

Hannegan, Robert  
1945-49

Robert Hannegan

June 3, 1945

Dear Mr. Hannegan:

I have been thinking a good deal about the political situation as I view it from New York State. I know that my husband felt very strongly that we have to carry the Congressional election in 1946 in order to win in 1948. If Governor Dewey is not defeated the chances are that we will be defeated in 1948, so what happens to him is vitally important.

I notice a number of things. Governor Dewey certainly learned from the last campaign that he could not ignore the colored vote and, at the expense of some of his most conservative support, he is now playing up very strongly to the minority groups in this State and also to the liberals.

On the other hand, the impression is spreading that the Democratic Party as far as President Truman is concerned, is doing a good job from the liberal point of view in most of the things which he has done, but that in Congress, particularly in the Senate, we are still going to have a strong fight by the conservative southern Democratic Senators on our hands. If they filibuster on the FEPC and on the Poll Tax, I think we will have a big group of people feeling that there is a chance even though there is a conservative monied power in the Republican Party, that the Republican Party may be more liberal from the point of view of racial and religious questions and we may lose a certain number of people to that party who would ordinarily be Democrats, but who want to serve notice that there is one issue on which they will vote with the party which they consider is doing the right thing on that issue.

You may find others who will feel that neither party with the conservative elements can be trusted and that both parties are controlled by these elements, and the time has come to form a third party. That third party, of course, will not win, but on the other hand it will defeat the Democratic Party because we know the Democratic Party can not win unless it has the liberal vote and some liberal Republican elements voting with it.

I know that you feel strongly, and I know that Mr. Fitzpatrick in New York feels strongly, that we must build up the Democratic Party organization throughout the country. I am entirely in agreement with this because we have to have people to put on campaigns and to do the work not only of the campaigns, but the in-between campaign work. However, the day when

organization such as Tammany in New York and Prendergast in Kansas City could really swing elections has gone by. The people want to know what the things are for which the party stands, and they want to be convinced that those are going to be put through. Mr. Kelly in Chicago has a good organization, but if Mr. Kelly had not played fair with a great many people he would not hold his organization. That holds good of practically all of your Democratic Party groups today. So while these organizations are vitally important to the Party, I think you have to add something which has often been neglected, namely, a program which meets the needs and wins the approval of the rank and file of the voters.

At the present time, that would include many things concerning veterans, health, social security, education, and above all, the sense that we are moving forward in our foreign policy to a peaceful world and in our economic policy to a realization of responsibility for economic situations throughout the world which would affect our own in the long run.

I know, of course, it is rather presumptuous of me to talk to you about the general political situation which you and the others must have considered already, probably in much more detail and with far better powers of observation than I can possibly bring to it at the present time.

There is one phase of the whole picture with which I think I am more familiar and more closely connected than many of the people whom you know well, namely, the situation of the women who are not the regular party workers, but who are the women you have to have with you to win in campaigns. Many of them are feeling that while Miss Perkins was not particularly popular during the last few years as Secretary of Labor, still she was a woman in the Cabinet. There will be no woman in the Cabinet and there has been no suggestion so far of any woman or women in comparably important positions. Most of the women whom you have to have with you to win elections, do not expect positions, but they like to feel that some women are in the policy making positions and I think that they must feel that this is not just for a brief time but permanently.

I know many men are made a little uncomfortable by having women in these positions, but I think the time has come to face the fact that you have to win as many women's votes as you do men's votes and that the Democratic Party probably has more strength among women if it stands as the liberal party and the party of human rights than it has among the men.

From the point of view of doing something for our biggest minority group - the colored people - I think you will have to make some good appointments to commissions where you choose a man because he is a good man and has ability, and it just happens he is colored which you forget about in the work which he does.

I think the administration will have to try to get the FEPC and the Poll Tax vote out on the floor of the Senate and not allow it to be killed by a filibuster. If you can get a vote on these two issues, it is one step forward and the men who vote against them are known and their position is out in the open. A fight can be made on them on their record in voting. If these two issues are killed without a record vote and then there is discrimination in employment and the economic situation becomes unfair to racial and religious groups, I think we will be in danger of creating a lack of unity in the nation as a whole which will affect the Democratic Party more than it will affect the Republican Party.

I will be interested to know what you think of these points because, of course, I am interested in the success of the Democratic Party, and I am equally interested in the progress of our nation which transcends party lines.

Very sincerely yours,

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*Hannegan's*

August 9, 1945

My dear Mr. Postmaster General:

There seems to be some lack of understanding in the Hyde Park Post Office about the use of Mrs. Roosevelt's frank. They are under the impression that it includes registered mail, parcel post, and insured mail, and they would like to have a letter from you giving them instructions as to just what should go free. Would you be good enough to write to Mr. Arthur Smith, the Postmaster, and send me a copy so that I, too, will know?

Very sincerely yours,

Secretary.

Hon. Robert E. Hannegan  
The Postmaster General  
Washington, D.C.