

Flynn, Edward J.

1945-51

Flynn, E.

EDWARD J. FLYNN
60 EAST 42ND STREET
NEW YORK

July 31, 1946.

Mrs. Franklin D. Roosevelt,
Hyde Park,
New York.

Dear Mrs. Roosevelt:

I have read the letter that you have forwarded to me in your note of July 19th, and I am returning it to you. I have sent a copy to the Cardinal and asked him to look into it,

With every good wish,

Sincerely yours,

Ed Flynn

EDWARD J. FLYNN

EFJ:K
Enc.

*Dear P
J. W. [unclear]
for [unclear]
for [unclear]
for [unclear]
for [unclear]*

ORIGINAL RETIRED FOR PRESERVATION

275 Las Flores Drive
Bakersfield, California
July 12, 1946

Mrs. Franklin D. Roosevelt
Hyde Park
New York

Dear Mrs. Roosevelt:

Although you cannot be expected to have a direct concern in every congressional district and the elections therein, I feel sure that you will be interested in the attached photostatic copy of a letter which was read in the Catholic Churches in Kern County the Sunday before the primary election in California on June 4.

Aside from the issue which is involved of the direct action by the church in elections, there are many circumstances surrounding the reading of this letter which I feel sure the Catholic Church would deplore and which I feel should be called to the attention of higher Church officials so that no recurrence of such action shall be permitted. You will note that none of the candidates mentioned is directly called a communist, but the implication is that all are controlled by communists or subversive organizations and that no member of the Church should vote for any of them. You undoubtedly know Attorney General Kenny and Congressman Patterson and can determine the truth about them. Mr. Terry who ran against Mr. Alfred J. Elliott for the Democratic nomination for congressman and Mr. Lewis, the only Democrat running for the State Assembly from Kern County, definitely are not communists. They are both liberals devoted to the American form of government and espousing the principles for which your husband stood. Mr. Terry is a teacher and public school administrator, a veteran of World War I, and was a Red Cross Field Director in Europe during World War II. Mr. Lewis is a farmer. Both of them had C. I. O. endorsement and apparently the C. I. O. is the "subversive organization" to which the letter refers. The People's World published in San Francisco recommended the election of Mr. Terry and Mr. Kenny among others, but how the People's World ever heard of Mr. Terry is a mystery to him as he had no contact with them whatsoever.

The circumstances surrounding the writing of the letter are open to the suspicion of political manipulation. A meeting of some members of the Catholic Church was held with the fathers at the instigation primarily of Mr. Thomas A. Werdel, Republican Assemblyman from Kern County in the California Legislature, who is not running for re-election and whose activities in the last year have aroused wide criticism throughout the state. At this meeting, a committee was formed to carry on the work against communism, but some members of the committee were never notified of any subsequent meetings. There is some reason to believe that the letter was written by Mr. Werdel and a very few other men and that the fathers were completely deceived by the information given them.

At any rate, no attempt was made to contact the candidates named in the letter and to hear their side of the case. As I say, the letter was

read in the churches the Sunday before the Tuesday election and the candidates knew nothing about it until Monday evening. Should they have heard about it immediately, there would not have been time to counteract it even by radio, since the stations want political scripts twenty-four hours in advance and the business offices are closed on Sundays. The letter has, therefore, all the aspects of the well known, last minute political trick which I am sure the Catholic Church would not countenance. You will note that the implication is that Bishop Scher endorsed the formation of the Association for Political Honesty and the letter though the actual wording is that Bishop Scher endorsed the plans of the Association to give facts about candidates who oppose the "teachings of Mother Church." Since the letter was devised secretly and without an attempt to get all the facts, it can hardly be described as honest.

Mr. Lewis won the Democratic nomination, but Mr. Terry was defeated by the slim margin of 731 votes. We have some evidence to indicate that the influence of this letter provided that margin. The real issue of Mr. Terry's campaign was his advocacy of the Bureau of Reclamation as the agency to carry on the work of the Central Valley Project and the retention of the 160-acre limitation as applied to the use of water made available by such work. A big issue in Mr. Lewis' campaign was his active work on behalf of the rights of minorities and his espousal of a state F. E. P. C.

There has been an unfavorable reaction here to the use of the Church in such a political maneuver not only by liberal Democrats but also by both Protestant and Catholic conservatives who were active in the campaign against Mr. Terry and Mr. Lewis. One Catholic Republican lawyer said to me, a Protestant Democrat, that the Catholic Church had prospered and grown strong in the United States where it had stayed out of politics and that he had some apprehension about the possible consequences of political action by the Church. Aside from such considerations, the untruth of the implications in the letter will surely be deplored by the Church which could not want to be identified with a small reactionary group which used the Church to attain its own political ends by fair means or foul and thereby put the Church in the position of opposing liberal candidates whatever might be these candidates' devotion to the American principles of government.

Do you feel, therefore, that you could call this matter to the attention of the high prelates of the Catholic Church whom you know and ask their consideration of action on their part to prevent the issuance in the name of the Church of any such secret, one-sidedly conceived political matter in the future. If you think it wise, you might bring this matter to the attention of Mr. Robert Hannegan who will not fail to notice that all of the candidates mentioned in the letter are Democrats.

I hope that I have not imposed upon your time by writing such a long letter, but the presentation of the facts of the matter necessitated its length. Anything you can do will be very much appreciated by many people in this county, liberal and conservative, Catholic and Protestant, who are concerned about the possible attack on the traditional separation of church and state in the United States.

With kindest personal regards.

Sincerely yours,

Joseph J. Conte

Mrs. Joseph J. Conte

Dear Father:

We have written His Excellency, Bishop Seher, outlining our program of combatting Communism, and soliciting his approval. We have just received his full endorsement along with his suggestion that we adopt the name "Association for Political Honesty".

A definite policy has been adopted to the effect that we will not endorse any candidate for any political office. Our function, approved by His Excellency, will be to advise all Catholics the facts regarding any candidate for public office who opposes the teachings of Mother Church. Inasmuch as you can supply the only means now available of reaching Catholics before next Tuesday, we respectfully request that you have this letter read at all Masses on Sunday, June 2.

The Association for Political Honesty has been created to study recent worldwide dishonest and deceptive political practices whereby subversive organizations and individuals, through false political reports, seek to overthrow existing governments.

The Congress of the United States and the Legislature of the State of California have appropriated large sums of money for the investigation of the activities of such individuals and organizations and the Federal Bureau of Investigation is making a complete study of the subject and the above mentioned investigations have identified certain political personages in California as being closely identified with subversive political groups, including communist front and other totalitarian organizations.

It has been the observation of this Association as a result of its study that any person who receives the active support of such subversive organizations or individuals seem to be under their complete control in any legislative body or political office and except for the support given to such individuals by subversive organizations and their close identification with such groups, it is virtually impossible to determine whether such individuals for political office are definitely members of such organizations. However, due to the present worldwide pattern of the activities of subversive organizations in an effort to confuse the voting public, this committee respectfully suggests that any candidate whose campaign is actively supported and carried on by organizations that are identified by the above mentioned investigations as being subversive in nature should be critically reviewed by patriotic American voters. At the present time, we suggest the following persons campaigning for California State and National offices as being worthy of close scrutiny because of their subversive support:

Robert W. Kenny, candidate for Governor of California;

Ellis E. Patterson, candidate for United States Senator from California;

John G. Terry, candidate for Congress from the Fifteenth District;

Joe Lewis, candidate for the California Assembly, Thirty-ninth District (Kern County).

Sincerely,
ASSOCIATION FOR POLITICAL HONESTY

J. B. Spellacy, Chairman