

Jaunty Truman Says He Kept White To Support FBI Probe Of US Reds

By CLARENCE A. JOHNSON

KANSAS CITY (AP) — Former President Truman told the nation last night that he kept Harry Dexter White in government service because he did not want to endanger the FBI investigation of subversives.

This was Truman's answer to accusations stemming from a speech 11 days ago by Atty. Gen. Brownell. The former President spoke over a nationwide radio-TV hookup.

Brownell had charged that White had been retained in an important post in 1945 "though he was known to be a Communist spy by the very people who appointed him."

White died in 1948. Truman, jaunty and confident as ever, made a step-by-step summation of the White case, and defended and followed it by blast. Brownell's charges as "phony," as "false" and as "damnable demagoguery."

"The manner and timing of what has been done," Truman said, "makes it clear that the powers of the attorney general have been prostituted for hopes of political gain. No election is worth so much."

Truman's first answer to Brownell's charges was that the Republicans were "desperate" because of their election reverses in New York and New Jersey.

The attorney general withheld comment on Truman's talk. Other reaction ran generally along partisan lines.

Truman had told newsmen earlier in the day he would talk to them after his speech, but on departing from the radio-television studio he said, "Nothing tonight. I might say something I shouldn't."

At one point he lashed out with this:

MCCARTHYISM

"It is now evident that the present administration has fully embraced, for political purposes, McCarthyism. I am not referring to the senator from Wisconsin—he is only important in that his name has taken on a dictionary meaning in the world."

As to the action he took in the White case, he said, it was the best for the nation.

He said he wanted the "American people to understand that the course we took protected the public interest and security and, at the same time, permitted the intensive FBI investigation then in progress to go forward. No other course could have served both purposes."

He admitted an error in a previous statement made after Brownell issued his charges. Then Truman learned White was "wrong," he fired him by allowing him to resign.

"Although my recent offhand comment concerning his resignation was in error," he said last night, "the fact is that he was separated from government service promptly when the necessity for secrecy concerning the intensive investigation by the FBI came to an end."

White had been assistant secretary of the Treasury. The Brownell charges revolved around his promotion to the post of U. S. member of the Board of Directors of the International Monetary Fund, a promotion Brownell said was approved after the White House received allegations of disloyalty against White.

In describing the White case, Truman said a lengthy FBI report on "certain accusations of espionage" reached the White House in December 1945.

"Among the many names mentioned, I now find, was that of Harry Dexter White, who had been in the Treasury Department for many years and who was at that time an assistant secretary of the Treasury," he said.

He added that as best he can determine an FBI report "specifically discussing activities of Harry Dexter White was brought to my attention" early in February 1946. He said it was delivered to him by Brig. Gen. Harry Vaughan, "brought to my personal attention by Secretary of State Byrnes."

Truman said he sent a copy of the report to White's immediate superior, the late Pres. Vinson, then secretary of the Treasury. He said he also discussed the matter with Vinson as well as Byrnes.

But that discussion, he related, was not until after the Senate had confirmed White's promotion to the International Monetary Fund.

"Secretary of the Treasury Vinson consulted with Atty. Gen. Tom Clark and other government officials," Truman related. "When the results of these consultations were reported to me, the conclusion was reached that the appointment should be allowed to take its normal course. The final responsibility for this decision, of course, was mine. The reason for the decision was that the charges which had been made to the FBI against Mr. White also involved many other persons. . . . It was of great importance to the nation that this investigation be continued in order to prove or disprove these charges and to determine if still other persons were implicated."

ALERT FEARED

He said any unusual action in connection with the White appointment "might well have alerted all the persons involved to the fact that the investigation was under way and thus endanger the success of the investigation."

At one point in his speech, Truman said the "wild imputations of disloyalty which Mr. Brownell has made" were directed not only at him but against Vinson.

"No man I ever knew was a more patriotic American," Truman said, adding that "I deeply resent these cowardly insinuations against one who is dead."

Truman made no mention by name of J. Edgar Hoover, director of the FBI, a fact noted by Sen. Homer Ferguson (R-Mich.). Ferguson accused the former President of letting it "leak out" before the speech that the FBI director had been in on the agreement to keep White in the government while the investigation continued.

But in the speech, the Michigan senator said, "he doesn't combine

held by him as assistant secretary of the Treasury."

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