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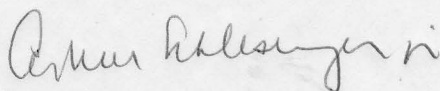
December 22, 1959

Dear Senator Wheeler:

I am most grateful to you for your letter of December 9th and the attached memorandum. Both the letter and the memorandum offer valuable sidelights on history and I am very pleased indeed to have them.

I think you will be hearing from Dr. Sears of the Oral History Research Office about making their facilities available to you for the dictation of your reminiscences.

Ever sincerely yours,



Senator Burton K. Wheeler
Southern Building
Fifteenth and H Streets N.W.
Washington, D.C.

December 9, 1959

Mr. Arthur Schlesinger, Jr.
Widener T
Harvard University
Cambridge, Mass.

My Dear Schlesinger:

I am in receipt of your letter of November 30. It was my pleasure to meet you. I have had a copy made of the memorandum you mention and am enclosing it herewith.

The request that I be the Vice-Presidential candidate with Roosevelt in 1940 was made to me first at a dinner which Bob Kintner asked Mrs. Wheeler and I to attend at his home here in Washington. At the dinner were Ben Cohen, Leon Henderson and his wife and Ed Foley of the Treasury Department. After dinner, Leon Henderson said to me "Burt, you have got to take this Democratic nomination for Vice-President. The convention will nominate you -- and you have got to take it". I said that I couldn't take it because I was sure the President was going to get us into war. They talked with Mrs. Wheeler and said to her "You will be the Vice-President's wife" and she in turn said "I'd rather have my husband in the Senate than Vice-President of the United States".

When we discussed the war situation Ben Cohen spoke up and said that what we ought to do was to treat the French and English as mercenaries, furnish them everything we could but let them do the fighting. I told Ben that the day of mercenaries was over and that you couldn't do that any more. Then Leon Henderson said "What ought to happen is that you should take the Vice-Presidency and when the emergency is over the President should resign and you would become president". I asked him "Will he let me say when the emergency's over?" Leon said "Here is Ben Cohen, Bob Kintner, myself and Foley -- and Foley is Tom Corcoran's close friend..." indicating that they were speaking and could speak for the President.

Dave Niles had dinner with Edward some time in 1940 and told him that the President would throw his hands up with glee if I would call him up and go and see him, but that the President thought Mrs. Wheeler hated him and that she strongly influenced me. Edward replied "You know my father -- he listens to my mother, he listens to us, and to anyone whom he respects, and then he does as his own judgment dictates". The next day I called Dave Niles and told him Edward had reported the conversation to me. I also told him that I hadn't called him because I hadn't wanted to embarrass him with the President. He said "It wouldn't embarrass me -- it might help me". I said "If you feel that way about it, come up and have lunch with me." When he came up I said "What is the President going to do?" and he replied "He doesn't want to run. If he could find somebody who would look upon him as an elder statesman and send him to the peace conference, he wouldn't run." I asked him who they had under consideration. He replied "We haven't got anybody." I said "What about Barkley?" and he said "No"; I said "What about Jimmy Burns?" and he said that he was a Catholic who had turned Protestant and the Catholics wouldn't be for him; I said "What about McNutt?" and he said "No". "But" he said "you could be elected". I told him I didn't think Kelly and Nash would stand for me and he replied "They want to win". I said because of the Court fight the labor crowd might not be for me and he said "Phil Murray likes you" and I said "He ought to -- because I was the one who investigated the strike in Pennsylvania and West Virginia in the 'thirties". Then I said to him "Some of your Jewish friends are sore at me because I want to keep out of the war" and he replied "They would eat out of your hand". Dave and I had always been very good friends -- I first met him in the LaFollette campaign in Chicago when he was doing the scheduling of the speakers. Both John and Edward knew him when they were at Harvard Law School. I had spoken at Ford Hall Forum at his request.

At the Chicago convention in 1940 I was a member of a Subcommittee of the committee on resolutions. I came into the meeting on one occasion just a few minutes late. Senator Neely of West Virginia was reading a statement. I could hardly believe my ears -- but it went on to condemn dictators in general and said that to preserve peace everybody had to be fitted into their particular niche -- the farmer, the worker, the banker and the businessman. It was really a tirade having no precedent as a part of a party platform. I thought to myself "I am going to fight this". But before I had a chance to speak up Senator Walsh of Massachusetts said "This means dictatorship". After consideration and considerable discussion they took a vote on it and everyone on the committee -- most of whom were friendly with the President -- voted

against it. Wallace, to my recollection, was one of the few who voted for it. When Neely sat down I said to him "Who sent this in?" and he said "The President". Later it was brought up by Wallace who said that if we felt it had no business as a part of the platform, couldn't we use it as a preliminary statement. The Committee again turned it down.

I insisted on writing into the platform that we would not go to war unless attacked. Over the objections of Senator Pepper, the William Allen White Committee and others who wanted a stronger pro-war platform, this plank was adopted. The proposals of the pro war group were beaten time after time. On the full Resolutions Committee I think there were only about eight or nine votes out of approximately 100 against the peace plank or for Pepper-Wallace proposals. Finally, after we had supposedly settled the matter, Mayor Kelly of Chicago, who had supported my proposal throughout, said that he had made a survey in Chicago and the people of Chicago wanted no war. Later when we were settling other provisions Jimmy Burns came to me and, referring to the peace plank, said "Burt, wouldn't you modify the platform?" I said "No". "Well" he said "Cordell Hull feels it will interfere with his operations in the Orient." I asked "What operations?" Jimmy left without replying. I then had to go to the mens room. As I entered a little ante room I found Jimmy Burns, Claude Pepper and Mayor Kelly. I said "What are you fellows doing here?" Jimmy replied that he had just talked with the President and the President might not run unless we modified the platform. I said "Jimmy, he will not only run but he will run on any platform that we draft. If you go in there and modify the platform I will walk out of the convention." He said "You wouldn't do that, would you?" I replied "I certainly would". With that he threw up his hands and walked away.

I think it was the following day that Mose Cohen, a lawyer from Los Angeles who formerly practiced law in Butte, Montana and was a friend of Postmaster General Frank Walker's and mine, came to see me in my suite at the Congress Hotel. He told me he had just left Frank Walker, Harry Hopkins and Ed Flynn. They had told him that I could have the nomination for Vice-President if I would take it. I said to him "Mose, they are only kidding you -- they want me to put my name up and have it voted down". He said "No, no -- this is on the square". Just to see what would happen I told him I wouldn't take the nomination unless the President called me up and asked me to take it. The following day I was lying down in the afternoon and told my office staff not to let anyone disturb me. Bill Hutchinson of the International News Service came in and asked for me and although he was told that I was lying down and didn't want to be disturbed he pushed everyone, including Edward, aside and came into my room. He said that he had something important to tell

me -- that Frank Murphy of the Supreme Court had just left the White House and had called to have him tell me that if I would take the Vice-Presidency, the President would call and ask me to take it. I told him I couldn't do it, because I was convinced that Roosevelt was going to get us into the war -- and I wasn't going to tell the people that he would keep us out of it. He argued with me and I said jokingly "My wife would get a divorce from me". Afterwards that appeared in the newspapers. Hutchinson told a good many people this story.

In 1944 Sam Rosenman came up to the Interstate Commerce Committee Room and spent three hours with me -- said he wanted to bring about better relations between the President and me. He insisted that the President had never spoken a word against me, that trouble-makers had carried false tales to me and to the President from each concerning the other. I reported that the President was alleged to have said I was all right but that Mrs. Wheeler was the Lady Macbeth. Sam called the next day and said the President vehemently denies that Shakesperian quotation. On a later occasion we spent an hour and a half talking about the Vice-Presidential candidate for 1944. I did not indicate any interest and Sam did not tender it to me. Subsequently Jim Forrestal had lunch with me to discuss the same subject. He said many of his friends would not support Wallace. I did not encourage him to believe I would be a candidate. Frank Walker also talked to me about it and although we were long-time friends, grew very angry when I told him I would not run. Dave Niles talked to me again about the Vice-Presidency but did not say that I should be the candidate. After the election Tom Corcoran asked me why I didn't accept the Vice-Presidency. I told him it had not been offered to me. He then said that Dave Niles was supposed to have offered it to me.

There are the facts as I know them. In 1940 I felt that Roosevelt wanted me to run with him but I could not because of my conviction that he would take us into the war. In 1944 I felt that I might have had the nomination had I sought it, but no concrete tender was made to me. I discouraged the idea with those who suggested it to me because in good conscience I could not condone actions of the President and his Administration which I had previously condemned and continued to believe were wrong.

I have set forth my recollections at some length because like most events that transpire in history unless placed in context they can be quite misleading.

Sincerely,

Burton K. Wheeler

CONFIDENTIAL

Memo on Conference at the White House with the
President -- August 4, 1939

I said to the President that I had wanted to have a talk with him before I went home but I knew that he had been very busy, and I had been busy also.

I said to him, columnists and others might carry various stories concerning me and my attitude toward him, and I wanted him to know firsthand just exactly how I felt.

I told him that Senator Norris had talked with me a short time ago, and that the Senator had said that he wanted to ask me a question. That the question he was propounding was entirely on his own initiative, and that no one else had suggested it to him. Then Senator Norris said: "Would you run for Vice President with President Roosevelt?"

I told the President that I said "No." "That I would not run for Vice President with anyone, and that I thought he (George Norris) should not encourage you to run. That I thought it was a mistake for you to seek a third term." President Roosevelt at this point interrupted me by saying, "Of course it would be a mistake."

I told him I felt it would be a mistake for him personally, and it would be a mistake for the Democratic Party as well, and that all of the New Deal legislation would be eliminated in his fight over the third term issue, and

that if he lost, it would then be considered as a repudiation of all of the New Deal legislation which he had put upon the statute books.

I told the President "I am for seeing the Democratic Party nominate a liberal candidate, and it is the only way we can win."

He said, "I do not want to see a reactionary democrat nominated." The President went on "I love Jack Garner personally. He is a lovable man, but he could not get the nigger vote, and he could not get the labor vote". I added that I was very fond of Jack Garner, but that I doubted he could get the Irish vote, and called his attention to the fact that a friend of mine from Boston, when I suggested to him that Garner might be nominated said, "It would be a mistake." I asked him if he couldn't carry Boston, and he answered by saying, that if the Pope would come over there, and make a speech for him, I doubt that he could carry Massachusetts.

Then he spoke of Bennett Clark. He mentioned Jim Cox. He said Cox played with the reactionaries. He mentioned John W. Davis, and said he didn't want anyone of that type to be nominated or to get control of the Democratic Party. He said, "I am getting too old to go out and fight for a ticket that cannot win, and I want to see a ticket that can win.

He said, "I supported Bryan. I was young and got into the Bryan campaign for the experience. I supported Wilson, and he won." He said, "If Champ Clark had been nominated in convention he could not have won." He said "After Wilson, I ran with Cox. I said to Cox, of course, we have got

to go along with Wilson's League of Nations. We have got to be good sports. If we do go along with it, the anti-League people are going to be sore, and if we do not go along with it, all of the Wilson forces are going to be sore. So I said to Cox, we will go along and be good sports, and after it is over, you will go back to Ohio, and I will go back and practice law in New York, because we cannot win."

Then I told him that I had gone along with him on almost everything else excepting the court. He interrupted me by saying, "Burt, I would like to have you do one thing. I would like to have you make a speech, or a statement (I forget which) and state that while you disagreed with me on the method of reforming the Supreme Court, that you agreed with me on the objective, and that the Court had now been liberalized, and that I won my objective." He said, "This would help you and it would help me." He had previously asked Secretary Wallace to ask me to make the same identical statement. Secretary Wallace wrote it down, and saw me a few days later in his office to tell me of the President's wishes in the matter.

Now he said "Burt, I think we can win, and I want to win in 1940." He said "Well will go along until January, February or March, we will get together then. We will sit around and take up different combinations, and try and pick out one that can win."

He then talked about labor and John Lewis. He said that John Lewis was an able fellow, and that if he would not do something (I forget the

language he used) he would be an excellent labor leader. He said, "If Sidney Hillman was the leader of the CIO, I could settle all differences in the labor movement in a very short time, but we took \$600,000 from Lewis' CIO, and he has never gotten thru boasting about it." He said, "We made a mistake. We never should have taken the money."

Now, he said "Lewis made a mistake. It was a mistake for him to say what he did about Garner". He said "You are strong in Eastern Montana, and the endorsement of you by Lewis would not help you in Eastern Montana, because there are no strong labor unions over there."

I then told him the story of how I ran for Governor and was defeated with the endorsement of the Non-Partisan League and Labor League in 1920, and how I fought to keep the League from endorsing me in 1922, because I knew the League would be the kiss of death for me, but I got the support of most of them, notwithstanding the fact they didn't endorse me.

He talked with me about railroads. He said "You and I have done everything we could to help the railroads but some President is going to come in here in the not far distant time, and is going to take over some of these railroads, and I dislike to see it done, but I do not see any other outlook." "But" he said "You know it as well as I do." "I want to help them and am willing to help them as far as I can on a reasonable basis."

He said he was going to be in Montana in October, and he said "around the 12th." I told him I had a long standing engagement at Hudson,

Massachusetts on the 12th, and I probably could not be there. He said he would like to have me there, and I said the only way I could be there was to have this date changed, and he said "See if you can't have it changed."

I stated to the President during the conversation "Another thing I want to say to you is that Farley, when he visited me, never mentioned a third term, nor did he say anything in the slightest way which was disrespectful to you. He did say that McNutt was one person that could never have the nomination if he could prevent it. He did complain about Tommy Corcoran."

The President then said "I know that Jim is very bitter against McNutt, and I know that he does not like Tommy Corcoran." He said "I never see Tommy Corcoran more than once a month, and I told Jim this, and I told him that a lot of things that Tommy might say, I didn't know anything about, and that the newspapers gave Tommy credit for a lot of things that were not so."

He said "I had a very fine talk with Jim. He wants to run for Vice President, and because of his large acquaintance over the country, he feels he should have the nomination". "But" he said "a Hull-Farley ticket could not be elected" or words to that effect.

He said "Cardinal Mundelein said that some day we are going to have a Catholic President, but he should not come in by the back door, and then he stated "They could not nominate Farley or Murphy for Vice President with the idea that they were going to become President". He said that the

Catholic they would elect would have to come out of the West , and not from the sidewalks of New York.

Then the President said "If we had a Catholic today like Tom Walsh was in 1924, a young man and vigorous, we might possibly elect him President today."

When I left he said "Well, I will see you in October."

The President said the Northwest was all right (meaning all right politically). "There is only one bad spot, and that is Oregon. There, on account of ex-Governor Martin, the situation is not good."

WIDENER T
HARVARD UNIVERSITY
CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS

ARTHUR SCHLESINGER, JR.

UNIVERSITY 4-9710

November 30, 1959

Dear Senator Wheeler:

This is a belated note to thank you for that most agreeable and interesting luncheon the other day at the Metropolitan Club.

On returning to Cambridge, I sent a note to Dr. Louis Starr, director of the Oral History Research Office at Columbia University, suggesting that he get in touch with you concerning a possible arrangement by which the Oral History Office might provide you the facilities for dictating portions of your reminiscences. I would very much hope that you might be able to do this. I need hardly say that it would be a tremendous boon for future historians to have available your own account of several historical episodes in which you were a leading actor.

In this connection, you mentioned to me a memorandum you recently came upon in your files describing a conversation with Roosevelt in 1939 about the third term. I wonder whether it might be possible for me to see a copy of this memorandum. I would, of course, clear with you any use I made of it. It sounds like a document of historical importance, and I would hate not to have consulted it when I come to write about that period. I will perfectly understand, however, if you would prefer not to disclose it at this point.

I was also very much interested in the account you gave of the attempt of several New Dealers to interest you in the Vice-Presidency in 1940, and especially in your story of the offer transmitted to you at the convention through Frank Murphy and Hutchinson of INS. Unfortunately my own notes on this incident are rather fragmentary. If you have a moment, I would appreciate it more than I can say if you could put down the details of this story in a way I might eventually use when I come to describe the 1940 convention.

I am sorry to bother you on these matters. But I am concerned, as an historian, to set forth as straight and fair an account as I can, and very often it is only possible for me to do this by imposing on the patience and generosity of people who were there when all these things happened.

Sincerely yours,



Senator Burton K. Wheeler
Wheeler and Wheeler
Fifteenth and H Streets, N.W.
Washington, D.C.