

January 21, 1952

Dear Foster:

Your letter of January 14, which I can tell you was much appreciated by Marion and myself, reached me just before we left for Cuernavaca this last Friday evening, and although I am up to my neck in work and should not be answering any personal correspondence, it is a relief from the daily grind to chat with you for a moment. First of all, Marion and I are really touched that you should have kept our Christmas cards during these years. I think the custom of having a photograph on the Christmas card was started by Leland and Nancy Harrison a good many years ago and Marion and I started the year after we got the first card from the Harrisons and every year we say that we are going to stop doing it but as so many of our friends write us about these cards and as we are so desirous of remaining in touch with our friends, we keep on.

When I first decided to live in Mexico after retiring it was really with the intent of writing some books here and because we felt that we would enjoy the climate and could continue to enjoy some of the amenities of nice living which on our slender income would be impossible in the United States. I soon found, however, and already before we left for Mexico towards the end of 1947, that I was far too active just to try to write books, and so I took on this job which I thought would occupy me about 4 hours a day and leave me the rest of my time for writing. Over 4 years have passed and I have not done any writing and I am wondering whether I can get at it even this year. My work has kept me so occupied that it has consumed all my time and I am sorry to say my energy, to the degree that this last year I decided I must take it a little more easily and we bought a house in Cuernavaca, which is about 3,000 feet lower than Mexico City and very nearby, nevertheless, and we religiously spend every weekend there. As a matter of fact, I am hoping during this year to begin to spend in addition the fourth week of every month there. I am now 68 and I am glad to say that life has been kind to me and my health is good, but the constant strain under which I have worked for

The Honorable  
Foster Stearns,  
21 Spring Street,  
Exeter,  
New Hampshire.

so many years, first as a school teacher, then in the service and now in private industry, really takes its toll.

A good many of my friends do not understand why I should work so hard at my age in a private business. The fact is that while my company is a very important one, no company would be sufficiently important to me to make me work like I do. I am one of those who believes that the strength of our country lies in the simple virtues of the people who live in the smaller cities and towns and on the farms in our country, and that we have been able to build up our strength on these virtues and on the maintenance of private initiative and a capitalist system which is undergoing the change which any important aspect of society organization has to undergo with the passage of time and experience. Experience in every country where I have lived has shown me that where private initiative in business, etc., is destroyed, the real strength of the country begins to abate in the same measure that private initiative and private enterprise are undermined. The electricity industry is one of the most fundamental in the economic structure of practically every country, and in these Latin countries it is primarily because they have so little other motive power. The company which I serve produces practically all of the power in the central area of Mexico, which is the important area of the country, and in fact produces almost 50% of all the power produced in the country. It is a sad comentary not only on Mexico but on all of these Latin countries that the capital which has developed this primary need for their economies has had to come from other countries. In the case of our company, it was really European initiative and capital that created and developed this company, and I am in the strange position of being an American at the head of the largest electricity company in the country which is practically entirely owned in England and on the Continent. During the last years there has been increasing interest in our securities in the United States and Canada, so that there is now a real interest and ownership in our securities in the United States and Canada, but the original money came from the old world.

I am interested in my job because having seen what a charge the railways and the oil industry have become



on the government as government monopolies, I believe that it is of vital importance to the country to maintain the electricity industry in private hands, whether they be Mexican or foreign. You see that I am the same fighter as always and I have a certain satisfaction in feeling that I may be doing something for the maintenance of one of the principles which I think is most fundamental for our beliefs and security and which I see more and more attacked and undermined in practically every country, and even in a measure in our own.

So much for myself. We are delighted to have this news of you and Martha. It is thoughtful of you to have written me at such length. I am delighted to know of your interest in politics. When I was 22 years of age I wrote a little book on the "Government of Delaware" for use in the public schools of Delaware, because I was convinced that it was essential that our young people learn the importance of the primary elections if we were going to have anything like decent government in Delaware. That was the time when a New England gas man was trying to buy up the State. I am delighted you are taking this interest in the political situation and especially that you feel the way you do about Eisenhower.

I will not express my feelings about the present administration, and particularly with regard to the little man who heads it, because that would take a volume. I think Truman has done more to undermine public morals in the United States than any President in our history, and I think he has been responsible in a large measure for a great deal of the deterioration which has taken place in the morals of some of our public men. It is time that there is a change if things which are worthwhile in our country are to survive, and if we are to survive. Some of the men in the administration I know are just as good as any men we have in the country, but I have seen their influence decrease year by year.

I know Taft and I think he is essentially a stupid, prejudiced and quite impossible person. There are those who think he is intelligent, but I have never known a new idea really to penetrate his head, and the ideas which he has are more prejudices than ideas. His last book was a dishonest one and was written with an eye to delegates to the Convention, and I see that just recently he has admitted that the policy he expounds is "a"

policy and not his policy, that his policy is in his voting record. I think this is the most disastrous statement that he has made, and certainly his voting record is clear enough to exclude any understanding person from voting for him for the Presidency. We would be in for very bad times with Taft as President, and while it would be an improvement in some ways so far as the internal policies are concerned, he would wreck us through a foreign policy which would be disastrous.

I do not go back on anything which I said to you some years back concerning Stassen, but he has not increased in stature and while he would make an infinitely better President than Truman or Taft, I do not believe that under any circumstances he could be elected, so I think that he is to all intents and purposes eliminated, and as he is fundamentally a decent and fine person, I think he will turn to Eisenhower.

God knows that I have worked and lived enough with the military to know their limitations, and I am not particularly keen to see a military man at the head of our government. On the other hand, I do not consider that Eisenhower is primarily a military man. I have not known him as many years as I have Marshall, but between the two men there is no comparison. Marshall is a man who is military in every way of his thinking and who cannot change, and as a strategist during the war he did a good job because he had certain aides whom I know who really did the job. Marshall is more of a facade than a reality as circumstances have proved, and he has no knowledge of human beings or of political problems and is as inflexible as a ramrod.

Eisenhower is a military man in the sense that he has done a good job as a military man, but he is essentially a man of broad interests, great human understanding and infinite common sense. I see in him the only hope of anyone on the horizon or the near horizon. I hope and pray that he may be our next President. I know him well enough to have the most complete confidence in him. I wrote Arthur Sulzberger the other day and told him that the editorial in the Times several weeks ago in which he announced that the Times would support Eisenhower was one of the finest editorials, so far as form and substance was concerned, in the long fine editorial tradition of the Times. Arthur Crock has had several



columns recently, in fact in the last few days, on Eisenhower's views on internal problems and I think these are excellent and written out of conviction. The tendency to say that Eisenhower's views on internal policies are not sufficiently known is merely a political form of attack on him by the professional politicians. There is, I believe, from what I can learn, no doubt that Eisenhower if he is the Candidate of the Republican Party will have as large a popular vote as any Candidate for President has ever received. So far as I can see, he is the only Candidate which the Republicans can put up who has the possibility of defeating Truman, because whatever defects Truman may have, he is a consummate politician. There is, however, not the slightest doubt in my mind that the professional politicians in good part among the Republicans will do what they can to nominate Taft instead of Eisenhower. I do not believe they will be able to get away with it, because the popular demand for Eisenhower is too great, but I have seen strange things happen in politics. In spite of Taft's stupidities and ineptitudes, I somehow have the feeling that he may subside and give way to Eisenhower, but knowing Taft as I think I do I am not quite sure that he is able to make any sacrifice of that kind, even for his party or for his country.

I am delighted that you hold these views with regard to Eisenhower. I am perhaps a little prejudiced because he is a Pennsylvania Dutchman like myself, but I don't think that that really has anything to do with the opinions that I have expressed.

So far as the state of the world is concerned, I am not even going to try to enter into that because I am afraid that my views are so strong and so definite that I would write you a book and I have not time to do that. The world does not look good to me and I have no illusions whatever about the intentions of Soviet Russia and I have no illusions whatever as to how much we can be weakened by the present situation lasting so long, because I do not know how long our economy can stand the strain.

Sometime before long I hope to be able to exchange views with you on the world's problems. I am delighted to have had this word from you, and Marion joins me in affectionate good wishes to you and Martha.

Cordially and faithfully yours,

George S. Messersmith