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Letter from Theodore Bilbo to Sam H. Smith; July 13, 1935

Theodore Bilbo

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July 13, 1935 Reply to Smith attached
Smith for supporting Mississippi

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United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON
AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY

July 13, 1935

C. A. LAWTON, CLERK

Senator Sam H. Smith
Pittsboro, Mississippi

My very dear friend:

I am more than pleased to acknowledge receipt of your very gracious and inspiring letter of July 5. This letter was so interesting that I have taken time from my busy and absorbing hours at the Senate to read it several times for fear that I might miss the significance of your many observations.

In the first place I want to give recognition to your urgent and splendid words of recommendation in behalf of Mrs. Otis Hill Cook of Calhoun County. I will take great pleasure in commending her splendid qualities to Dr. Alliston, State Administrator of the W. P. A. if you will be so kind as to give me her post office address. Of course, I want everyone to get a square deal, but when you assure ^{me} that Mrs. Cook and her family have always been friends and ^{superior} neighbors, and ^{to me}, it makes me especially anxious to help her. ^{What I shall do for her} will not be done merely as ^{our} courtesy, but with a determined purpose of securing such employment for her as will meet her special qualifications and supply her needs in the present economical disturbance.

I note your observations about the revamping of plans as to county administrations in the W. P. A. work. The idea of having a county administrator and a county set-up never came from Mr. Hopkins, but was the result of a mistaken idea that the people had that the W. P. A. work organization would be an exact duplication of the old Conner F. E. R. A. set-up.

I also notice your observation about the failure of all the people to attend the mass meetings held for the purpose of selecting a committee of five to outline and present to Dr. Alliston the most desirable projects for each of the 82 counties in Mississippi. Of course, I would regret exceedingly and it would grieve me much to know the committee selected would fail to give proper interpretation of the wishes of the majority of any particular county involved. ~~happened to hinder~~ ^{happened to hinder} ~~social~~ ^{social} Alliston's real purpose ~~to~~ ^{to} matters directly ~~to~~ ^{to} one people so that he would not be misled by the board of supervisors, or any court house clique, or any other faction within the county. It was an attempt on his part to have a real democratic administration.

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Senator Sam H. Smith - 2 - July 13, 1935

I note with interest your conclusions about the great and overwhelming domination of the affairs of Calhoun County by Dr. F. L. McGahey. From your conclusions the doctor must be a gentleman of ability, sagacity, and leadership.

My attention is next directed to your keen and elequent observations concerning my present friendly attitude and support of my friend and neighbor, the Honorable Hugh White of Columbia, Mississippi, for governor of the Old Magnolia State. It is gratifying to know that you will arrange through Dr. McGahey to have Governor Connor issue a proclamation calling upon all of my friends to gather together in their usual places of worship to fast and pray that I will survive the ordeal of supporting Mr. White and to escape the consequences of contamination because the Right Reverend Frederick Sullens, Editor of the "Jackson Daily Liar," has seen fit to support Mr. White for governor.

I ^{che} ~~note~~ interest and appreciation that you also entertain the idea that ~~the~~ ^{ignorance} ~~ignoring~~ with political death and destruction by giving my support to this distinguished gentleman from Co.

I am especially impressed with your request to permit a photographer to make my picture while casting a free-man's ballot—pure and patriotic—for Hugh White on the 6th of August down in the little town of Poplarville—the Athens of South Mississippi—the home of my nativity—the sweetest village of the piney woods—the one spot on earth that I have tried to immortalize through my efforts to serve a grateful people of my state and nation. I make haste to gladly give my consent to have this picture ~~made in all of its details and thus satisfy beyond all peradventure that curiosity bump that sometimes troubles the north end of your spinal column—the abnormalcy of which I readily admit to be true.~~

Now, my dear friend Sam, having granted all the requests contained in your elequent epistle, won't you be kind enough to permit me to give expression to some thoughts that intrude themselves upon me and portray the meanderings of my mind?

When I contemplate the awful crime that you ~~are planning to commit~~ ^{say here} against organized ~~society~~ and good government ~~o. pic+...~~ ^{C. A.} voting for Dennis Murphree for governor of the great commonwealth of Mississippi, I wish my vocabulary was such that I could fully, adequately, and completely describe the feelings of regret and sorrow that overwhelm me as I am reminded of the fact that you, my friend, my supporter—a friend that I love and admire for the splendid qualities of honesty, integrity, and patriotism which you have always demonstrated in all of my

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Senator Sam H. Smith - 3 - July 13, 1935

dealings with you in the past—shall, in your latter years blindly, and I say blindly in order to excuse your conduct, because I am sure that it is not with your usual crystal thoroughness of mind to analyze every proposition and determine the good from the bad, to destroy and break down a reputation of a life's making by an act that will put you in a class with, yea, put you to bed with, the foulest, the dirtiest, and the most reprehensible gang of thieves and racketeers that ever robbed a bank or scuttled a ship on the high seas.

By giving your endorsement and influence to Dennis Murphree and by helping him to become governor of the state you are putting the affairs of the government of the state of your nativity in the hands of such men as Cecil Inman, Rush Knox, Bob Brown, and a long list of racketeers whose reputations for graft and racketeering at the expense of the tax-ridden people of the state are too well-known to be denied by any intelligent voter of the state. Have you so soon forgotten my efforts to route the money-changers out of the temple of justice in 1928? Murphree was then governor, and he was either winking at this carnival of crime and graft as the chief law-enforcing officer of the state, ~~he was so~~ damned stupid and weak and ignorant that it ~~would~~ ^{was} ~~be~~ ^{was} ~~to~~ ^{was} be even secretary of a goat breeders' association, ~~of course~~, he knew that Rush Knox and his brother-in-law were shaking down the big tax-payers and robbing the state. I succeeded in making this bunch of gangsters put part of this money back into the people's strong-box, but I have always known that I was able to recapture only a small part of the theft. It was through the power of Murphree, aided and abetted by his brother-in-law and the attorney-general of the state that all of the big corporations were forced to kick in on a great slush fund that was used in Murphree's campaign against me in 1927.

For you to put your stamp of approval upon, aid, and assist in returning to power and pelf this gang is beyond me—it passeth all understanding, knowing you as I do. Again I repeat that the puny sentiment of county pride has blinded you and is prohibiting you from asserting your usual convictions of honesty and probity in government.

When you have taken my picture voting for Hugh White, who is incidentally supported by Fred Sullens, and I might say here that he ~~is~~ ^{is} ~~not~~ ^{is} fighting Murphree, I want to tell you that your picture ~~is~~ ^{is} ~~not~~ ^{is} to be complete ~~and~~ you make a picture of your candidate for governor, Murphree, as he marched to the polls in last summer's campaign side by side with Fred Sullens, editor of the "Jackson News", and Tom Headerman, editor of the "Clarion Ledger", and voted for that prince of betrayers of the people, Hubert D. Stevens. He not only voted for Stevens, but he