JOHNSON
[M-Z]

The University of Chicago
CHICAGO 37, ILLINOIS
Department of History

I can't [illegible] Ex. Com

May 20, 1946

I can't give permission
Suggest you write
Earle Loomis who
120 Bway
is acting
for executors

Mrs. Franklin D. Roosevelt
Hyde Park
New York

Dear Mrs. Roosevelt:

In March, 1947, Henry Holt will publish my biography of William Allen White. It is based primarily on his unpublished letters, and I have had the fullest co-operation of the White family in this project. Every once in awhile I quote from letters written to him. In 1943, the President, through Mr. Early granted me permission to quote some of the President's letters to Mr. White in my book, The Battle Against Isolation. I enclose these quotes which I already published along with some new ones that I would very much like to use in my biography of Mr. White. Could you grant me permission to quote this material? It would help my biography immensely.

Sincerely,

Walter Johnson

Walter Johnson

WJ:hy

White's support of much of the President's program during 1933 was gratefully received by Roosevelt, who wrote the country editor that "It gives me a great deal of pleasure to know that you are with us in these strenuous times - - -"

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attention to myself. I can get plenty of publicity any time I want it doing conventional things. But because it seemed to me that some one ought to knock a hot liner . . . I don't want any rewards for my expressions, my explosions, my snorts of rage and joy. I have had my fun as I went along. And I suppose I have persisted politically, not in spite of what seemed to be bad breaks at the time, but because time has generally justified them."

White's boost for La Guardia so incensed John Hamilton, the National chairman of the Republican party, that Hamilton refused to appoint White as the Kansas member of a new policy committee on party affairs. The Kansas Congressional delegation, Alf Landon, and the New York Republican organization urged the White appointment but Hamilton refused. Commented White to Herbert Hoover: ". . . it indicates the general idea of the Republican organization toward reasonably liberal Republicans. But maybe I am not reasonably liberal!"[1]

Although the Old Guard might dislike him, the high regard in which White was held by many leaders in American life and by the general public was demonstrated in December, 1937, when he underwent an operation at the Mayo Clinic. A host of telegrams and letters descended upon Rochester expressing hope for White's early recovery. President Roosevelt, for instance, wired that he hoped White soon would be back at his writing "for we all need to jog people into speeding up their evolutionary process of thinking."[2] During the next year, some of White's editorials on the New Deal especially delighted the President. He wrote White on June 14, 1938, after one exceptionally able one and asked, "Can't you bribe the New York Times and Herald Tribune to run them occasionally?" At the annual White House press conference of the American Society

1. January 18, 1938.
2. January 17, 1938.

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that a better prepared Germany would soon launch a devastating blow at the western European countries. If Germany succeeded in defeating France and England, the United States would be faced with a triumphant Germany in the Atlantic and a triumphant Japan in the Pacific.

Very disturbing, too, was the attack that Russia launched on Finland shortly after Germany's destruction of Poland. White's sympathies, like those of most Americans, were definitely with Finland. The Gazette lent editorial support to Herbert Hoover's Finnish Relief Commission, and White urged the American people to help Finland short of war.[1] What was not clear in 1939, but which became obvious after Germany attacked Russia in June, 1941, was that Russia desired strategic outposts in Finland for protection against an inevitable German assault. Had Russia not taken the Karelian Isthmus from Finland and constructed defensive positions, Leningrad would have fallen to the Germans and the course of the war might have been drastically altered. Finland was in an impossible position. Leaders like Baron Mannerheim had a passionate hatred of Russia and Russia, which once had controlled Finland, was considered by most Finns as their nation's most dangerous foe. When Russia asked for bases in 1939, Finland felt that it had no choice but to fight.

The Emporia editor was gravely concerned over the complacency and apathy of the American people toward the epoch making changes taking place in Europe. President Roosevelt, too, was distrubed over this very same problem. "I need a few helpful thoughts from the philosopher of Emporia," he wrote White on December 14, 1939. ". . . . Things move with such terrific speed, these days, that it really is essential to us to think

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1. November 29, December 8, 14, 16, 1939.

in broader terms and, in effect, to warn the American people that they, too, should think of possible ultimate results in Europe and the Far East. Therefore, my sage old friend, my problem is to get the American people to think of conceivable consequences without scaring the American people into thinking that they are going to be dragged into this war."

White's reply revealed a puzzled mind. He told the President he feared that the United States would enter the conflict. "Yet I fear to remain uninvolved," he quickly added, "letting the danger of a peace of tyranny approach too near. Finland seems to need us . . . I suppose if we can help the Allies surreptitiously, illicitly and down the alley by night, we ought to do it."[1]

From playwright Robert E. Sherwood there, also, came a letter filled with concern over the international situation. Sherwood wrote White on December 11, 1939, that he thought it was necessary for the United States to intervene in a military fashion to save the world from the calamity of domination by the dictators. Sherwood's expressive letter stirred the small town editor. He thoroughly agreed that the dictators had to be defeated for the good of civilization. Yet, he did not feel that he could raise his voice for military intervention. He felt that he had no right to tell young men that they had to lose their lives. On the other hand, the wisdom that he had acquired over seventy-one years told him that the aggressor nations had to be checked. "I have stood with you in spirit," White wrote Sherwood on December 27, 1939. "Always I have been constrained by an old man's fear and doubt when it comes to lifting my voice for war."

Although the future was to reveal that the Axis powers could not be defeated without the military might of the United States being thrown

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1. December 22, 1939.

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White, also, found himself in complete agreement with the New Deal's Good Neighbor Policy. From his own experiences in Haiti, he had seen at first hand something of the hatred of the United States that existed in Latin America. Long before the United States had a Good Neighbor Policy, White was demanding respect for the rights of the Latin American nations.

The reciprocal trade treaties were still another important ingredient of Roosevelt's international policy that was thoroughly backed by White. White's advocacy of the trade treaties as a means of checking economic nationalism and as a step toward real world peace elicited from President Roosevelt the following note on January 23, 1940: "At this critical time in world affairs it is fine to know that there are strong voices like yours which are willing and ready, irrespective of any partisan consideration, to speak out courageously in defense of constructive and far-sighted policies — policies that seek to build the future welfare of our country."

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opponents to me, thus keeping it off my candidate," White explained in glee.[1] His fight against Winrod attracted nation-wide attention. When President Roosevelt asked him to explain Winrod's appeal, White replied: ". . . He has all the elements of danger. He was a tent evangelist and knows the tricks of Father Coughlin, Huey Long and Billy Sunday. He is a nice blend of the three, temperamentally, intellectually, morally . . . He speaks well, either on the radio or to an audience, and is a strapping, handsome, smooth-talking man much like a medicine vendor or a soap-peddler. His religious angle is interesting. He is a four degrees sub-Baptist, more fundamental than Bryan, believes in all the prophecies of Revelations . . . One cannot assume that he is dishonest. He really believes it . . ."[2] Roosevelt wrote back on June 14, 1938, that . . . "It sounds to me like a situation in which the President of the United States cannot help . . . at least for the moment. Knowing T. R. and F. D. R. you will realize what a momentous admission that is! . . ."

Although Winrod was defeated, he did obtain 53,000 votes. Clyde Reed praised White's superb handling of his campaign, and after White's death, Harold Hammond declared in the Great Bend [Kansas] Herald that all the eulogies overlooked what he had done in 1938 to prevent Kansas from the disgrace of Winrod as Senator.

The hate that Winrod spread did not die easily. During the fall campaign, Payne Ratner, Republican candidate for Governor, was subjected to anti-Semitic abuse on widely circulated cards which read:

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1. To Arch Jarrell, January 29, 1938.
2. June 10, 1938.

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To the Gazette office and to the home came messages of condolence from all over the United States and from many other areas of the free world as well. President Roosevelt wired Mrs. White that "My heart goes out to you and Bill in the loss of a beloved husband and friend. The newspaper world loses one of its wisest and most beloved editors in the death of William Allen White. He made the Emporia Gazette a national institution. As a writer of terse, forcible and vigorous prose, he was unsurpassed. He enobled the profession of journalism which he served with such unselfish devotion through more than two score years. To me his passing brings a real sense of personal loss for we had been the best of friends for years. Mrs. Roosevelt joins me in this assurance of deepest sympathy."

Eulogistic editorials appeared in paper after paper and Harold