

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

PERSONAL

July 31, 1935

My dear Governor Eccles:

May I ask you and those of your assistants who, from time to time, leave Washington to deliver addresses before various conventions and gatherings to carefully consider the problem of publicity for these addresses.

In this connection, I cite for you, confidentially, certain excerpts from a letter recently received from a newspaperman who worked on publicity during the Convention of the American Bar Association. He wrote, in part, as follows:

"While anyone could expect the corporation lawyers of America to be anti-New Deal, the 58th annual Convention of the American Bar Association, recently held in Los Angeles, was treated by many newspapers and wire services almost as a National Republican Convention. Why?

"Being connected with the publicity of this convention, I know why and I am passing the 'tip' on to you so that certain precautions may be taken to prevent other conventions during the coming year from being so completely usurped by Republican 'mouthpieces'.

"The tip is this: the Administration's publicity machine slipped a cog -- the press was not supplied with advance copies of speeches made by the New Deal's spokesmen. And, excepting what work two of us did voluntarily, no attempt was made to lay a ground work or build up public interest in what these Administration spokesmen had to say.

"It is true that Mr. Hearst sent his best local political writers, including Joe Timmons of The Los Angeles Examiner and Ross Marshall of The Los Angeles Evening Herald and Express, to make 'political capital' out of the convention, and get every anti-New Deal slam obtainable. The Times (Republican bulwark) did likewise. And the wire services lifted and re-wrote a lot of this inspired copy that said Timmons, Marshall and a dozen more, instructed newshawks, brought in.

"With Governor Nice of Maryland, James M. Beck, former Solicitor General, Louis G. Caldwell, of Washington, D. C., former general counsel for the Federal Radio Commission, and other big mouthpieces deeply concerned about state rights and the saving of the Constitution, it wasn't a hard job for the reporters. Copies of anti-Roosevelt speeches were readily obtainable and the reporters 'went to town' on what they got.

"Even Patrick J. Hurley, former Secretary of War, had hundreds of copies of his speech, which he gave before the Mineral Law Section of the Convention, ready for the reporters when they called.

"But what of the speech of J. Howard Marshall, who spoke for the Administration on 'Federal Control of the Oil Industry' before the same committee? There were numerous calls for copies of his speech -- from newspapers, including the Wall Street Journal, petroleum trade magazines, and persons who attended the meeting of the Mineral Law Section. But we didn't have copies.

"Even now, I could get his speech printed in The Los Angeles Bar Association Bulletin, if I had a copy.

"The speech of Dean Justin Miller, chairman of the U. S. Attorney General's advisory committee on crime, was the only pro-Administration one available. It was mimeographed and was given considerable publicity.

"I assisted Mr. Ewell D. Moore, general counsel for the Home Owners' Loan Corporation here, in getting some publicity for John Dickinson, Assistant Secretary of Commerce, although we were again faced with the same problem -- insufficient copies of his speech. We had two copies of one of his talks -- a highly technical one, which reporters found difficult to quote in short excerpts.

"The point is -- THE PRIME RULE OF PUBLICITY, THAT PROPER INFORMATION MUST BE AVAILABLE, WAS IGNORED. I don't know what arrangements the Administration made, if any, for handling publicity on this convention, but whatever they were, they were a failure, with the exception of the good work done by Mr. Moore, who by the way, was once an A.P. man in New York.

"The lesson, it seems to me, is clear. Why not make every important convention WORK FOR instead of against the Administration?"

You will be interested in the comments of Mr. Charles Michelson, Director of Publicity for the Democratic National Committee, concerning

the above. I quote Mr. Michelson's letter to me under date of July twenty-seventh:

"I have at various times made efforts to have copies of all Administration speeches sent in here before delivery in order that I could have them mimeographed and properly distributed. That is the procedure we follow with every speech I get hold of.

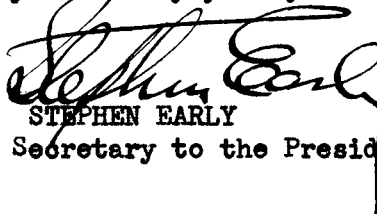
"Of course, the difficulty is getting hold of the speeches before delivery, and that is what we are up against when it comes to speeches by the Cabinet officers and their representatives. The first we know about it is when we see quotations in the papers.

"For example, I did not know there were to be any New Deal speeches delivered before the 58th Annual Convention of the American Bar Association.

"As to the remedy: It would be best for you to give general notice to the Administration Heads, not only the Cabinet but the Emergency Departments as well, that they should send here, before delivery, every speech. I will have made as many copies as may be necessary for the local newspapers and will, if the speaker desires, mail copies in advance to papers published in the area wherein the speech is to be delivered."

I respectfully request that Mr. Michelson's suggestion, stated in the fourth paragraph of his letter, be kept in mind and that such steps as are necessary be taken in the future to prevent a repetition of such conditions as prevailed during the Bar Association's Convention.

Very sincerely yours,



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