority that you have is archival preservation and records management. All other areas are to be considered as compensating dollars to achieve this important task." The August communication also called for the establishment of "archival centers in the various GSA regions within the United States. Such archival centers will house records important to various areas of America's history and will allow for the United States to have various areas of America's history and will allow for the United States to have various places to review our records, rather than being centralized in Washington." (Editor's note: this is a verbatim quotation.)

Since NARS established a successful system of regional branches in 1969 to hold regional federal records and has an active program of microfilming other records for dissemination, this edict was puzzling, even after the verbiage was sorted out. It quickly became clear that Freeman was seeking to clear out much of the Archives' Washington holdings--with no apparent regard for archival principles or the needs of researchers.

In a November 16 memorandum, Freeman charged that the National Archives held "a wealth of material
(continued on p. 4)

ARCHIVISTS PETITION CARTER AND CONGRESS

The archival profession's strong views on the situation at the National Archives are being transmitted to President Carter and to Congress.

In addition to the resolution of SAA Council (facing page), which was sent to the President, other officials of the executive branch, and to every Member of Congress on February 1, SAA's Chicago headquarters transmitted numerous other letters and petitions to Washington. More than 360 officers and employees of the National Archives were joined by hundreds of other archivists from coast (the New Hampshire State Archives) to coast (the Council of the Society of California Archivists) in calling for action to ensure the preservation and integrity of the National Archives.

The text of a typical communication, a petition signed by 26 staff members of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin, read:

Dear Mr. President:

We, the undersigned members of the archival profession, petition your intervention to protect and preserve the National Archives and the historical and cultural heritage it represents against the actions of the Administrator of General Services. We enlist your aid reluctantly, and only after we have concluded that by remaining silent we will fail in our duties as concerned professionals.

We request your intervention to assure the safety and long-term care of the records of the United States Government. Specifically, we ask:

- 1) That you direct the Administrator to select as the next Archivist of the United States a person who is recognized as a distinguished archivist, historian, political scientist, or man or woman of letters;*
- 2) That you direct the Administrator to undertake a thorough study before implementing his announced decision to relocate or dispose of many of the records the National Archives maintains and preserves; and*
- 3) That you establish a panel of experts from within and without government to examine the recommendations made in 1978 by your Reorganization Task Force and in 1977 by the National Study Commission on the Records and Documents of Federal Officials, regarding placement of the National Archives outside the General Services Administration. The panel should be instructed to provide you with a plan which will end the unfortunate subjugation of the National Archives to GSA.*

Many archivists contacted Washington officials directly. An SAA member writing to Senator Claiborne Pell states: *Of all the stupidities done in the name of administrative tidiness, none compares with putting our National Archives in the care of the janitors called GSA! I have a fairly wide circle of acquaintances, and I know of not one educated person who has a good word for this arrangement. One would think the furor re Nixon's papers would have produced reform long since. May the Archives once again breathe free? I hope so!*

A constituent wrote to Senator Warren G. Magnuson: *I served for six years as a member of the Advisory Council of the National Archives. On a number of occasions we discussed the inappropriateness of having the Archives under the control of GSA. Similar discussions have been carried on in the various national and regional scholarly associations. All, or almost all, are on record as calling for a National Archives independent from the whims of GSA. . . . I would hope that some action to stop the Admiral in his tracks could be followed by changes in the law that would free the National Archives from such capricious molestation as that now threatened by Rear Admiral Freeman.*

An Ohio archivist wrote to President Carter: *Your act in preserving your papers as Governor of Georgia at the Georgia Archives demonstrates foresight and sensitivity to preserving historical records and papers. I hope you will act upon that same foresight and sensitivity in matters related to the appointment of the next Archivist of the United States.*

Writing to Senator Edward M. Kennedy, a Massachusetts archivist observed: *The administrator of GSA has statutory obligation to oversee the activities of NARS and to see that it is managed effectively. Moreover, it is clear that NARS does face assorted problems that do require resolution. But it is crucial to the nation's citizens, policy-makers, and scholars that the mission of NARS, an agency of worldwide archival eminence, be preserved. Review of its programs should proceed only after appointment of a competent professional archivist. I urge you to impress on Admiral Freeman the importance of availing himself of competent scholarly and archival advice before the nation's heritage is dealt a serious blow.*

The SAA Newsletter is a bimonthly publication of the Society of American Archivists, with issues published in January, March, May, July, September, and November. The copy deadline for the March Newsletter is February 18.

SAA Resolution on the National Archives

At its January 28-29 meeting in Williamsburg, Virginia, the Council of the Society of American Archivists unanimously adopted a resolution relating to the National Archives and Records Service, the Archivist of the United States and the application of archival principles to our national documentary heritage.

Along with a letter from SAA President Maynard J. Brichford, the resolution was forwarded to the President and to Members of Congress. Brichford urged that federal officials give the National Archives situation prompt attention and that suitable actions be taken to "ensure that decisions affecting the appraisal, description, retention and use of valuable federal records are made by persons with archival qualifications and that the nation's records and archival programs be located in a federal agency that affords professional independence for qualified archivists."

Following is the resolution adopted by SAA Council.

WHEREAS the Society of American Archivists represents those who identify and preserve the documentary heritage of the government and citizens of the United States, and

WHEREAS archives of the United States are a foundation of democracy through the administrative, legal, fiscal, and historical information they provide to the public, and

WHEREAS access to the archives of government is prima facie a right and a necessity for all citizens of the United States, and

WHEREAS the National Archives and Records Service, a part of the General Services Administration, is the institution established to maintain the archives of the federal government, and

WHEREAS the Archivist of the United States, as head of the National Archives and Records Service, is charged to preserve, protect, and make available the records of the United States in accordance with the best archival principles,

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the United States deserves, and the Society of American Archivists calls upon the President and the Congress to ensure, that:

- 1) the Archivist of the United States possess demonstrated ability both as an archivist and as an administrator;
- 2) the Archivist of the United States, as an impartial servant of the public interest, be permitted to exercise judgment based on sound and accepted principles of the archival profession;
- 3) the integrity of our national documentary heritage be preserved through consistent application of the principles of the archives profession.

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that I believe could be very easily disposed of." In the same communication, he proposed to "microfilm/microfiche that which is of doubtful retention value, thus substantially reducing the volume of material on hand . . . I want to see results that substantially reduce our holdings by the end of FY 80."

When Archives officials began to implement the plans for records dispersal, a firestorm of protest arose from archivists and from the user community.

In late January, Freeman temporarily suspended the plan to relocate National Archives records claiming "it hasn't been managed very well" by archives officials.

Another policy pursued by Freeman which has also alarmed interested observers is placing GSA managers with no archival credentials in charge of National Archives regional operations. In Philadelphia, for example, NARS programs are now supervised by GSA's Regional Office of Personal Property. Seattle Archives operations are passing into the control of GSA's Automated Data and Telecommunications Service.

In Denver, a search has been announced by GSA for a Program Management Officer, GS-15, to supervise the Federal Archives and Records Center, the Archives Branch and Records Management activities. The qualifications required include expertise in program management, supervision, automated data and telecommunications systems management, and/or records management, and data processing.

The task of persons seeking to learn more about the situation at the National Archives has been complicated by a "gag" order issued by GSA which precludes National Archives professionals from any contact with the press.

NARS HISTORY AVAILABLE FROM SAA

The National Archives: America's Ministry of Documents 1934-1968, Donald McCoy's detailed study of the development of the National Archives, is available from SAA's Publications Service.

The volume, winner of the Society's 1979 Leland Prize, illuminates the significant steps and controversies in the evolution of the agency prior to its absorption into GSA. It is particularly relevant professional reading in light of the present situation.

The cost is \$17.00 to members and \$20.00 to others. \$1.00 postage and handling will be added to orders not prepaid.

SENATOR MORGAN ON NARS

A January 14 letter from Senator Robert Morgan of North Carolina to GSA expressed concern over plans for dispersal of National Archives records. Excerpts from the communication appear below.

. . . I believe that records of the National Government should be stored in Washington. Scholars come to this area not only from the various states but also from all over the world. It is a disservice to the scholarly community to scatter records all over the country. These records are not simply masses of paper but rather potential material for books, articles, and reports--more importantly, they are the history of our country. Washington is the national research center for governmental records. . . .

I have read various estimates of the amount of records that are under consideration for relocation. Archivists assure me that there are records that can be sent to regional centers without sacrificing the role of the Archives. Yet the concept of record groups, originated in Europe and perfected in this country, has a logic about it that assures that a researcher can locate the records that relate to his topic of study. Any artificial transfer by subject or date compromises this system.

When an archivist is faced with an arbitrary amount of cubic feet to be transferred, he will, of course, try to minimize the damage to the system. Yet, why is there such an emphasis on numbers of feet? Naturally, a good employee will follow the orders that come to him, but to give an order that in fact violates the stated objectives of the agency puts the employee in an untenable position. Presently such workers are prohibited by your order from speaking out publicly on this issue, an order that I find incredulous. . . .

I have discussed the problem of relocation of Archival material with some of my colleagues, and I find that many of them are also concerned about this problem. As much as we try to hold down the cost of government and make it more efficient, we try to cut spending in ways that do not affect important projects.

I strongly oppose the dispersion of records from the National Archives. I have not been convinced by any arguments that I have heard that this is a sound idea."

NARS INDEPENDENCE A LONG-SOUGHT SAA GOAL

The Society of American Archivists has long led efforts to remove the National Archives from GSA's administration.

The 1967 Report of the AHA/OAH/SAA Joint Committee on the Status of the National Archives recommended that NARS be restored to the independent status it had prior to its 1949 placement in GSA.

In October 1976, SAA's Council approved the following resolution:

WHEREAS, actions of a recent Administrator of General Services presented a real threat to the integrity of the nation's archival heritage and demonstrated the need for the national archival system to be protected from political intrusion and

WHEREAS, the National Archives establishment was subordinated to the General Services Administration by the Federal Property and Administrative Services Act of 1949 as one means of improving effectiveness and efficiency of the executive branch of government, and

WHEREAS, the passage of 27 years under this administrative arrangement has not proven efficient and effective, but rather inefficient and burdensome,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Council of the Society of American Archivists strongly recommends that the National Archives should be re-established as an independent authority to guide the administration of records throughout the United States Government and to preserve and make accessible the permanently valuable archives of the United States of America. Independence should insure the following four conditions as enunciated by Walter Robertson, the recently retired Executive Director of NARS whose service in that agency dated from 1941 (in his paper on "NARS: The Politics of Placement")

- "1. Return to the Archivist of the United States statutory authority relating to archival programs.
2. Appointment of the Archivist, as a matter of law, by the President and with Senate confirmation, and based upon a set of professional criteria.
3. Creation by statute of a governing body to oversee National Archives Programs.
4. Submission of an annual report by the Archivist to be required by law."

If the exigencies of governmental re-organization should preclude independence for NARS, the Council insists that it is vital that the four foregoing conditions prevail for NARS, whatever the administrative arrangement.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Council of the Society of American Archivists communicate this resolution to the National Study Commission on Records and Documents of Federal Officials.

* * * * *

In November 1976, SAA Executive Director Ann Morgan Campbell wrote to President Carter immediately after his election to call the GSA/NARS situation to his attention as he began to plan governmental reorganization. Later, the 1978 report of Carter's Administrative Reorganization Task Force recommended NARS's independence.

The 1977 final report of the National Study Commission on the Records and Documents of Federal Officials, drafted by a committee which included Commission members Elizabeth Hamer Kegan, James B. Rhoads (former SAA presidents) and Campbell, also called for NARS's separation from GSA.

Archivists again called for NARS independence while testifying in support of the passage of presidential papers legislation in 1977 and 1978. While some of the drafts of the presidential papers bill called for NARS independence, the final act did not address the issue.

FREEMAN REPLIES TO CRITICS

GSA's public relations office released a bylined article on January 24, 1980 in which Admiral Freeman addressed many of the issues which have alarmed archivists, historians and others. Excerpts of the release follow:

A storm of controversy and concern has developed around this program [records transfer to regions] in recent weeks, mainly because my interest in the program has been poorly communicated, perhaps deliberately. Part of that controversy was a meeting during the past few days of some 200 midlevel managers and employees of GSA's National Archives and Records Service (NARS), a group calling themselves the National Archives Concerned Professionals. The organization approved a resolution to be transmitted to the President of the United States. It called for a delay in the regionalization program, and that a commission be formed to study the feasibility of re-establishing and independent National Archives.

The proponents of this resolution may be surprised to learn that I have no basic disagreement with them. I had already directed a temporary halt to the transfer of records to regional centers until I perceive my views on the matter are properly understood and until we can confer at some length with the user community to ensure agreement as to how the records may be kept.

NARS ADVISORY COUNCIL MEETS ROWLAND FREEMAN

Reports of GSA Administrator Rowland Freeman's comments at a December 1979 meeting of the National Archives Advisory Council served to increase the concern felt by archivists and others over the situation in Washington.

"I have a tremendous sense of history. I have helped make it," said Freeman, 57. "I know where I'm coming from. I'm an expert in almost every area you work."

Seated at a table in the Archivist's Reception Room, Freeman then told the assembled group that he was not budging from his plan to save taxpayers money by shipping archival records from Washington to regional locations across the country. (About a month later, a temporary halt to shipments was ordered.)

In an apparent attempt to convince the scholars that he was their peer, Freeman said, "I'm a former college president." Before he was chosen by Carter to head GSA, Freeman was commandant of the Defense Systems Management College at Ft. Belvoir, Virginia.

"The dispersal of records is the beginning of the end of the National Archives," complained Pulitzer Prize-winning historian John W. Toland, a member of the Advisory Council, the group Freeman addressed. The Council's chair is Richard Leopold. SAA representative is Herbert Finch.

PANEL TO STUDY TRANSFER OF NARS RECORDS

Acting Archivist of the United States James E. O'Neill moved in late January to create a panel to advise the National Archives on the transfer of records to regional locations.

O'Neill's action followed by several days GSA's order to temporarily halt the dispersal of materials--a plan which GSA Administrator Rowland Freeman had ordered National Archives officials to carry out.

The advisory group will be composed of five members of the National Archives Advisory Council, SAA Executive Director Ann Morgan Campbell, American Historical Association Executive Director Mack Thompson, and Organization of American Historians Executive Secretary Richard Kirkendall.

FEDERAL OFFICIALS RESPONSIBLE FOR NARS

Interested archivists may express their views on the dispersal of National Archives records and on the establishment of the National Archives as an independent agency by writing to their own representatives in Congress. Letters should also be sent to the following:

President Jimmy Carter
The White House
Washington, DC 20500

Hon. Jack Brooks, Chairman
Gov't Operations Committee
2449 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Hon. Richardson Preyer, Chairman
Subcommittee on Gov't Info. and
Individual Rights
2344 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Senator Abraham Ribicoff, Chairman
Senate Com. on Governmental Affairs
337 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Senator Lawton Chiles
Subcommittee on Treasury, Postal Service
and General Government
443 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Senator David Pryor
Senate Com. on Governmental Affairs
404 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Alfred Stern
Deputy Assistant to the President
Rm. 234, Old Executive Office Building
Washington, DC 20500

Rowland G. Freeman, III
Administrator
General Services Administration
Washington, DC 20405

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RHOADS CALLS FOR INDEPENDENCE OF NATIONAL ARCHIVES

James B. Rhoads, who retired as Archivist of the United States in August 1979, spoke at the Cosmos Club in Washington on January 7, 1980. His topic was "Current Issues Facing the National Archives." In his remarks, which are reproduced below, Rhoads joined his predecessors in office, Wayne C. Grover and Robert H. Bahmer, in calling for independence for the National Archives. Rhoads, Bahmer, and Grover are the three Archivists who served during the period of GSA's control of the Archives.

Rhoads has been active in professional archival organizations. He served on SAA Council and was President of the Society in 1974-75. At the time of his retirement, he was President of the International Council on Archives. When Rhoads announced his intention to retire, GSA Administrator Freeman remarked that "He was universally respected in the profession and by the public. He has brought substance, growth and improvements to the National Archives. He will be sorely missed."

I'm going to be rather candid tonight. I realize that not everyone who is knowledgeable about the National Archives may agree with the positions I shall take. I also recognize that this is a view from the top, and that differing perceptions from those with a different perspective are quite understandable.

To make certain that you know where I'm coming from, let me say that almost my entire career has been spent at the National Archives and Records Service. I've been a GS-3, and most every other grade from there on up. I was Deputy Archivist of the United States for two years, and then the Archivist for more than eleven years. I believe in the National Archives, and I am committed to doing anything that I honorably can to insure its future integrity and vitality. I must also tell you that today the National Archives and Records Service is an organization with more than its fair share of troubles, and there are still more looming on the horizon.

However, for most of this past decade I think it is fair to say that the National Archives and Records Service enjoyed a good reputation, that it was run in a non-partisan fashion, that it was competently managed by and large, and that it was responsive to the needs of its several constituencies.

As evidence I cite the President's Reorganization Project on Administrative Services. Other elements of the General Services Administration came in for severe criticism, both by the public and Federal agencies served by GSA. NARS received practically no criticism and a good deal of praise--as well as a surprising amount of unsolicited support for the idea that it should be removed from GSA and be made an independent agency once again.

As further evidence I cite the wide-spread corruption and fraud in GSA that has come to light during the past two or three years. NARS came out of those wide-ranging investigations with absolutely no taint of

illegality or wrong-doing.

Watergate--here we were severely tested. It would have been very easy to succumb to political pressures, to shade things a bit to accommodate our political bosses. But that didn't happen. First there was the celebrated case of the President's tax returns back-dating a gift of his papers to the National Archives so that he could get a tax deduction to which he was not entitled. Then, Watergate culminated--for us in NARS--in the infamous agreement of GSA Administrator Arthur F. Sampson and Richard Nixon which provided for the destruction of the notorious tape recordings, and the right of the former President to withdraw, after a three year delay, any of his papers from our custody. NARS was completely by-passed in the negotiations, and I didn't even know of them until I was presented with the signed agreement. Fortunately, the Congress was so outraged that it enacted legislation nullifying the agreement. I believe that we came out of that experience with heightened respect from those Americans who value the historical record, preserved inviolate.

What were some of the factors, you might ask, that contributed to keeping NARS on a steady course? First of all, there was a degree of continuity at the top. Other services in GSA has turnovers in management oftener than once every two years on the average. And almost every time a new Commissioner came on board he felt an irresistible urge to reorganize, reshuffle people, give a different direction to programs--in short, to place his mark on the organization. The result--confusion, demoralization, and bureaucratic caution. How did NARS escape the oft-recurring game of musical chairs? Partly it was tradition and precedent. There has never been an occasion when the Archivist of the United States was replaced when there was a change of Presidential Administration. Every new GSA Administrator came to understand that NARS was a professional organization and that it would not look well to appear to be playing partisan politics with

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the keepers of the Nation's memory. And I am also convinced that NARS was respected because its managers held a set of tenets that they tried to uphold--non-partisanship, a determination to preserve the integrity of the historical record, a belief that in a democratic society the records belong to all the people and that the people should have the freest possible access to them, and that we owed courteous professional service to all our clients.

Paradoxically, our emphasis on providing excellent service bore the seeds of severe problems. The number of persons making use of the resources of the National Archives has increased several-fold over the past decade. There are a variety of reasons for this--the very strong efforts we made to build bridges to historians, and to encourage the use of our holdings for scholarly research, brought forth a great increase in use. The era of the Bicentennial served to accelerate this trend and as the attention of the man in the street was focused increasingly on the Nation's history, this too made itself felt in the demands placed upon us. No sooner had the year 1976 passed into history than we were caught in the tail of "Haley's comet." The impact of *Roots* was amazing. Hundreds of thousands of Americans became interested in their family history, and our genealogical inquiries soared.

In one sense we were delighted. The reason records are saved and preserved is so that they may be used. Our institution was becoming known--and used--not only by ever-increasing numbers, but by an increasingly diverse public. Unfortunately, our budget was not increasing significantly, and allocation of the resources that we did have became an increasingly difficult matter to deal with. We felt we really had little choice but to meet the public demand for reference as long as we could, although we dropped some marginal services and were able to make some economies through greater use of form replies and computer prepared guide letters. But inevitably something had to give. As a result, we were unable to make much headway in other important archival areas, most notably in arrangement and description of archives, and in preservation.

I suspect that most Federal managers have had to postpone needed activities for a year or so because of unforeseen developments or lean budget years. That can be handled. But to defer year after year one of the most basic and pressing needs--in our case preservation--is quite another matter. It is a cause for most serious concern. I should like to note, parenthetically, that during the last twelve years we were able to increase the amount of preservation expenditure approximately

ten-fold--to an annual level of about \$2 million. But that sum is simply not enough to make any significant headway against the 150 year backlog of neglect that the National Archives inherited in 1934, and to deal with the wear, tear, and decay that is bound to take place over time, and to cope with the preservation needs of new accessions. Instead of spending \$2 million a year, we should probably be spending at least \$7 million a year for this activity, some of which needs to go into research and development for new technology that will drastically reduce unit costs.

In the meanwhile, there were a couple of disgruntled employees who were spending a good deal of time on Capitol Hill in an effort to persuade some committee of Congress, any committee, to investigate the National Archives. It was slow going for them for awhile, but finally some very exaggerated allegations about the status of preservation of historical documents won them a sympathetic audience--and they had touched us on a vulnerable spot, because we do have, as I have said, major unmet preservation needs--so, I might add, does every archives, manuscript repository, and library in the world.

Preparations began for investigative hearings. The General Accounting Office was asked to evaluate our preservation program and our general management practices. And just at this point one of our nitrate film vaults at Suitland was destroyed by fire, and millions of feet of unique historical film went up in flames. The timing couldn't have been worse--from our point of view. And the inquiry was broadened to include a probe of the reasons that it had been possible for that fire to take place.

The investigators, meanwhile, were talking to everyone on the staff who had, or thought he or she had, pertinent information. Understandably, the quality of that information varied a good deal.

Also, there is no denying the fact that NARS management has made some mistakes, and I have been personally responsible for them. We are not perfect. I *am* proud that the mistakes were errors of judgment rather than errors born of greed or lack of ethical standards.

In the meantime, rumors were ricocheting all over the place, morale was plummeting, and management was spending an inordinate amount of time dealing with the allegations, many of them without merit and others containing just enough fact to give them a surface plausibility. Finally, the allegations of mismanagement began to have some basis in fact, because the managerial ranks were too thin to cope with the situation I've been describing and do a good job of managing, too.

On another front, the General Services Administration found itself once again in an interregnum between two Administrators. Admiral Rowland G. Freeman III had been nominated for the post, but had to wait in the wings for something like three months before he was confirmed by the Senate and could formally enter upon his new duties. It is reasonable, I think, to presume that he was not unaware during this time of some of the allegations about NARS and its management. In fact, I personally saw to it that he received all of those that appeared in print, although I did not have an opportunity to discuss them with him until after his confirmation. So it came as no particular surprise when, during the course of our first substantive discussion, Admiral Freeman told me that he had decided to have the new GSA Inspector General come in and make an independent assessment of the charges. I could hardly blame him for that. Had I been in his place under similar circumstances I would have done the same thing. But internally within NARS the effect of this additional probe was simply to extend and magnify the problems to which I have already alluded.

Somewhere at about this juncture I began to think seriously of stepping aside. Because of a major reorganization elsewhere in GSA, the Office of Personnel Management had granted all GSA employees in the Washington area a brief opportunity for early retirement, providing they met certain age and service requirements, which I met. I had served as Archivist of the United States for a long time. I knew that any organization is likely to benefit from an occasional change in leadership, and the fresher insights and different perspective that a new leader with proper qualifications can bring. And I knew that I was no longer finding rewards in many of the things I had to do. So I retired, effective the end of August 1979.

During the months that have passed since then, I've had an opportunity for reflection about the National Archives and Records Service, about its current problems and opportunities, and about its future potential. I've tried to maintain a degree of detachment in the process. But that hasn't been entirely successful, I suppose, because it is an institution about which I care deeply, and also because I keep posted from time to time about developments there.

So, I come now to the point where I should like to talk for a little while about the current problems and issues confronting the National Archives and Records Service. Many of them I've alluded to already--and I shall try to be selective.

First of all, is the need for resources to carry on a balanced program, including adequate funds to serve our publics, to establish necessary controls over the records in our care, and to preserve them. We also need funding to meet the problems and opportunities of a future that is already upon us; here I refer primarily to records of the Government's scientific and technological activities, and to machine-readable archives. In all fairness, I must say that within GSA we have usually been decently treated in this respect. And the Congress has usually appropriated most of the funds requested in the President's budget. Our problem in recent years has been an inability to persuade the Office of Management and Budget to include sufficient funding in the President's budget. During a period of meteoric growth in the budgets of the National Endowments for the Arts and Humanities, and substantial budget increases for the Library of Congress and the Smithsonian Institution, the budgets of NARS have probably not even kept pace with inflation. We have been told by OMB that these are tight budget years, and we understand that. But we also see far better treatment being accorded our sister cultural agencies. Something is out of kilter. Part of the problem may be that there is no continuing opportunity for the Archivist of the United States and his principal assistants to keep OMB aware of our needs. The fault probably is shared by OMB and the GSA budget office, and probably also by the NARS leadership for not having made a major internal GSA issue of this lack of opportunity. The other part of the problem, I firmly believe, is that as long as NARS is part of GSA, the OMB examiners assigned to GSA are going to be preoccupied by and oriented toward the big dollar issues involving Federal procurement, building construction and management, and Government-wide ADP and computer management. NARS' importance as a national cultural agency is ignored and buried by OMB simply because it is a part of GSA, an agency with a basically different kind of mission.

This problem has in one narrow but important respect been aggravated by the Congress. The National Historical Publications and Records Commission's relatively new program of grants to non-Federal institutions for preservation of historical documents is a good program that is effectively meeting an important need throughout the country. Not surprisingly, that program has developed its own constituency, and a lively and vocal constituency it is. For several years now, the OMB has refused to fully fund this program in the President's budget. So the beneficiaries of the program turn to our appropriations subcommittees in Congress and lobby for full funding. Congress responds to the citizenry, and fully funds the grant programs. So far so good. The problem is that Congress has

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been unwilling to raise our overall appropriation ceiling by a like amount, and has reduced NARS internal funding accordingly. For several years running this has happened, and the small increases we have sometimes gotten through OMB for preservation and the like have been lost. It is imperative, I believe, that the NHPRC grant funds be the subject of a separate appropriation, so that the basic operational needs of NARS can be considered on their own merits.

The second major issue has to do with NARS' need for space and facilities to house the permanently valuable records of the Nation. For the last ten years NARS, having long since outgrown the National Archives Building, has been working with GSA's Public Buildings Service, and more recently with the Pennsylvania Avenue Development corporation, in planning for a major facility just north of the National Archives Building. Eventually, the plan approved by Congress provided, as an optional form of development, a large underground archives repository as a part of the Market Square complex. This would give us sufficient space to last us well into the 21st Century, and perhaps much longer as more and more of the Government's valuable information will be coming to the National Archives in microform and in machine-readable media. This kind of approach to our space needs has had the support of every GSA Administrator of the last ten years. All of us have understood that this would be an expensive project, and that we might have to fall back on an alternative location in the Washington suburbs if OMB and Congressional approval for construction on a downtown site could not be secured. I think all of us felt, however, that the convenience of researchers who would use our holdings, the administrative efficiencies and economies that would accrue to the National Archives from a single central location, plus the potential that a centrally located facility would give us for increasing our contribution to the cultural life of Washington, made the Market Square option the preferred one. I am sorry to report to you that the new Administrator has apparently decided to scuttle not only the downtown Washington plan, but also the idea of continuing to accumulate the archives of Federal agency headquarters in the Washington area. His solution apparently is to move large quantities of central government records to locations throughout the country--a decision which, if carried out, will cause untold frustration and expense to researchers, and will probably mean that our Federal archives will be used far less in the preparation of historical works. The people of the Nation will be the losers. As one Pulitzer Prize-winning user of the National Archives has remarked, "This is the beginning of the end of the National Archives."

At the same time that a massive decentralization of the National Archives is being contemplated, ostensibly to make the records more available to the American people, it appears that the new Administrator is looking with favor on the centralization of the Presidential papers, and on a very sharp curtailment, both at the National Archives and the Presidential Libraries, of exhibitions and other programs designed to benefit the non-scholarly public. I might add that some 2,500,000 people visit the museums of the Presidential Libraries and the Exhibition Hall of the National Archives each year.

For many years some scholars have questioned the policy of decentralization of Presidential papers as embodied in the Presidential Library system and as sanctioned in the Presidential Libraries Act of 1955. In 1978, however, when a bill asserting Federal ownership of Presidential papers was enacted, the Congress chose not to disturb the Presidential Library concept. Nevertheless, there are legitimate arguments in favor of a centralized facility for housing the papers of future Chief Executives, although I believe the arguments in favor of the present system outweigh them. At any rate, two or three years ago Senator Lawton Chiles of Florida, concerned about the growing cost of the care and feeding of former Presidents, began to question the validity of the Presidential Library system, choosing to view these institutions primarily as monuments to, and emoluments for, the former Presidents, rather than as important centers for research and popular education. Late last summer the new Administrator, in testimony before Senator Chiles, indicated that he favored a centralized institution for Presidential papers, and, incomprehensibly, that there was no legal basis for having museums at Presidential Libraries. Furthermore, the Administrator appears to have decided that the existing Presidential Libraries should be removed from the administrative control of the Archivist of the United States, and run henceforth by the Regional Administrators of GSA, most of whom have reached their present posts through the partisan political route, and whose major concerns tend to be with Federal buildings and procurements of supplies. One of the great strengths of the present organizational set-up has been that the Libraries have been perceived, by scholars and former Presidents alike, as being administered in an even-handed, non-partisan, and professional manner. I really wonder whether the Administrator understands and is sensitive to the implications of the organizational change he contemplates, or whether this is an impulsive decision in line with his general view that GSA's eleven regional fiefdoms rather than the central office service heads (of whom the Archivist is one) should have primary responsibility for all GSA programs. In any

event, it seems clear that the present time-proven system for caring for the papers of the Presidents, a most precious part of the Nation's documentary heritage, stands at the crossroads; and that there is a real danger that changes may be made without regard for the great sensitivities inherent in the situation.

And there is still another vital organism within the National Archives and Records Service that seems to be imperilled. I refer to the National Archives Trust Fund. Back in the early 1940's when the demand by researchers for copies of documents in the Archives began to reach significant dimensions, a problem arose. The money authorized by Congress for making copies was being used up before the end of the fiscal year, and the Archives, sometimes for months at a time, was unable to provide this essential service. The fact that researchers paid for this service, into the Miscellaneous Receipts of the Treasury, by no means insured that the Archives would be able to spend an equivalent sum to make copies. So Congress enacted a law to solve the problem. It created a revolving trust fund, to be administered by a National Archives Trust Fund Board, chaired by the Archivist of the United States. The law enjoined the Board to charge ten percent above costs, so as to provide a cushion, and permit the expansion of operations as necessary. The Trust Fund has been a great boon to the National Archives. It has enabled us to develop innovative programs in behalf of scholars and the public, expand our publication and exhibition activities, and to fund, at user expense, a number of valuable services. The Trust Fund also encompasses a gift fund which has enabled us to carry on a number of worthwhile and appropriate projects and programs without cost to the taxpayer.

During the investigations of the past year, this, too, has come under attack. It is true that under the law the Trust Fund Board has rather broad authority. It is understandable that the Congress might want closer oversight than it has had over a fund with income and expenditures now approaching \$6 million annually. The General Accounting Office simply doesn't like revolving trust funds on principle. A number of Administrators of General Services have been unhappy about the Trust Fund because they didn't control it, an unhappiness that was compounded for many of them when they wanted some of the money for their own pet projects or for use in other parts of GSA, and were told by the Chairman of the Trust Fund Board that they couldn't have it. The law requires that expenditures be made only for the benefit of the National Archives and Records Service.

So, during the last several months a number of solutions have been proposed, ranging from outright abolition to closer Congressional oversight. The most recent proposal that has come to my attention is one put forth by Admiral Freeman, namely that the Administrator of General Services replace the Archivist as Chairman of the Trust Fund Board. For those who believe the National Archives should have a degree of autonomy within GSA this is bad news, indeed. For the Archivist's control of the Trust Fund has given him a limited area of relative independence.

I think it is clear that I am terribly concerned about the future of the National Archives. Its parent organization has an Administrator who stated publicly a couple of weeks ago that he understood history--he has *made* history. That he is an expert in everything NARS does. That he has the answers to all of its problems and is going to put them into effect.

I might note that I have served the National Archives and Records Service for twenty-seven years, full-time, and I surely don't claim to have all the answers. After six months of part time attention to NARS he has all the answers, and the determination, plus the ultimate statutory authority to implement most of them. Add to this a tendency to disregard the professional knowledge and judgments and concerns of the staff, a demonstrated penchant for involving himself in purely professional decisions to a degree unequalled by any of his predecessors, his apparent belief that NARS has been systematically mismanaged for years, that its cultural mission is a frill, and that the next Archivist of the United States must be a tough manager above all (although he concedes that it would be nice if *his* type of manager also had academic credentials and acceptability to the historical and archival community)--all of this leads me to fear that the leadership of NARS over the next several years may view its primary mission as obedience to the orders handed down by the Administrator and that it may not be sensitive to the very reasons why the National Archives was established, and why it exists today. Strong management and cost effectiveness are undeniably important, but they are not the only imperatives for the National Archives.

During the course of my remarks I have been quite critical of the Administrator of General Services, Admiral Freeman. Lest you carry away a distorted impression of him, I should say that he is a man of great energy and drive. He does not appear to be motivated by partisan political concerns. He is undoubtedly an expert in procurement and contracting, skills that are important to many of the major programs of GSA. On a personal level, he was thoughtful and generous to me at the time of

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my retirement. I have no personal animosity toward him. The only reason for my criticism is that I am convinced that there is a very real danger that in the course of a few months he may undo the work of three generations of professional archivists who have built possibly the finest national archives in the world. I should also note that, more than any of his predecessors, he seems open to arguments that GSA may not be the best possible location for the National Archives. The problem is that as long as the present organizational arrangement exists, he seems determined to make all of the important decisions, including those essentially professional in nature.

At least twice in the thirty years that NARS has been a part of GSA there has been a concerted campaign to restore NARS to an independent status--once in the late Sixties--and once in the mid-Seventies in the wake of the Sampson-Nixon agreement. In response to each of those efforts useful reforms were instigated, either by GSA or the Congress.

I believe that the time has come for one more try--hopefully the last and the best of them. It is not fair to the American people, who care for the unsullied documentation of their history--it is not fair to a capable and devoted National Archives staff--to have the integrity of this great national institution threatened repeatedly, whether by neglect, or ignorance, or partisan politics, or arrogance. It is time for a parting of the ways. And if for some reason independence cannot be secured, surely somewhere in the great Federal bureaucracy there must be an agency where the National Archives and Records Service could be received with the support and understanding that it so desperately needs. I understand that Admiral Freeman has publicly announced that he tried to give the National Archives away to the Smithsonian Institution. I only hope that *someone* takes him up on the offer before he changes his mind.
