

Sierra Paracaima 1285
México, D. F.
October 7, 1955

Dear Jimmy:

I should have answered long since your handwritten note of September 17, which I appreciated very much, but I really haven't written anything, not even personal letters for the last two weeks. We have had a good deal of company and Ruth Hughes has just spent a little over a week with us here at the house. You will remember her as head of the Mexican Division in the State Department. We have four friends from Cuba who are arriving today and who will be with us for a week here in Mexico City and in Cuernavaca. We are really never alone. We are beginning to do most of our entertaining in the house in Cuernavaca instead of in Mexico City. The road between Mexico City and Cuernavaca is really so good that people do not mind driving down there on Saturday or Sunday for lunch or dinner and coming back the same day. You would be surprised at the number of people, many of whom you know, who are building houses in Cuernavaca and in Acapulco.

Since I returned from this last trip to the Lahey Clinic I have been feeling quite well but Marion is really becoming disturbed about me. You know how much she was upset when I gave up my active duties in the company, because she thought that I would go to pieces not having anything to do. Now she is worried because she says I don't do anything. The fact is that since I returned from the last trip to the Lahey Clinic at the beginning of August I have been taking it more easily than I have at any time in my life. Why I should be doing it I can't explain to anyone, including myself, because I am feeling quite fit, but I am just reveling in not having to do anything. I keep pretty busy doing all sorts of things down at the company offices and my friends keep coming in seeking advice and counsel on matters which I sometimes think are beyond my capacity, but so far as letter writing is concerned I have neglected my correspondence completely for two weeks. I haven't written practically a letter in two weeks. So far as the notes that I was writing are concerned, I have been giving a good deal of thought to it and I have decided that the advice that I got to publish two volumes instead of a single book in two volumes, is good, and I am directing my thoughts towards writing a book with European background and one with Latin American background. I will have to weave into both of them something about Washington. My ideas are getting into pretty good shape and I think in every way it will be better to prepare two books instead of one. I will prepare the one on Europe first, but will work on the two of them more or less simultaneously. The time has come now really to settle down to some hard work, because real writing is hard work. The dictating that I did early this year was reliving the past and really was nothing in the way of work. If I really want to publish something it will mean preparing the material very carefully and I am just about getting the courage to settle down to it. One of my difficulties is that the house in Mexico City is really so small and that we have so much company that I haven't anyplace here to work. In Cuernavaca I am going to

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turn one of the bedrooms into a work room for myself.

Things here continue to go well on the surface. Mexico has never been in a better shape financially and economically than she is today. There are real problems ahead and some of them are going to make themselves felt in the first months of next year. I am not pessimistic, however, as to developments here. Next year will not be as good a year as this year and last year, because the torrential rains and the long rainy season which we have had have done a good deal of damage in various parts of the country. Up until the time that Janet came along no real damage had been done in any way, even to agriculture, by the heavy rains, but Janet certainly raised hell. Several of the smaller towns on the Gulf were completely wiped out by Janet. Tampico has suffered the most. The whole city and the surrounding country are practically under water. Lots of people are suffering and it will be several years before Tampico will be anything like its normal self. The help which our government, through the Red Cross and the Navy, are giving at Tampico is really doing a great deal of good and is more effective than anything that the Mexicans have been doing themselves. That unfortunately is always the case. This time, however, the newspapers seem to be giving us credit for what we are doing.

We almost had a serious disaster at Necaxa. If Janet had broken up in the mountains some hundred or 250 miles south of Necaxa just at the time that it did--in other words if it had broken up two or three hours later--we would have had I think a catastrophe at Necaxa and the plants might have been out not only for months but many months. It was just at the moment that the flood waters were threatening to destroy the plants that the storm broke up and the water began to recede. Even at that the generators in the plant just below the Necaxa plant were damaged by water and are still out of service, but they hope to have them dried out in another day or two. There was danger of the Necaxa plant and the one just below being really destroyed. It would have been a tremendous thing for the company as well as for the economy of the country, for as you know, over 200,000 KW of the installed capacity in the central area is at Necaxa, and when one realizes that the whole capacity serving the central area is something over 600,000 KW, one understands what it would have meant if the Necaxa system had been out for months. It was almost by a miracle that we were saved.

I am glad to have the good news of your father. I had a very nice telegram from the family on my 72nd birthday and it was kind of them to think of me. Have you any indication when your mother and Edna are coming back? I understood that they plan to come back around the end of September, but I gather that they have not yet returned. I am not surprised that your father wishes to stay in Europe somewhat longer.

There is so much that I would like to write you about that I don't know where to begin, so I had better not start. I have a tremendous load of accumulated correspondence here to take care of, some of which I really should have attended to in the last weeks. I know that these are difficult weeks for you, for you are reaching a decision. I think the conversation with Morrison was quite satisfactory. He is a plainspoken man and a competent one. How you two would get along with each other I am not able to foresee. You can have the definite feeling that whatever decision you will make will be one you have reached after very careful thought. If it doesn't

turn out the way you want it to turn out there is nothing irreparable. That is what you must keep in mind.

Maryssael had an operation for appendicitis last Tuesday a week ago and we had some anxious moments until after the operation. I insisted that the operation should be performed by Dr. Baz and Christine was quite in accord. Maryssael himself was too sick and had too much pain to care very much what happened. It turned out to be a very bad appendix, but it had not burst, but would have if the operation had not taken place in a relatively short time. He has obviously been suffering from this appendix trouble for some years, and I think it is what made him so sluggish from time to time, and I think it even caused the pains which he thought came from his heart and of which he used to complain to me from time to time. They were, I think, reflex pains from the appendix. In any event, he looks wonderful now and he went yesterday to Cuernavaca and I hope that he will carry through the instructions of the doctor to remain there two weeks.

Draper has been away for about ten days and is coming back at the end of this week. The Board decided a few days ago to recommend to the shareholders at a general meeting to be held before the end of October that the number of Directors be increased to 20. I think it is a good thing to do, because we should have several more Mexican Directors, and I do not think that any of the present Directors should be asked to resign. The idea is to elect Luis Legorreto and Eduardo Suarez as members of the Board. I think it is a good thing. They are the men who after careful consideration I concluded several years ago were the ones we could elect to the Board with the most help to the company and without causing too much heart burning among our good Mexican friends, who might feel themselves neglected. I think it is a foregone conclusion that one of the four new Directors is going to be our friend Arthur Ross in New York, who has finally achieved his purpose. I would not be at all surprised if André Mayer does not have himself elected to the Board.

There is much that I would like to write you about the company, but this has gotten to be a long letter already. We have got a lot of things to think about. There is this program of tremendous scope which has to be carried through in the next ten years, and up to now the decisions which have to be made by the Mexican government in order to make it possible for the company to carry through such a program have not been taken. The electricity study is still uncertain as to what its recommendations will be, and even though the recommendations turn out to be entirely good and sound, there is the question of legislation, because unless good and sound recommendations are formulated and solidified in legislation, there is no security for the companies. Fair words do not help to raise money. We had all hoped that this report would be out in good form by this time. We had all hoped that the appropriate implementing legislation would be passed during this present session of the Congress, which will end on December 31. Now that the report is so delayed that we are even uncertain as to what it is going to say about some of the principal things, there is very little hope, so far as I can see at this moment, that the appropriate legislation will be passed by the end of the year. That is going to be a big handicap so far as the company is concerned, because it will not really know what it can do towards carrying through this tremendous program. We have, of course, in the meantime to use every effort to get through with Lechería and the new

80,000 KW unit there, because something will have to be done to provide the power for the next few years. Draper is beginning to realize the facts of life. I think that he is on a good working basis with Maryssael now, and now that Maryssael has had this operation and has got rid of this trouble which I think has been bothering him for the last three or four years and acutely aggravated so recently, he ought to be in much better shape. He simply has to get some people to help him and I have been telling him that he must get some people to help him to carry the burden. I had a talk with him just a few days ago and I think he realizes he has to do something about it and I am inclined to think he will do something about it, but he should have been looking around for the appropriate people for some time. My impression is that some adequate person has to be brought in from outside the company as General Manager, so as to leave Maryssael as President. It will have to be someone from the outside because both Rivera and Juan Martinez would like to have the job as General Manager, and in neither case would it work out. Juan has the capacity but not the personality, and Rivera under no circumstances should have the job. There is no one else in the company now who could take the job or be selected for it, so it will have to be someone from the outside but I am sure a good man can be got if Maryssael really decides that he is ready to do it.

This is a very long letter and it doesn't say very much, but I have wanted you to know that things are going fairly well here and that we are thinking of you and June. I wish that you and June could make us a visit, and you know how happy we would be to have you at any time. I am still hoping that the family will come down to see us, but I gather that that will be after the first of the year some time. As soon as the rains are over I must change some of the wooden windows in the old part of the house in Cuernavaca, as well as some of the wooden doors with iron doors and windows, because the termites have been raising hell. It will only be a job that will take about three weeks, but during about three weeks time when we are doing this work we will have only one guest room available. There is no hurry about doing the work, but I am having the iron frames of the doors and windows made so that I can have the work done at any time I find convenient. When I know that we are not likely to have company and the rains are over, I will have the work done.

I have thought of you many times every day during the last weeks. I repeat that I wish that I were in a position to be helpful to you in your difficult decisions, but I do not think you must worry too much about this decision, because as I say, nothing that you will do will be irreparable. Whatever you decide to do you will do your best at it and if it doesn't turn out it will be just too bad in some ways, but you will have the greater part of your life still before you.

Marion joins in affectionate good wishes to you and June, and I hope that the whole family are well. When you know anything about your mother's and your father's plans I hope you will let me know, and you know how much I am always interested in having your letters. Always,

Faithfully yours,


George S. Messersmith