

G Brown Goode

SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION

SPENCER F. BAIRD, Secretary
S. P. LANGLEY, Assistant Secretary,
in charge of Exchanges, Publications and Library
G. BROWN GOODE, Assistant Secretary,
in charge of U. S. National Museum

OFFICE OF ASSISTANT SECRETARY

IN CHARGE OF U. S. NATIONAL MUSEUM

Washington, October 23, 1887.

My dear Dr Gray:

A strong impulse moves me to write to you today - perhaps stimulated by the knowledge that Prof. Langley will see you this week, and that you will be talking over together the affairs of the Institution.

I want to say, first of all, that I am personally very desirous to see Professor Langley made Secretary. I hope that he will see his way clear to take the place. I fear, however, that he has some hesitation, forseeing as he does that the work will be heavy, and its details irksome, while it will be practically impossible for him to exclude himself from work in his special researches. At the same time, I hope he will ^{be deeply impressed with} ~~see what a field~~

the opportunity which the Secretaryship offers, for helping others. I have a strong personal liking for Professor Langley, since I have come to know him, and am anxious to help him to the extent of my power, and to do all I can to lighten the difficulties of his position. I fully realize what a sacrifice he will make in giving up Allegheny, but I fancy he will get very much interested in the work here if he tries it.

I wish it were practicable to have the matter decided soon. January seems a long time away and we really have had no one to direct our work here ~~since~~ for many months. - to give it. I mean, that constant personal supervision which only a resident director can give. Of course Prof. Langley as Secretary will ~~handle~~ ^{act} ~~matter~~ much more fully than he has felt inclined to do as Acting Secretary, and I shall be glad to feel that the rudder is in a strong hand.

The Smithsonian is of course all right, or will be after the new Secretary shall have come into power. Congress cannot materially cripple it, and a little vigorous reconstruction of the staff will greatly increase its efficiency. It really stands about where Prof. Hensy left it, for Prof Baird seemed to feel great delicacy about making any changes.

The Museum can, I think, be kept on its present course. It is increasing daily in popularity, and its usefulness both to science and education ought to become greater each year. - and its influence ought to reach out over the whole country. Its great danger is in its tendency to expansion. More collections demand more buildings, - more buildings more money. Larger appropriations make it more conspicuous and more likely to attract, or to political interference. It seems to me that if it should be separated from the Smithsonian, both Museum and Smithsonian would lose immensely, - and Science in equal degree.

The opportunities for general usefulness which the Secretaryship affords.

Independently of the fact that Professor Langley was Professor Baird's candidate for the succession, I am impressed with the idea that he would be an excellent man for the place. This is the result of my own observation of him, ^{and the impression made by} ~~and~~ of many long talks which we have had together. I do not know of any one else who seems to me at all so well fitted.

I only wish that the matter might be settled soon. It is many months since we have had a strong hand at the helm, for Professor Baird had done little for a year before his death and Prof. Langley as acting secretary, and absent much of the time at that, has of course not felt called upon to act very vigorously. Will it be necessary to wait till January. It would be unfortunate, for although our ship is ~~fast~~ in no danger of stranding, she is "hor to" and it is

discouraging not to be making any progress.

I wish I might talk to you about the situation here. The feeling of personal bereavement is very great with us. For Professor Band was almost like a father, and for sixteen years I have been with him almost ^{every day} ~~daily~~ - often several hours a day - and have had a share in almost all of his labors, not only in the museum, but in the Irish Commission, with which I was never connected officially, but which I gave much time to, largely because he was interested in it, and thought that I could help him. I can't tell you how I feel the loss of him, not only as a personal friend, but as a strong self-reliant helpful superior officer.

I do not know how far it will be possible to sustain the two interests to which he was especially devoted - the Museum and the Irish Commission - on the same increasing scale of usefulness. Sometimes it looks almost hopeless, especially in the case of the

latter, for his personal influence in Washington was enormous and was the growth of thirty-years. Fidelity to his memory and intent in his only will however lead me to do all in my power to pursue all the important features of his work.

I feel very lonesome and helpless, for I have no one to whom I can go for advice and direction, as it used to go to Professor Baird; while the people in the Museum and the Fish Commission, all expect me to advise with and direct them.

I write about these matters to you because I know how much Professor Baird used to talk with you concerning his plans and hopes for the Museum, and the Fish Commission. You are moreover the eldest member of the Board of Regents, and the only valuable among them all. You are in fact the ^{only} person besides Prof. Langley, with whom I feel that is really proper that I should speak of all these things.

The organization of the Museum is very thorough but
the methods of administration are of necessity very
complicated. It is unlike any other museum in the world,
since its growth depends entirely upon the efforts of
its officers, and of ~~the~~ correspondents, there being
practically no fund for purchase of collections.
The pay-roll of the museum is ~~for the~~
~~less than~~ ^{much} ~~as~~ greater in proportion to its income
than that of most museums which are managed in the
same degree. It is this very peculiarity which makes
it so appropriate and adjunct to an institution for
the increase and diffusion of knowledge, for it
places under the control of the Secretary of the
Smithsonian Institution, a thoroughly organized staff
of experts and investigators, representing every department
of zoology, botany, geology, and anthropology.

Prof. Langley takes a very broad view of the relations
of the museum to the Institution, and under his direction

as Secretary, I believe a satisfactory administration of its affairs would be practicable.

The Fish Commission is the third interest. For this I am, it seems more directly responsible, and it is a great source of anxiety to me. It is really a great scientific organism, without any organization and without a head which it can rightfully claim for its own. Its ~~is~~ ~~has~~ interests and those of the museum intersecting in manifold ways, and indeed, it really controls some very important departments of the Museum, — the fishes, and the marine mollusks. and the publications of the Museum and the Fish Commission have very much in common.

The "Albatross", which is now better equipped than the "Challenger" was and which is just starting for the Pacific, with a staff of these naturalists is ^{capable of} ~~a great~~ of great usefulness to science, in connection, legitimately with its work for the fisheries. Then, above all, there

is that great scientific status at Woods Hole - and
in the establishment of this sort of the scientific
schools have had a share. Harvard, Princeton,
Johns Hopkins and William among others, and
it is just ready for work.

I might write a great deal about the Com-
mission, but you are familiar with its history, and can
easily understand the nature of my perplexities.

Of course the main question is, how to maintain
the scientific character of the Commission, while at
the same time continuing to do justice to its
practical work, - how to save the collection
part and prospects to Science, and the
Smithsonian, and how to secure the best
results generally from this great creation of
Prof. Baird. I wish there might be some
subordination of the U. S. Commission to the
Smithsonian, but don't know how far this is possible.

~~But~~ I am sure that Congress will make some changes
in the law organizing the Commission. I expect they
will make the Commissioner's a salaried position.
I have little doubt that I can have the place
if I want it, for the President has as much as
told me so. But I do not want to leave
the Smithsonian. The increase of salary is not
a temptation. I have given twenty years to
preparation for museum work and for fifteen
years I have been studying the National Museum
and the methods of administration, and with Professor
Baileys constant advice and help. He exhorted
me to continue in the museum, and did all he
could to place the United Commission in other hands.
I honestly believe, though it may not be modest to say it,
that the Museum needs my services for some years yet
to come, and that by reason of my training and experience
I can do for it what no one else can do at present.

That was Professor Baird's idea too, and I feel that I ought to be guided by his judgment. Furthermore I feel a much deeper interest in the Museum, than in the York Commission. And I have not strength or capacity to continue in charge of both.

But if I let go of the York Commission it is likely that it will go to the politicians — And if I take it, and leave the museum, the very fact that it is no longer directly connected with the Smithsonian will cripple it scientifically on me.

Altogether I am in great perplexity, and I wish you could tell me what I ought to do. I am working night and day, trying to save the commission from going to pieces and expect to succeed, temporarily at least. — but I can't carry it alone much longer. I shall carry it however until I am certain that the wisdom and purity of Prof Baird's administration of it

affairs as so demonstrated that his meaning cannot suffer.

At one time I was afraid that the Commission would follow in the wake of the Coast Survey. - which would have been a blow to all the scientific institutions of the country. The President however decided to let the Commission mortgage its affairs from within, rather than order an mortgage by outsiders, and the Commission is going to show itself worthy of his confidence.

I want to say, definitely, that I accepted this responsibility of the Commissionship of Graham, solely because I considered it my duty, as an officer of the Smithsonian Institution to do so, and acting under the advice of the Acting Secretary.

Professor Seungley is very kind and helpful in the matter, and has talked it over fully, and I hope he will talk with you about it - but I don't yet

see my own course of conduct clear before me.

Prof. Langley seems to think, or I judge that by
thoughts, though he does not say so directly, that I
am likely to be drawn away from the Museum
by the York Commission.

I do not feel willing to make this sacrifice
even for the York Commission. — that is I ~~do~~
~~not~~ prize the position of Assistant Secretary, with its
partial freedom from responsibility, much more than
I should the independent position of Commissioner
of Fisheries — especially since the Museum work is
that in which, above all others, I am interested,
and since I feel it a privilege and an honor
to be an officer of the Smithsonian Institution.

I do not expect you to answer this letter at length
of course. I wanted to speak to you of these
matters, and perhaps you may think it best to

mention some of them to Prof Langley when you see him.

If you feel disposed to give me any advice I shall be more than grateful, and I will gladly write more at length concerning any special plans of the situation if you wish it.

In conclusion, I feel that I must say again that it seems to me that the interests of the Smithsonian and the science demand that a Secretary shall be elected at the earliest practicable moment.

Yours very sincerely
G. B. Woodhouse



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