

January 9, 1979

TO: IPA Mailing List*

I trust that each individual who receives this letter knows Norm Latker well enough to perceive the true motivation behind his dismissal by HEW. His persistence in calling attention to the factual basis for patent waivers constituted a continuing source of embarrassment to those political officers whose policy preferences were inconsistent with the demonstrated facts. Their choice was clear: either face the facts or dismiss Latker.

The real mystery surrounding Norm's dismissal by HEW lies not in its motivation but in its methodology. Since HEW clearly believed it had the power to fire Norm for his unwillingness to espouse the party line with the convincing dedication of a true believer, why did it choose instead the scurrilous path of suggesting that he was fired because he used postage-free envelopes for the conduct of his personal affairs? The answer, it seems clear, is because HEW correctly anticipated that a dismissal grounded upon policy differences would focus unwanted attention on the policy, perhaps to the extent of perpetuating the very embarrassment which Norm's firing was designed to eliminate.

Incidentally, HEW does not contend that Norm used postage-free envelopes in his correspondence with Aunt Susan from Omaha. No, it was not Aunt Susan; it was you. Each party on the IPA mailing list is the alleged addressee of a non-business communication from Norm Latker enclosed in an HEW postage-free envelope!

What is to be done?

Let us be clear at the outset what need not be done. Norm is an attorney of demonstrated competence; he will doubtless earn more money outside of government than in it. It follows that he has no need for assistance of a personal nature, much as he appreciates the moral support and encouragement which has been lavished upon him to date. He may well institute legal action against HEW. If so, it will be for the purpose of clearing his name, rather than for the purpose of resuming his government career. This he can accomplish without outside help.

What we need to do is to insure that Norm's Federal career has not been sacrificed in vain. HEW has already manifested its vulnerability by its clumsy attempts to camouflage the true reasons underlying Norm's dismissal. So shaky is this edifice of concealment that it will collapse under the pressure of sunlight. We can begin, therefore, by focusing as much light as possible on HEW's actions. Letters to Congressmen and Senators are obvious weapons. Another and perhaps better way would be to generate in-depth media coverage. Your own imagination is the final limitation upon the possible courses of action.



David J. Eden

* Copies of this note are also being distributed to selected individuals whose names do not appear on the IPA mailing list.