

Waldo H. Heinrichs (1891-1959)
Lend Lease Act Collection, 1940-41
MSA 314

Introduction

The bulk of the material in this collection involves the debate over the acceptance of the Lend Lease Act of 1941 between Waldo H. Heinrichs (1891-1959), a professor at Middlebury College in Middlebury, Vermont, and U.S. Senator George D. Aiken (1892-1994), of Vermont. This collection was donated to the Vermont Historical Society by Waldo H. Heinrichs, Jr., in 2002 (ms. acc. no. 2002.3). The collection is housed in one archival box and consumes .25 linear feet of shelf space.

Biographical Note

Waldo Huntley Heinrichs (1891-1959) was born in British India of Baptist missionary parents. Upon graduating from Denison University in 1913, he began a career in the international Y.M.C.A., interrupted by service in the First World War. A pursuit (fighter) pilot, he was shot down, severely wounded, and taken prisoner by the Germans. After the war he earned an MA in history at Columbia University, returned to the Y.M.C.A. in India, and then ran the “Y” in Jerusalem, Palestine, that was open to all faiths. In the 1920s, Heinrichs supported a new Wilsonian world order that would lead to the reduction of military conflict and world peace. He joined the faculty of Middlebury College in 1934 and in 1936 and 1939 took study tours to Europe. During the 1939 trip he gained entrance to German-occupied Czechoslovakia and talked with people under Nazi domination. He became convinced that Nazi power was a threat to free peoples.

In 1941 Heinrichs became involved in effort to convince the United States government to purchase arms and lend them to countries fighting the dictators in Europe. The Committee to Defend America (CDA) was organized to muster public opinion in support of intervention in Europe through the Lend Lease Act. The Vermont chapter of CDA formed in the summer of 1940 with Heinrichs serving as one of the co-secretaries. Vermont’s U.S. representative, Charles Plumley, supported the Lend Lease bill, as did one of its U.S. senators, Warren Austin. Newly elected Senator George D. Aiken, however, was opposed to the bill. The CDA’s efforts focused on changing Aiken’s opinion, but they ultimately failed when he voted against the Lend Lease bill on March 8, 1941. The majority of the U.S. Senate and House, however, supported the bill. Heinrichs moved on beyond the CDA to join the new pro-war, public activist group Fight for Freedom.

Scope and Content

This collection contains photocopies of correspondence and other documents related to the effort in Vermont to convince the United States government to support the concept of Lend Lease in opposition to the dictators of Europe. This collection includes a scrapbook of copies of letters put together by Waldo H. Heinrichs, Jr. and presented to

his mother, to commemorate the part his father played in gaining support for the Lend Lease program. Included are some anonymous letters attacking Heinrichs for his “un-American” views and other strong reactions against the views of the Committee to Defend America by Aiding the Allies, of which Heinrichs was an officer.

The collection also includes copies of correspondence between Heinrichs and Senator George D. Aiken of Vermont, leading up to Aiken’s voting against the Lend Lease bill. The chairman of the Burlington Fellowship of Reconciliation asks Heinrichs if he would prefer war with the Axis rather than just aid to the Allies, and Heinrichs responds in the affirmative, though another letter from Paul Evans, President of the University of Vermont and co-head of the Committee, says he personally wants aid, not war. Overall, this is a thoughtful exchange of views on this contentious issue.

There is a small file on the Aiken-Flanders primary fight for the Senate in 1940, an exchange of correspondence on the question of whether historians should participate in current events debates, a small file on various Lend Lease issues, and copies of the address Senator Aiken gave against the Lend Lease bill. Lastly there is a pamphlet dealing in part with the long friendship between then-governor Aiken and Senator Ernest Gibson, Jr., and the friction caused as Gibson went on to replace William Allen White as Chairman of the Committee to Defend America by Aiding the Allies.

Publication History

Vermont History, Vol. 69, Nos. 3 & 4, “Waldo H. Heinrichs, George D. Aiken, and the Lend Lease Debate of 1941”, by Waldo H. Heinrichs Jr.

Related Collections

The papers of Waldo H. Heinrichs are at the Yale University Library, Divinity Library Special Collections, record group 115.

Inventory

- MSA 314:1 Aiken-Flanders Senate primary campaign of 1940.
- 2 An exchange of letters over the correctness of historians participating in public debate, September 1940.
 - 3 Aiken-Heinrichs exchange of views over the petition circulated by the Vermont Committee to Defend America by Aiding the Allies, and other correspondence and newspaper articles.
 - 4 George D. Aiken, Senate speech against Lend Lease, February 25, 1941.
 _____, CBS radio address, March 6, 1941.
 _____, remarks in U. S. Senate, March 6, 1941.

- 6 Scrapbook, photocopies of correspondence with Vermonters concerning aid to Britain, February - April, 1941.
- 5 “Friends, Neighbors, and Political Allies: Reflections on the Gibson-Aiken Connection” by Samuel B. Hand, in Occasional Paper #11, Center for Research on Vermont, 1986

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