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THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

September 10, 1980

INFORMATION

MEMORANDUM FOR: THE PRESIDENT
FROM: HENRY OWEN **bo**
SUBJECT: 1932

You may be interested in the attached side-lined excerpt from a biography of Walter Lippman, which I am reading, showing how liberals and intellectuals thought they faced an awful choice when Roosevelt was nominated to oppose Hoover in 1932.

ng Baker's aide Ralph Hayes made sure that copies of the paper containing Lippmann's article got into the hands of every delegate before breakfast.

Sensing a panic, Roosevelt's supporters moved quickly to prevent a deadlock. Joseph Kennedy, the millionaire real-estate speculator and a key FDR backer, warned William Randolph Hearst that Garner did not have a chance, and that if FDR did not get the nomination soon, the convention would turn to Baker. The publisher detested Baker for his pro-league sentiments, and whipped the California delegation into line for FDR. William G. McAdoo, another Californian, whose own presidential prospects had been doused in 1924 by Al Smith, now saw his chance to even the score by supporting the person whom Smith most detested. With a self-pleased smile he stepped to the podium and announced that California would switch to Roosevelt. Suddenly it was all over. The other delegations fell over one another to follow suit and make FDR's nomination unanimous. Roosevelt, in a striking break with tradition, flew to Chicago to accept the nomination.

If the Democrats had closed ranks, Lippmann had not. A contest between Roosevelt, Hoover, and Socialist Norman Thomas was not his idea of a choice. "Those who can find in any one of these men or in any of these parties the ideal of their heart's desire are fortunate indeed," he declared glumly. "The rest of us will, I imagine, spend the next months realizing that John Morley was right when he said that politics was the science of the second best."¹⁵

Others shared his discouragement. The *New Republic*, after listening a few weeks to Hoover and Roosevelt proclaim the sanctity of a balanced budget, labeled the campaign an "obscene spectacle." Professor Paul Douglas of the University of Chicago, later a Democratic senator from Illinois, declared that the destruction of the Democratic party would be "one of the best things that could happen in our political life." John Dewey said it would be "suicidal" for progressives to back Roosevelt. Henry Hazlitt, Elmer Davis and Reinhold Niebuhr vowed they would vote for Norman Thomas. Lewis Mumford took the logic a step further: "If I vote at all it will be for the communists, in order to express as emphatically as possible the belief that our present crisis calls for a complete and drastic reorientation."

With the campaign in abeyance until the fall, Lippmann began his annual six-week summer vacation at the end of July. Setting off in their Chevrolet, he and Faye visited his mother at Saranac Lake in the Adirondacks, and then continued north to spend a week with Hamilton Fish Armstrong and his wife, Helen, in the woods of Quebec. Over the past decade the two men had developed a close friendship. Lippmann wrote frequently for Armstrong's magazine, *Foreign Affairs*, published by the Council on Foreign Relations, and in 1931 and 1932 edited the