

Monday
December 13, 1954

Internal Memorandum

Concerning Mr. E. A. J. Johnson

Edgar Augustus Jerome Johnson is an economist whose name was first mentioned by Mr. Walter Stewart in conversation on Friday, December 10th, in Washington. He has been a professor at various colleges. He was Director of the Department of Commerce of the South Korean Interim Government, and he is now at Belgrade for the F.O.A. He has written several books on economics, including one on "The Origin and Development of the American Economy." He was also an editor of the Journal of Economic History from 1940 to 1943, and it was in that connection that Mr. Stewart first knew him. The more Mr. Stewart thought of him, the better he seemed as a possible historian for this Committee. Mr. Stewart warned that he might seem too suave and might seem to wear his clothes too well. I promised to find out more information about him and to see whether he seemed a possibility. His is one of the first new names that have been mentioned for some time.

On Monday, the 13th, I asked Dr. Lester Chandler whether he had known Johnson. Chandler said that Paul O'Leary of Cornell would have known him. Johnson was at Cornell as assistant professor of economics from 1931 to 1937.

As an Executive meeting was due on Tuesday, the 14th (later cancelled), it seemed important to get as much information as possible in a short time. I therefore asked Dr. Chandler to telephone to Mr. O'Leary at Ithaca and find out what he could. His report is as follows -

Mr. Johnson was a good scholar of the Teutonic type and very fond of footnotes. He held up a page one day to Mr. O'Leary and said, "Is this not beautiful?" The page had one line of reading type, and all the rest of it was footnotes. He has a great deal of drive, and he is a very good editor - that on the positive side.

On the negative side, Mr. O'Leary thought that Mr. Johnson knew little about

banking and credit and that his interest in that field might chiefly be described as antiquarian. He described him as a difficult person, pompous and ostentatious, "a very good example of the Harvardian Illinois farm boy." Mr. Johnson was described as rather hard to get along with. He has the reputation of being a rather spectacular person.

This, in general, is not far from Mr. Stewart's concept of Mr. Johnson, but as far as Mr. Stewart was concerned, it did not weigh heavily enough to outweigh his excellences. Mr. Johnson is in Belgrade at the present time for the F.O.A. If the F.O.A. is now to be coordinated with an overall foreign economic agency, as was indicated in the newspapers of December 12th or 13th, it may be that he would be returned to this country and could be available for this kind of an operation. At any rate, the name is well worth being considered, if only because Mr. Stewart recommended it.

Mildred Adams