Fischer, George
1946-51

Fischer

Dear George-

I was very glad to hear from you & to know what you are doing in medical, what you can contribute. I am also interested in what you have to say about ADA.

It will not be possible for me to go to the convention of the National Student Organ as I am so busy.

Congratulations on receiving the Harvard fellowship - many thanks for your kind

words. I do appreciate them.

If you are in this vicinity, please let me know as I should very much like to see you —

V. Ford

Copy marked part for Joe Lash

George Fischer
P.O.Box 211
Madison 1, Wisconsin

June 2, 1947

Dear Mrs. Roosevelt:

for many weeks I have had on my desk a note saying just "Letter to Mrs R" but I was always torn between school work, a feeling that I may have too little to report, and worrying about your I am sure still bulky correspondence. But now I wish to report the final fruition of a project, in whose early beginnings at Campobello in 1941 you had a part. I have just learned that I have been accepted--with a fellowship--to a new special Harvard graduate program on the Soviet Union, which after about two years leads to a "regional" Masterm of Arts degree. Since returning to the University of Wisconsin after the army I have developed an entirely new interest in academic work, and have concentrated on mostly independent work in Russian history. I will finish my undergraduate work here and start at Harvard this September. Alongside with undeniably serious differences of appreach much of our present difficulties with Russia lie in the sphere of sheer lack of knowledge and sound information. The idea of teaching in this field, and thus contributing a tangible bit towards future normalized cooperation has given me more a lift than I have had for many years. In a way it is a blessing of college, especially out here in a small town with much less extreme spokesmen and tempers, that detachment and moderation becomes easier and more attractive...

When I saw you last summer after coming back from Germany I promised to send you a report about things as they are in Wisconsin, but I see that you have just been through Milwaukee. As you have probably heard, we have gone through a painful and no doubt politically tragic split connected with the LaFollette brothers. Their conviction that only through the Republican party, traditionally THE party in Wisconsin since its inception, could progressives regain power here was not accepted by a sufficiently large group of their former and potential followers and adjutants. It lead not only to Bob's defeat in 1946 but to a general conclusion around here that a comeback for either Bob or Phil LaFollette is quite unlikely for years to come, if ever. As I said, the split was painful and involved much acrimoneous and deeply felt emnity among progressive and liberal old-timers and fighters. This breach has not been healed yet, and it would be wrong to assume that ALL of the best or most of Wisconsin's liberal strength have gone into the our Young Turk Democratic party. Similarly, the ADA has so far attracted almost only Democratic leaders and pro-Democratic labor and coop groups. Henry Wallace's figure draws much interest and potential support from traditionally grass-root and certainly not 'pink" Wisconsin progressives, and I have heard several

criticisms of the ADA for what was thought to be its overly anti-Wallace and pro-Truman stand on the issue of the Truman Doctrine and overconcentrating on the undeniably important Communist question. More specifically, I have heard criticisms of the ADA national board recently refusing to endorse Savage in the state of Washington, and also of the ADA's seeming lagging behind the PCA in the question of imaginateness and skill in its literature, organizational work, and organizing on the local level. I myself have concentrated very much on my studying and also teaching Russian at the university, and so havent been active in any outside group. I have taken much to heart what you, Justice Frankfurter and James Wechsler onee told us at Campobello about working through the Democratic party, and think that when and if I have again the time I will try my hand at precinct work in the Democratic party, probably in Cambridge, Mass, before the 1948 elections.

The combination of a conservative political trend and an influx of veterans (a 100% increase here) have meant at Wisconsin as elsewhere a lowering of teaching quality. It is perhaps more notable and discussed here because Wisconsin has prided itself for its academic experimentation and breadth of its ideas and vision. Traditionally linked closely to the state and the legislature (for in progressive periods this meant the ability to quickly liberalize the faculty...) the university is now handicapped both by actual budget cuts which make it unusually underpaid in faculty salaries and in a general spirit of retreat and apprehension on the part of the remaining independent-minded professors. There is a definite trend, as I imagine elsewhere, towards the "paying"professions like law, engineering, and commerce, and the Liberal Arts more and more are openly sneered at as useless and outmoded gibberish... There is little interest in outside activities, and in the past year only the careless and obvious strength of pro-Communists in the University AVC gave that group a spurt of activity at the end of which non-Communists--remaining moderate and avoiding any public "red baiting"--obtained all offices.

One "outside activity" that has interested me is the current attempt to organize a new nation-wide non-partisan American college group, and especially its plans to stimulate exchange and travells of students between different countries. The group, tentatively called National Student Organization, is to have its constituional convention here in Madison this summer. As in the case of the International Student Assembly in Washington in 1942 I am a delegate from Wisconsin. I have heard that you may come to speak to the NSO convention. If so I will try to look you up, unless you seem too harried by others.

I am a constant reader of your columne, Mrs Roosevelt, and want to tell you with all sincerity that I get as much inspiration, encouragement and enjoyment from those words as I do anywhere in these often not encouraging or promising times. I am sure there are many like me who are deeply grateful to you for keeping it up. May you continue to be well for many years to carry on your good work.

Yours, George

George Fi[illegible]
P. O. Box [illegible]
Madison [illegible] Wisconsin

August 10, 1947

Dear Mrs. Roosevelt:

yesterday I participated by accident in an all-day conference in Eau Claire in northern Wisconsin called to start a grass-root Wallace-for-President movement within the Democratic party, and wanted to write you about it.

The conference was called by a political unknown--a high school teacher from Milwaukee who claimed to have no connection at all with any other national or state groups--and was enthusiastically backed by the president of the Wisconsin Farmers Union, Ken Hones. Hones is an old Wisconsin Progressive, a rural radical of the most militant and effective type, and a deep admirer of Mr. Roosevelt. He, as well as the others there, mostly older grass root farmer leaders who had fought many battles under the LaFollettes and the New Deal, exhibited a great personal loyalty to Wallace as the New Deal's friend of the farmer, as the one bright light in today's gloom, and as a victim of a current "red" smear by the traditionally dishonest and viscious press.

Neither/nor an old ex-socialist labor leader now editor of a farmers union newspaper also present were able determine whether the Milwaukee person calling the meeting was either a member or a sympathizer of the Communist party. I was deeply impressed by the enthusiasm and determination to do political leg work to capture the local delegates to the Democratic national convention in the "sleeper" spring election in April here, although the conference was poorly conducted and no good follow-up procedure established.

I wanted to write to you about this for there may be many like myself, who have associated Wallace's candidacy too closely with his most recent "indiscretions" both organizationally and in some of his foreign-policy statements. The meeting yesterday made me aware of a seemingly entirely indigenous pro-Wallace sentiment, and also of the fact that the non-Wallace liberal Democrats, at least in Wisconsin, have failed to prvide any leadership. Privately the attitude has been that there is"nothing left"but back Truman and that Wallace is too compromised now to rally much party support. The important thing to me seems to be not whether either of these two last assumptions are correct, but that the liberals in the Democratic party may by their default both strengthen any more conservative traditional leadership in the party and the Communists, who will appeal to the action-seeking progressives through groups like the PCA. Therefore my feeling is that liberal Democratic leaders like yourself should, if possible, publically adopt a clear policy both

in regards to convention support in the election of delegates--that is Truman, blank, or a man like Douglas or Arnall--and the relation to local pro-Wallace moves, I realize that this is quite a delicate matter, but much discouragement and new expectations in a liberalized Democratic party afoot, the failure to provide leadership for the large number of non-Wallace liberals may push those people into either apathy, extreme groups, or at presently undesirable third-party schemes.

Sending this letter to Campobello in accordance with the latest date-lines of My Day. These have reminded me each time of the summer of 1941, and our enjoyable ISS institute there. I am told, by the way, of a new reorganization of ISS under pressure from the present student leaders, aimed largely at Dr. Kohn and his distrust of Communists which was said to have been translated into a desire to prevent major student initiative within ISS here...Now, according to this Bryn Mawr girl who was one of the student leaders involved, the college students will have a majority on the governing board and many of the adult group have resigned. Dont know at all whether this is, however, true. But the report by itself seemed to be interesting.

With four beauteous lakes surrounding Madison, the city is--alas--quite muggy in times of heat. But school must go on, so we sweat and study...

With hopes that all is well with you and with best regards to mutual friends--especially Miss Thompson,

Yours,

George Fischer