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(SES)

OOI file

MEMORANDUM FOR: Deputy Director of Central Intelligence

FROM : Harry H. Fitzwater
Director of Personnel

SUBJECT : Inter-Directorate Rotational Assignments as a
Prerequisite for Promotion to Supergrade Rank

1. Action Requested: None. This memorandum is in response to your request for a paper which discusses the feasibility of phasing in over a five-year period a program requiring employees to serve at least one rotational assignment in another Directorate before being promoted to management positions at GS-16.

2. Background: Recognizing that rotational assignments benefit both the organization and the employee, the Directorates have established programs of their own. The extent of these programs is reflected in figures from the APP which show that in FY 78 there were approximately 200 employees (GS-13 and above) on rotation in positions outside of their own Career Service. In addition, the Agency inaugurated in FY 1979 a formal inter-Directorate rotational assignment program, the organization and maintenance of which is a current Office of Personnel MBO objective. In general, however, participation in these various rotational assignments has not been specifically linked with career advancement and promotion as strongly as the referent proposal would do.

3. Staff Position: Our detailed examination of this proposal resulted in the identification of a variety of arguments in favor of rotational assignments but also revealed that practical, administrative obstacles would exist in the implementation of such a program. The five-year phase-in period has no impact on the broad problems we foresee. These pro's and con's are briefly summarized below:

Pro's

- a. Employee rotations serve an educational purpose, broadening the worker's understanding of the problems and activities of other organizational elements.

- b. A crucial test of the employee's capabilities can be conducted by observing his or her performance in a new and different work environment.
- c. The best components benefit from the fresh perspectives of the newcomers.
- d. The employee, knowing the significance of the rotational assignment for future advancement, can assess his or her continued capacity and/or interest for a career at a senior management level.

Con's

The con's are concerned with the numbers of people and positions involved and the limitations impacting on both the Agency and the employee by the imposition of mandatory requirements which are administered by management and outside the control of the employee.

- a. To avoid charges of proselection which could be in conflict with HEOC guidelines, rotational assignments might have to be made available to all employees in the supergrade feeder group (GS-13 - GS-15) who desire them.
- b. The number of rotational assignments which could be identified and which would provide the required developmental exposure would probably be exceeded many times over by the size of the pool of candidates in the program. This imbalance could well delay the promotion to GS-16 of many otherwise qualified employees while they waited for an assignment to a rotational position. In the worst cases, certain employees might never receive a rotational assignment in the competition for these scarce positions.
- c. It should be noted here that the forecast of the success rate to supergrade level per grade ten years after promotion to GS-13, 14, and 15 is 5%, 10%, and 20% respectively. This ratio makes a mandatory requirement, if it could be accommodated, a rotation for rotation's sake program rather than one designed with a firm focus on the utilization of experience.

4. Discussion: The matter of accommodating the large number of employees in the feeder group to the probable limited number of meaningful rotational assignments, within a reasonable time frame of suitable grade

and position, poses serious practical problems. Since it is possible that some who possess the supergrade management potential, but are identified late in the development process, would find it difficult to obtain the qualifying experience for promotion, the Agency would deprive itself of the choice of selection by instituting a mandatory requirement of this nature.

An additional factor for consideration before making a determination is that the SES Task Force will be looking at the recommendation for the identification of positions and personnel in three career tracks -- executive/managerial, executive/professional, and executive/program. The results of the review may identify clear career tracks which employees would or could elect to follow at a mid-career level of GS-13 or GS-14. Where a rotational experience is desired for the particular track, the pool of candidates would be defined by employee option and management's selection criteria which would be based on the employee's proven record. It is probable the feeder group for the track would be of a size which could be provided with the required developmental assignments. It is also feasible that given a more defined position roster and a more limited group of employees, the rotational assignment can be programmed after the promotion with equally successful results.

5. Recommendations:

a. Because of the complexity of the proposal and the potential for creating mandatory limits on choices available to both management and employees in the area of executive development, it is recommended the requirement not be mandatory, but that rotation be encouraged.

b. Because the group developing the proposal for the establishment of a senior executive service is also addressing the issue of an executive development program for SES members, it is recommended that the proposal, as modified by the discussion points herein, be included as part of their overall study.

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