

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
OFFICE OF BUDGET AND FINANCE
WASHINGTON, D. C.

MEMORANDUM FOR DR. BRESSMAN

Dear Dr. Bressman:

The reimbursement vouchers from Messrs. N. C. and George N. de Roerich have been received, and in accordance with the regulations of the General Accounting Office they have been forwarded to the Comptroller General for pre-audit. In accordance with the request of the Secretary, I am sending you this memorandum containing suggestions that might be helpful to the Messrs. de Roerich in the preparation of future accounts.

In a preliminary review of these vouchers by the Bureau of Plant Industry, a number of items are noted which are likely to meet with trouble in the audit by the General Accounting Office. If these items are suspended, it is quite probable that some of them will be passed when additional explanations are made. However, this causes delay in reimbursement for expenditures; and unless finally allowed by the General Accounting Office, means a personal loss, as ultimately a full settlement will be required covering all funds advanced. It was inevitable that some of these items would occur, as difficulties are experienced by even the most seasoned employees in handling their reimbursement accounts covering travel under the difficult conditions obtaining in remote parts of the Orient. Below are noted some of the items appearing in the accounts which may be questioned by the Comptroller General.

There are quite a number of expenditures which would appear to come within the purview of Paragraph No. 30 of the Fiscal Regulations, which reads as follows:

"Purchase of Articles of a Personal Nature. --In the absence of specific statutory authority articles of personal equipment shall not be purchased from any appropriation of the department unless the object for which the appropriation involved was made can not be accomplished as expeditiously and satisfactorily from the Government standpoint, without such equipment, and unless the equipment is such as the employee could not reasonably be required to furnish as a part of the personal equipment necessary to enable him to perform the regular duties of the position to which he was appointed or for which his services were engaged."

The foregoing paragraph would apply to such purchases as boots, house coats, raincoats, trousers, stockings, etc. Without a background

of real experience under the difficult conditions in which they are traveling, it is hard for anyone to prepare an accurate explanation which normally would be acceptable to the Comptroller General showing the necessity of these purchases as official equipment. If these items are suspended by the Comptroller General, it may be that the Messrs. de Roerich can furnish explanations which will bring the purchases within the terms of the paragraph of the fiscal regulations quoted above.

In the vouchers there are a number of charges for camp beds and covers, plates and towels, rolling pins, etc. If these items are incident to subsistence, they may not be allowed by the Comptroller General as the per diem of \$6.00 is presumed to cover all subsistence expenses. Charges for food supplies will probably also be questioned on the same basis. It may be, of course, that many of these articles were for purposes other than subsistence, and if so an explanation would clarify the matter.

As a basis for audit, when United States currency is converted into foreign currency, the rate of exchange is required on the receipt. The rate of exchange has not been shown on a good many of the receipts. I quote below Paragraph 90 of the Government Travel Regulations bearing on this question:

"Foreign currency.-Persons traveling in foreign countries should report their expenditures by items, in the money of the country in which made. Each item of expenditure in foreign currency must be converted into United States money at the rate at which the foreign money was obtained. Every time money is converted the traveler should obtain a receipt to be attached to the account, which must show the rate of conversion and the commission charged."

In one of the vouchers was an item for eight railroad tickets, no information being given as to the identity of the persons using the accommodations. This information has always been required by the General Accounting Office. There was also a charge for excess baggage. Paragraph 39 of the Government Travel Regulations reads as follows:

"Excess baggage.-Baggage in excess of the weight or of size greater than carried free by transportation companies will be classed as excess baggage. Unless previously authorized, explanation must be made when submitting claim for reimbursement for excess baggage charges, showing the official necessity therefor. The authorization or a copy thereof must accompany the expense account. All charges for excess baggage must be supported by receipts showing the weight of the baggage and points between which moved."

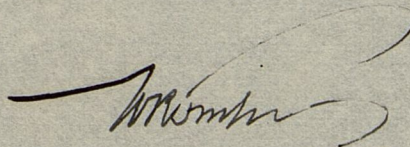
Paragraph 80 (t) provides that if it is impracticable to furnish receipts in any case, an explanation should be submitted. This paragraph reads as follows:

"If it is impracticable to furnish receipts in any case as above required, the failure to do so must be fully explained in the expense account. Mere inconvenience in the matter of taking receipts will not be considered. In no case shall a receipt be taken in duplicate, except as provided in paragraph 12."

Under the Economy Act, we are required to make a deduction of five percent in all wages and salaries paid. Presumably this applies equally to employment abroad under letter of authorization. It is possible, however, that the Comptroller General may not insist on this in connection with foreign travel.

I enclose herewith a sample voucher similar to one given the Messrs. de Roerich before they left on the present trip. The one given them may have been lost incident to the hazards of travel and you may wish to forward this duplicate. The sample receipts may be suggestive and helpful.

Sincerely yours,



Acting Director of Finance.

4

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
OFFICE OF BUDGET AND FINANCE

March 11, 1935

MEMORANDUM FOR CHIEFS OF BUREAUS AND OFFICES.

Supplementing my memorandum of March 1, 1935, inviting attention to decision A-56432, issued by the Comptroller General on February 14, 1935, sustaining a disallowance of \$1,374.50 previously made against E. C. Paxton, of this Department, because of travel on a ship of foreign registry, there is transmitted herewith for your further information a copy of the Comptroller General's decision A-54093, dated February 27, 1935, affirming the disallowance of a claim for \$220.00 made by the Italian Line for the transportation of W. D. Reed, of this Department. It should be noted that in this case the Comptroller General has refused to allow payment to the steamship company for the services rendered in compliance with a Government transportation request and that the company has made demand upon the traveler for payment of the amount from his personal funds.

Particular attention is invited to the Comptroller General's reference to what he apparently considers "failure of administration to make timely decision and arrangements for travel" as well as the traveler's failure to use an American ship which sailed from the same port four days before the foreign ship and eleven days after the decision had been reached, administratively, that the travel was to be performed.

It is suggested that this decision as well as that in the Paxton case, be brought to the attention of all employees of your bureau who may be called upon to go abroad on official business, in order that they may again be warned against traveling on foreign ships in contravention of the requirements of Section 601 of the Merchant Marine Act of May 22, 1928. (45 Stat., 697).

Sincerely yours,

W. A. JUMP
Director of Finance.

Enclosure