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TO THE EDITOR:

In light of the current controversy over the disposition and ownership of the papers of public officials, I thought that the readers of the *American Archivist* might be interested in an editorial which I came across recently in the Northwestern University student newspaper, the *Summer Northwestern*. The editorial, which appeared in the July 18, 1947, issue of the paper, is headlined "Law Should Govern Officials' Papers." Although the editorial is unsigned, it was probably written by Creed Black, then editor of the *Summer Northwestern*, who later became a rather prominent journalist. The editorial, in its entirety, follows below:

The actions of two of President Roosevelt's associates, James Farley and John N. Garner, again throw light on the chaotic situation that exists in the disposal of papers by former public officials.

Farley has just completed a series of highly opinionated articles, based partly on recollections and partly on his notes. These articles were designed mainly to justify his own past actions at the expense of Roosevelt's reputation. On the other extreme, the former vice president revealed that he has burned all his papers and documents.

Such contradictions are possible because the papers of public men have no legal status whatever. They are not required to be made public or preserved, nor are they specifically stated to be private property.

Following the examples of Wilson, Hoover and Franklin Roosevelt in turning over their papers to libraries, however, there has been a growing tendency to recognize the public's claim to such documents. Nevertheless, those of Harding, like Garner's, were destroyed.

As long as these papers were collected while their owners were in the public service, it would seem reasonable to insist that they are more than private property. If historians are ever able to make a fair evaluation of this age, they will need all the papers and documents relating to it.

On the other hand, Farley's actions show that there should also be some protection against the damaging of reputations by reckless and indiscriminate publication of statements made in confidence.

Perhaps a statute requiring that the private papers of federal officials be turned over to the Library of Congress 50 years after the death of the owner would get around this difficulty.

But no matter what the specific provisions, we need some law in this field. In fairness to future generations and the officials themselves, Congress should make it clear just what the status of these papers is.

Unfortunately, the salient issues posed by this undergraduate editorialist almost thirty years ago have yet to be resolved. As J. Frank Cook, in his meticulously researched and carefully reasoned article "'Private' Papers of Public Officials" (*American Archivist*, July 1975) argued, it is high time to dispense with the hoary and vexatious concept of the private ownership of papers generated and received by public officials in the course of conducting official business while on the public payroll.

PATRICK M. QUINN
Northwestern University Archives

TO THE EDITOR:

I have an eighty-six page, 1904, album containing historically significant materials about Puerto Rico. I have tried to place it where it will be of the most use and

adequately housed and protected. I have not been successful, and ask your assistance by publishing this letter in the *American Archivist*.

Is there some institution concerned with Puerto Rican or West Indian materials that would be interested in receiving this photograph album? It is not for sale, but will be placed in the institution that is most appropriate. If any institution is interested, please contact the writer for details and conditions.

ROBERT V. VAUGHN
Box 1224, Kingshill
St. Croix, Virgin Islands 00850

TO THE EDITOR:

The History of Economics Society will hold its next annual conference at the University of California, Riverside, on March 24–26, 1977.

Persons wishing to present papers should submit an abstract, in two copies, together with a *separate* sheet containing the following information:

1. Author's name, address, professional affiliation, position, and telephone number.
2. Title of the paper.
3. Whether or not the author is a member of the History of Economics Society.

The above must be received by November 15, 1976.

Persons wishing to serve as discussants are invited to submit the following information: name, address, professional affiliation, position, telephone number, and major areas of interest *within* the history of economics.

All communications regarding the conference should be addressed to: President-elect Carl G. Uhr, History of Economics Society, Department of Economics, University of California, Riverside, California 92502.

The purpose of the History of Economics Society is to promote interest and inquiry into the history of economics and related parts of intellectual history; to facilitate communication and discourse among scholars working in the field; and to acquaint members of the profession with the scientific, literary, and philosophical traditions of economics. Information about membership in the society, which may be combined with a reduced-price subscription to the quarterly journal *History of Political Economy*, can be obtained from James L. Cochrane, Secretary-Treasurer, History of Economics Society, Department of Economics, University of South Carolina, Columbia, South Carolina 29208.

JAMES L. COCHRANE
University of South Carolina

TO THE EDITOR:

I have read and re-read Milton O. Gustafson's "The Empty Shrine" in the *American Archivist* 39, 3 (July 1976): 271–85. It cannot be contended that my memory going back twenty five to thirty years would change anything that is contained in the article, but I do believe that one series of minutes of the Librarian's Conference, between 1946 and 1952, would throw additional light on the transfer. Those minutes will show that long before the transfer was effected Luther H. Evans's advisors sitting in Librarian's Conference had come to the conclusion that when approached by the Archivist of the United States, the documents would be transferred, with good grace.

JOHN C. L. ANDREASSEN, *McGill University Archives*