

THE SECRETARY OF STATE
WASHINGTON

April 21, 1961

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

Subject: Your Appointment with Dr. Fintajohn,
Sierra Leone's Representative in the
United States.

You are seeing Dr. Fintajohn, representative of Sierra Leone in the United States, on Sierra Leone's Independence Day, April 27, at 2:30 a.m. specifically to express regret that Dr. Fintajohn was refused service in a Howard Johnson restaurant in Hagerstown, Maryland.

Biographic information on Dr. Fintajohn and a report on the Hagerstown incident are enclosed.

During the Africa Freedom Day reception on Saturday, April 15, Dr. Fintajohn invited you to the Independence Day reception to be held at the Sheraton-Park Hotel between 6:30 and 8:30 p.m. on the evening of April 27. If your schedule permits, I believe it would be desirable for you to stop by briefly at the Sheraton-Park reception. Such a gesture would provide a splendid climax to Dr. Fintajohn's assignment in Washington. He leaves shortly after Independence to become his country's first High Commissioner in London. It would also assuage the deep disappointment of the Government of Sierra Leone reported by our Consul General in Freetown. Evidently, the Sierra Leone Government believes our delegation to its Independence ceremonies in Freetown suffers by comparison with the delegation we recently sent to Senegal headed by Vice President Johnson.

Alternatively, Mr. Duke has suggested that rather than attending the evening reception you may wish to consider going to the flag-raising ceremony at Dr. Fintajohn's residence at 11:30 a.m. on April 27, which may in many ways be preferable from the point of view of its effect on Sierra Leone and Independent African state public opinion.

Mr. Duke and Assistant Secretary Williams will accompany Dr. Fintajohn during his call on you on the morning of April 27. Mr. Williams would accompany you in the event you find it possible to attend either the reception or flag-raising ceremony.

Dean Rusk

Dean Rusk

Enclosures:

1. Biographic information on Dr. Fintajohn.
2. Office of the Chief of Protocol report on the Hagerstown incident.

OFFICIAL USE ONLY
DEPARTMENT OF STATE
Biographic Information Division

FITZJOHN, William Henry (Dr.)

SIERRA LEONE

Dr. W. H. Fitzjohn, who has served as Sierra Leone's representative in the United States since September 1959, was appointed attached for Sierra Leone Affairs at the United Kingdom Embassy in October 1940. An ordained minister, he had previously lectured in social sciences at Fourth Bay College in Sierra Leone and sat in the House of Representatives.

Born November 5, 1905 at Bahra, Jong, Sierra Leone, Dr. Fitzjohn began his education at Albert Academy in Freetown and then studied extensively in the United States. He received a B.A. from Lincoln University (1931), a B.S. from Union Theological Seminary, Ohio (1934), and a M.A. and Ph.D. from Columbia University Teachers College (1939). He entered the ministry in 1938 at Sierra Leone's Evangelical United Methodist Church and was ordained into the ministry of the Evangelical United Methodist Church, Dayton, Ohio, in 1940. Fitzjohn was acting principal of Albert Academy (1940-47) and lecturer in sociology and religion at Fourth Bay College (1950-1959). He was a member of the House of Representatives from 1951 to 1957.

Dr. Fitzjohn was recently refused service at a restaurant in Maryland but this incident was made known only after a friend's protests on his behalf. He said that this was the first racial incident in which he had been involved during his service as Sierra Leone representative and indicated that he was impressed by the progress of desegregation in Washington, D.C.

Dr. Fitzjohn is married and has four small children.

TAM/WRG/ST

April 1961

DEPARTMENT OF STATE
Office of the Chief of Protocol

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April 18, 1962

TO : Mr. Angler Riddle Dale

FROM: Pedro A. Sanjuan

This is to inform you of the experience of Dr. W. S. Fitzjohn, Charge d'Affaires for Sierra Leone in Washington, an incident which has been receiving some publicity in United States press. This memorandum includes information on the action taken by the Department of State together with some notes on the final outcome of the case.

On the 9th of March at 5:00 p.m., Dr. Fitzjohn left his residence at 4821 Colorado Avenue, N.W. on a trip by private car that was to take him to Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

Several months ago Dr. Fitzjohn had been the guest of the city of Hagerstown, and at that time he learned that all public facilities in that city had been desegregated. Dr. Fitzjohn also remembered that in 1959 the President of the Howard Johnson restaurant chain had apologized to a Canadian diplomat who was refused service in a restaurant belonging to this chain. Therefore, Dr. Fitzjohn planned to stop at one of these establishments for supper, believing that their policy was non-discriminatory.

Dr. Fitzjohn stopped at the Howard Johnson restaurant located outside of Hagerstown, Maryland, at 7:00 p.m. Both Dr. Fitzjohn and Mr. Stewart Robinson, his driver, were met by hostile looks as they entered the restaurant and by a waitress who stated to them that they would not be served. Dr. Fitzjohn identified himself as a diplomat, but the waitress indicated that he still could not be served. Next Dr. Fitzjohn asked to see the supervisor, to which the waitress replied, in an unbecoming tone, that she was the supervisor. The waitress then turned her back on Dr. Fitzjohn and left him unattended.

The diplomat and his driver waited fifteen minutes longer, during which time they were not served. They then left the premises with a feeling of embarrassment.

At a lecture in Pittsburgh, Dr. Fitzjohn mentioned the incident and stated to the audience that he felt emotionally upset. However, Dr. Fitzjohn did not make an issue of this matter with his government because he felt that such an incident might tend to strain the cordial relations that exist between Sierra Leone and the United States.

Sanjuan

Action Taken by the Department of State:

Upon receiving this information on April 3, the Office of Protocol got in touch with Mr. Fitzjohn by telephone and secured from him the above account of the incident. The Assistant to the Chief of Protocol expressed to Mr. Fitzjohn sincere regrets and indicated to the diplomat that the action of one waitress did not quash the feelings of the American people. Mr. Fitzjohn was informed at this time that action would be taken by the Department of State on this matter.

On April 4, the Chief of Protocol conferred with Mr. Fitzjohn and discussed, to the satisfaction of the Chargé d'Affaires of Sierra Leone, the measures that were being taken by the Department of State to remedy this situation. The Department of Justice, in accordance with procedures previously established in a meeting at the White House, was informed by the Office of Protocol of the incident in Georgetown. A letter of apology was sent to Mr. Fitzjohn by the Chief of Protocol and another letter was sent to the President of the Howard Johnson chain, Mr. Edward S. Johnson, asking for an explanation of the policy of these restaurants.

On April the 9th, the Chief of Protocol visited Mr. Fitzjohn in order to go over with the Representative from Sierra Leone the action that was taken by the Department of State to prevent the recurrence of such incidents. The Chief of Protocol expressed the profound regrets of the Department concerning this incident and explained the functions of the Special Projects Section of the Office of Protocol, recently created to deal with the problem of diplomats in Washington. On this same day telephone conversations were held with the White House on possible courses of action that would be taken if the Georgetown situation did not resolve itself.

On the 10th of April, word was received from Georgetown that the Mayor and the Citizens's Council made public statements describing the occurrence of this incident. The President of the Howard Johnson restaurants stated positively that discrimination was not tolerated in his restaurants. Mr. Edward S. Johnson issued a public apology in Mand, stating that he was unaware that such a thing had happened in one of his restaurants.

On the 11th of April, the Department of State received word that the Mayor of Georgetown was issuing an invitation to Mr. Fitzjohn asking the diplomat to come back to Georgetown to be received by the Mayor and the city authorities. It is quite possible that Mr. Fitzjohn will also accept an invitation to return to the Howard Johnson restaurant, where this time he will be a most welcomed guest.

The positive solution of this unfortunate affair proves that the dignified action of one individual does not represent the feelings of the American people. It served as a catalyst for an expression of the friendliness and good will that the American people have for the people of Africa.

File for Kennedy

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

April 24, 1962

MEMORANDUM FOR

Harold O'Connell

How about such a statement when the President sees Fitzjohn?

Harold L. Wofford
Special Assistant
to the President

Enclosure

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DRAFT OF POSSIBLE STATEMENT TO BE ISSUED ON
APRIL 27 AFTER MEETING AMBASSADOR FITZJOHN

It was a great pleasure for me to greet the first Ambassador from the new nation of Sierra Leone. As one of the first modern nations to become free and independent after a period of colonial rule the United States salutes this newest republic on the great developing continent of Africa.

I have expressed to Ambassador Fitzjohn the deep regret of this government that a few weeks ago he was denied service in an American restaurant. I am sure that most of the American people felt the same kind of sorrow and shame that I did. As soon as I read about it, I asked to meet him to apologize personally. I was glad to find that the State Department was already taking action in this matter.

Officials of Maryland and of Hagerstown and of the management of the restaurant have taken steps to make amends. But until all forms of racial discrimination are ended throughout our public life we cannot rest content. We must take this action not just in order to assure fair treatment to our international guests but above all in order to be true to ourselves--to our Constitution and to our first principles as a nation.

When any person is discriminated against because of his color or race the purpose and spirit of America is being violated. But this is not just a domestic matter. It is a vital issue in our world relations, affecting our survival as a nation. We must face the fact that the white people of the world are a small minority. The great new nations of Africa and the great colored majority in the world will naturally test us by how well we live up to our ideal of equal treatment for all.

I have assured Ambassador Fitzjohn that this Administration is going to do everything in its power to end whatever racial discrimination remains in this country. I hope that our people, and particularly the operators of all establishments open to the public will take note of this unhappy incident and accept their responsibilities as citizens so that no guest of the country-- and no citizen of this country--has to suffer such indignity.





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**MEMORANDUM TO THE PRESIDENT
FROM: Ted Rosen**

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In regard to the matter of Dr. William F. Floyd, formerly Attaché at the British Embassy for Seven Years, who is scheduled to become Chief of Mission for Burma (leave on April 27th) I called Joseph Tobby at State Department. He conferred with Angus Duke who has been working on this matter.

An Associated Press dispatch in this evening's Star states the Department of State has apologized to Dr. Floyd and has asked the Howard Johnson Company to explain what its attitude is toward serving negroes.

Mr. Duke

- (1) recommended strongly that Dr. Floyd be invited to see the President at the White House.
- (2) he suggested that any visit of Howard Johnson to the White House be deferred until a reply has been made by our company to the State Department's inquiry.
- (3) likewise suggested that a letter be sent to each Governor of the fifty states asking their cooperation in insuring that such incidents do not recur. (I understand that Fred Dutton has to hand a suggested draft of such a letter.)

APRIL 16, 1961

Office of the White House Press Secretary

THE WHITE HOUSE

FOLLOWING IS THE TEXT OF A MESSAGE
FROM THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED
STATES TO THE GOVERNMENT AND PEOPLE
OF SIERRA LEONE

On the occasion of their independence, I wish to extend to the Government and people of Sierra Leone the heartiest congratulations and warmest wishes of the people of the United States.

We in the United States have watched with sympathy and admiration the progress of the people of Sierra Leone toward this historic and welcome event, which is the result of fruitful cooperation between the people of Sierra Leone and the Government and people of the United Kingdom. We are confident that this spirit of cooperation will inspire Sierra Leone's future relationships with all who hold freedom dear.

In expressing the best wishes of my country, I speak for a people who cherish individual liberty and independence, and who have made great sacrifices so that these vital principles might endure. It is with special pleasure, therefore, that we witness the assumption by this new nation of its ever sign place in the world community.

I am keenly conscious of the friendship which has marked the relations of our two countries, and, for the future, all Americans stand ready to work with the people of Sierra Leone to reach the goals we all share of health, enlightenment and material well being. I am confident that in years to come our two countries will stand as one in safeguarding the greatest of all bonds between us, our common belief in a free and democratic way of life.
