
James A. Farley

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ARTICLE
FROM
BOSTON SUNDAY POST

Mr. LANE. Mr. Speaker, under leave to extend my remarks in the RECORD, I wish to include herein an article which appeared in the Boston Sunday Post, Boston, Mass., under date of March 24, 1946. This article was written by Lester Allen:

FARLEY FINE FOR AMERICA—EX-POSTMASTER
GENERAL CHOSEN BY CORRESPONDENTS AS
TYPIFYING SMART, FRIENDLY YANKS
(By Lester Allen)

A group of foreign correspondents, lounging in the lobby of a Portuguese hotel and exchanging small talk of their craft got on the subject of American diplomats and their failure to typify Americans in their representation of the United States Government abroad.

From that topic they inevitably drifted into the subject of the typical American and began nominations of various prominent Americans who would be typical of the whole country and not a particular section of the country. They held that what the country needs is an official roving ambassador, and not one versed in the wiles of diplomacy, or high finance, or foreign trade—but in American good will.

FARLEY WALKS IN

The small talk developed into a wrangle. One by one all the leading figures in the public eye were taken up and rejected. The argument went on long and loudly. The lobby was well populated by refugees and expatriates waiting for transportation to America, all trying to escape from Europe, and all watching the American correspondents good naturedly wrangling over the question of who was a typical American.

At that moment a tall, pink-faced man walked into the lobby, grinned, said, "Hello, fellers," and headed for the elevator. The refugees, as one, turned to watch him. One of them, got up and approached the tall American.

He halted, stuck out his hand and said, "My name's Farley. I used to sell stamps."

In less time than it takes to tell it, a score of refugees had crowded around, and Jim Farley, former Postmaster General of the United States, was being introduced all around. There was nothing perfunctory about it. He was genuinely pleased to meet all of them, and they quite obviously felt that he was doing them an honor.

"That is the man," one correspondent said. "That's the typical American."

Considered apart from his political career, James A. Farley, whose breezy greeting, "My name's Farley. I used to sell stamps," is so typically American, that he is practically a new design for the cartoon figure of Uncle Sam.

Possessed of the most extraordinary memory for faces and names—a talent that makes the average city greeter or hotel manager look like an absent-minded mystic—Jim Farley spreads good will for America wherever he goes.

To watch him abroad, in Ireland, France, Italy, Spain, and Portugal, is a real pleasure. Equipped only with English, Farley manages to charm all comers whether they understand English or not. There is something about the way he sticks out his hand, beams down from the height of 6 feet 2 inches, always smiling, that would charm the most disgruntled bird down from a tree.

CHARMING PERSONALITY

When the soft-drink concern chose him as president of its export subsidiary the directors certainly got a great bargain. Even if the people in the export markets didn't like the drink, which they do, they would drink it anyway after Jim Farley had turned his sunny smile in their direction.

It works on all ages and both sexes. It works amid the most formidably correct surroundings—as, for example—the Quirinale palace in Rome, and it works back of the tracks in Limerick.

No hunter for big shots, wherever Farley passed in Europe he was sure to find some lowly GI who would come up to him, remind him that he met him 5 or 6 years ago in Des Moines, or San Francisco or Houston, and Farley would say, "Come on along to lunch with me. Tell me what you have been doing."

At the Quirinale, for example, at a reception given by Crown Prince Umberto, Governor General of Italy, a scene of staggering magnificence was prepared for the first big reception staged by the Italian royal house since Italy's defeat. There was more glitter and gold lace, more ceremony and more calculated magnificence than Hollywood ever was able to crowd into a superspectacle.

But within 15 minutes it began to be doubtful who was giving the reception, Crown Prince Umberto or Jim Farley. Towering above even the court guards, who are chosen for their imposing appearance, Farley was mobbed by Italian notables and by members of foreign diplomatic missions in Rome.

One member of the Italian royal family stared at the big American for a moment and wanted to know who he was. "An American, no doubt," she said. And she took off to join the throng around Farley.

MY NAME IS YOLANDA

"My name is Farley," he said. "I used to sell stamps."

"My name is Yolanda," she replied. "I used to be a countess."

"There does not seem to be any way we can swap jobs," Farley chuckled.

With Jim Farley meeting people is not a mere formality. He meets them, makes friends of them, and sooner or later corresponds with them. The mails from whatever place he pauses for a day or two are weighted down with missives to his legion of friends.

Many political wiseacres thought that when his long association with the late President Franklin D. Roosevelt came to an end that Jim Farley's career as a friend of everyone would come to an end. Actually this circumstance widened his circle of friends.

"I like friends," he explained. "Not acquaintances. Acquaintances are people who don't give a damn about you. Friends stay with you forever."

A great deal of his charm for complete strangers he meets in and out of the United States is the soul-satisfying resemblance he bears to the typical American. He is what the rest of the world would like to believe all Americans are. There is some of the breeziness of the West, some of the courtly dignity of the South, some of the prudence of New England blended into his character.

With Irish antecedents he is not a professional Irishman. He is a professional American in the best sense of the world. When the tide began to set against American popularity abroad it was a grave mistake not to draft Jim Farley for the task of circulating around Europe to mend our fences.

Son of a brick manufacturer in Rockland County, N. Y., Jim Farley's only elective office was town clerk of Stony Point, N. Y. He has always been, throughout his political career, a politician's politician. Now 58 years old, Jim Farley manages to crowd into a single day the contacts that would take the average man a year to make.

CAN REALLY SELL

His background of 15 years as a salesman for the United States Gypsum Co. gave him the flair for meeting people and establishing himself in a few minutes' conversation as a

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man to know. They tell a story about him when he was a salesman which illustrates the point. A lumber dealer in northern New York State was overloaded with gypsum products, so much of an overload, in fact, that the other lines he carried were suffering. Finally he said to Farley, "I'm afraid I'll have to ask you not to call on me for a few months. I've bought too much of your line and I can't sell it."

Farley settled down in the town for 2 weeks, put on an intensive selling campaign for the lumber dealer, and unloaded all the excess and, incidentally, wrote a new order.

Throughout South America, where American popularity is not too good at the present moment, Farley has hundreds of friends, all of them boosters for Farley. He made the friends just being himself. He has the knack of being interested in even the most commonplace things other people say, and he never misses the right felicitous response.

His knowledge of international affairs could never be called profound if analyzed for the special kind of intuition which is demanded of diplomats, but, for getting right down to cases and fundamentals he is hard to match.

He believes that we must import goods from foreign countries in order that foreign countries can secure dollar credits to purchase goods from us, and that the sooner we start doing it the better it is going to be for world economy.

One of the common faults of Americans abroad is their habit of apologizing or seeking to explain the shortcomings of American policy, American customs or American thinking. Jim Farley doesn't apologize for anything, or seek to explain anything. He has a personal belief that he is typically American, that foreigners meeting him can take him or leave him—and that explanations are left-handed apologies. He feels we have demonstrated enough good will not to be required to explain or apologize for anything.

Farley is the same man with the same character and the same sincere friendliness whether he is in Buenos Aires, Madrid, Rome, Paris, London, or Dublin. And people who are striving to know more about America recognize him instantly as Mr. America. He is the same man you meet in Tulsa, Okla., Fort Kent, Me.; Atlanta, Ga.; or New York.

Just plain Farley—"I used to sell stamps."