The Minority Voter, Election of 1936 and the Good Neighbor League

Primary Source Media



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SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

The intricate make-up of American political parties has challenged many students of political behavior to scrutinize more closely the numerous organizational components of these parties. One important element in American party organization has, however, been virtually ignored, namely groups like Americans for Democratic Action which function for a party but not in the name of the party. Such "auxiliary" party organizations are usually referred to only in connection with fundraising activities. Yet, that they exist and function for other purposes should be evident merely from reading the columns of newspapers during campaign years. It is the objective of this microfilm publication to recount the operation of one of the most successful auxiliary party organizations in history.

The minority voter has long been of interest to historians and political scientists, especially during presidential election years. Although a great deal has been published on how minorities have voted in particular elections, there have been few studies on their actual participation in political campaigns.

This microfilm publication is designed as a case study of minority, including African American, women, and ethnic, involvement in a presidential election campaign, using the 1936 Democratic Campaign as a model. The 1936 election provides an excellent example due to the importance of the election to minorities and the Democratic Party, and because of the availability of manuscript material on the Good Neighbor League—the principal "auxiliary" organization through which minorities participated in the 1936 Democratic campaign.

This collection consists of incoming and outgoing correspondence, memoranda, reports, account books, and publicity materials. The Printed Material series includes articles, campaign materials, press releases, and newspaper clipping scrapbooks.

The Good Neighbor League was a vital force in helping make minorities part of the Roosevelt coalition in 1936. Through recruitment and publicity, they were one means Democrats used to attract minority voters to Roosevelt. Their activities show that bringing together such a coalition was not a chance occurrence, but a well-planned political move whose basic premise was the New Deal legislative program. Minorities proved by their participation that they would be a significant influence in elections to come.

After the 1936 election, Charles Stelzle, a sociologist, became director and the League operated on a reduced scale, supporting such causes as the Child Labor Amendment and the Sesquicentennial celebration of the United States Constitution. The Board of Directors included Edward J. Flynn, James L. Houghteling, Walter A. Jones, and Sol A. Rosenblatt. The League was dissolved in March 1939.

SOURCE NOTE

The materials microfilmed for this publication are from the Good Neighbor League Records, 1936-1939, in the custody of the Franklin D. Roosevelt Library, Hyde Park, New York.

Additional manuscript collections at the FDR Library pertaining to the Good Neighbor League include:

PPF 3435: Good Neighbor League, Inc.

OF 2443: Good Neighbor League

PSF: Subject File (Good Neighbor League, 1936)

Stephen Early Papers: Subject File (Good Neighbor League)

EDITORIAL NOTE

This microform collection consists of selected records of the Good Neighbor League. These records are contained in fifty-two boxes, consisting of the Correspondence File, Printed Material File, and Membership Files. Primary Source Media has not filmed the following items: cancelled checks and check stubs, receipts and disbursements, ledgers and account books, and miscellaneous financial records in boxes 3 through 7; and the index file cards comprising boxes 21-52.

The newspaper clippings scrapbooks in the Printed Material File have been filmed in their original condition.

The selected materials have been filmed in their entirety and as they are arranged at the Franklin D. Roosevelt Library.

How To Use This Guide

Researchers have been given two points of entry into the collections, a reel index and a subject index. A table of contents lists the Series titles and the collection subdivisions and directs the user to the appropriate page of the reel index for each division. Users will also be able to scan the reel index to locate the titles and date ranges of each folder in each collection or division of a collection. Often these folder titles are useful guides to the contents found within. Each folder is introduced with a title page on the film indicated.

The subject index provides a list of the important topics found throughout the papers of the Good Neighbor League collection. An entry contains two numbers to help the user locate the item indexed. The first number is the reel number and the second, the number following the colon, refers to a folder number. A sample entry looks like this:

Democratic Party

financial support of GNL, 8: 68 general, 5: 58; 9: 73 platform, 8: 68 Southern conservatives, 8: 68 women 6: 63

The contents of the folders are more often organized by chronology than by subject. The subject index simply lets the researcher know that an item or run of items pertaining to that subject will be found somewhere within that folder. The folder number, then, provides an approximation of where the subject is to be found on the reel.

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Subjects:

Columbus, OH chapter National Good Neighbor League Good Neighbor League publicity Conference (Columbus, Ohio)

Ickes, Harold L. New Deal program
Stelzle, Charles

Printed Material File [76] Scrapbooks: Clippings, Articles by Charles Stelzle

Subjects:

Churches; religious organizations Press labor

Communism Radical political propaganda

Fascism Song of the Shirt Industry–labor relations Stelzle, Charles

Kellogg-Briand Pact Unemployment and economic crisis

Labor movement and AFL
Labor movement and CIO

Wages and hours
War threat with Europe

Labor versus capital issue Women labor

Leisure

Printed Material File [77] Scrapbooks: Clippings, Nebraska Good Neighbor League

Subjects:

Labor and farm leaders

1936 Presidential campaign LaGuardia, Fiorello H. Bigelow, Herbert S. Landon, Alfred M.

Education political debate National Democratic Committeewomen Farmer leaders Nebraska Good Neighbor League

Federal education aid

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