



YOUR KINDLE NOTES FOR:

## **America First - The Battle Against Intervention 1940-1941**

Wayne Cole

Last accessed on Sunday August 18, 2019

### **4 Highlight(s) | 0 Note(s)**

---

Yellow highlight | Location: 865

Many interventionists held views which could properly be classified as Left of Center. The interventionists included many New Dealers and liberal Democrats. The Administration leadership and the Democratic Party discipline undoubtedly helped keep some hesitant liberals in the interventionist fold. Many liberals in academic circles were interventionists. Labor was divided much like the nation as a whole, but a majority of organized labor favored aiding Britain and believed it was more important to defeat Germany than to keep out of the war.<sup>3</sup> After the Germans attacked the Soviet Union, American Communists were suddenly converted into interventionists.<sup>4</sup>

Note:

---

Yellow highlight | Location: 1,653

The America First Committee tried to avoid the stigma of anti-Semitism. Through General Wood's influence, Lessing J. Rosenwald, a Jewish director of Sears Roebuck and Company, became an America First national committee member in September, 1940. However, Henry Ford was made a member of the national committee at the same time. Stuart deliberately released the announcement of these two new members simultaneously. He hoped in this way to demonstrate that persons with different views were able to put aside differences and unite under America First to oppose intervention.<sup>3</sup> His idea, however, backfired. Ford had conducted an anti-Semitic campaign through his Dearborn Independent from 1920 to 1922 and in 1924–1925. This campaign included the publishing of the fraudulent Protocols of the Elders of Zion. Ford publicly denied that he was anti-Semitic in 1927 but his name continued to be identified with anti-Semitism in the minds of many. His association with America First brought the charge of anti-Semitism upon the Committee and increased the difficulty of getting Jewish support for the organization.<sup>4</sup> Ford's presence and the consequent pressure led Rosenwald to resign from the national

committee early in December, 1940. The America First executive committee, therefore, voted to drop Ford from the national committee. According to the minutes of this meeting, the action was taken because Ford had “been unable to give any time or attention to the work of the Committee, and because the Committee could not be sure that from time to time Mr. Ford’s views were consistent with the official views of the Committee.” Stuart hoped the move might induce Rosenwald to reconsider his resignation but in this he was to be disappointed.<sup>5</sup> Despite his anti-Semitic reputation, Ford probably would not have been dropped if he had been willing to make a sizeable financial contribution to the Committee.<sup>6</sup> This

Note:

---

Yellow highlight | Location: 1,917

America First leaders had not read Lindbergh’s Des Moines speech before it was delivered.<sup>108</sup> Such an outburst of criticism, however, could not be ignored without serious consequences to the Committee. National headquarters admonished local chapters to withhold comment on the speech until after the national committee met.<sup>109</sup> The course which the Committee should follow with regard to the Des Moines speech was discussed at length at a national committee meeting on September 18, 1941. In the discussion it was pointed out that Lindbergh had sacrificed a great deal for America First. Further, most of them were inclined to feel that what Lindbergh had said was actually quite true. Thus the decision was made not to repudiate Lindbergh or his speech.<sup>110</sup> A letter by Amos R. E. Pinchot, a national committee member present at the meeting, throws light on the view taken in the discussion.

Note:

---

Yellow highlight | Location: 2,036

President Roosevelt’s “shoot-on-sight” speech was met with a storm of protest from the America First Committee. The executive committee of the New York chapter labeled the speech “an amazing move to arouse hysteria and plunge us into a foreign war, unwanted by the people . . . and needless for national defense.”<sup>21</sup> The Research Bureau accused the President of circumventing the spirit of the Neutrality and Lend-Lease Acts. The Bureau described President Roosevelt’s interpretation of “freedom of the seas” as “freedom to aid one country at war without interference from that country’s enemies.”<sup>22</sup> General Wood released a statement endorsed by fifty-eight prominent

Americans denouncing the speech. This statement made no mention of America First but the “independent group” of endorsers included most of the America First national committee members and its principal advisors. The “independent group” also included Philip C. Jessup, Edwin M. Borchard, Edwin S. Corwin, Charles Clayton Morrison, Ray Lyman Wilbur, Charles A. Beard, Igor Sikorsky, and others. This statement described the President’s speech as

Note:

---