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Guide to the Louis Brownlow Diaries 1933-1936



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Table of Contents

Acknowledgments	3
Descriptive Summary	3
Information on Use	3
Access	3
Citation	3
Biographical Note	3
Scope Note	4
Related Resources	6
Subject Headings	6
INVENTORY	6

Descriptive Summary

Identifier	ICU.SPCL.BROWNLOW
Title	Brownlow, Louis. Diaries
Date	1933-1936
Size	1.5 linear feet (3 boxes)
Repository	Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library 1100 East 57th Street Chicago, Illinois 60637 U.S.A.
Abstract	Louis Brownlow, Director of the Public Administration Clearing House. Louis Brownlow's diaries consist of seven typewritten volumes totaling 1428 pages, which cover the period from November 12, 1933 to December 14, 1936

Acknowledgments

Information on Use

Access

No restrictions.

Citation

When quoting material from this collection, the preferred citation is: Brownlow, Louis. Diaries, [Box #, Folder #], Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library

Biographical Note

Louis Brownlow was born the son of a postmaster in rural Buffalo, Missouri on August 29, 1879, his entire life, which ended on September 27, 1963, was dedicated to a resolution of urban problems. After a career as a syndicated journalist, he was appointed by President Woodrow Wilson Commissioner for the District of Columbia in 1915. In 1920 he became City Manager of Petersburg, Virginia, and in 1923 he assumed the same position in Knoxville, Tennessee. From 1931 until he retired in 1945, Brownlow served as Director of Public Administration Clearing House (PACH) with his headquarters on the campus of the University of Chicago. This strategic, yet somewhat detached position provided Brownlow with an almost unique view of the internal operation, of the early New Deal, the Hutchins administration of the University of Chicago, and the activities of the affiliates of the Public Administration Clearing House. Brownlow reported his observations on these subjects as well as his personal experiences and travels in the form of a diary which was recorded daily for the benefit of the trustees of the Clearing House until a heart attack forced him to curtail many of his activities. PACH, which functioned until 1955, was a center for organizations of public officials the field of

administration. PACH was not in competition with member agencies. Rather it served to have participating bodies gain advantage from the immediate interchange of information and experience that derived from being housed under one roof. In addition PACH provided extensive research facilities and library services in the field of public administration. The character as well as the content of the diaries are a reflection of Brownlow's a personality, his experience in the field of public administration and the development of PACH the commonly used acronym for the clearing house.

Brownlow was instrumental in channeling foundation money for research in public affairs. His widespread contacts and conciliatory manner made him an invaluable liaison not only among opposing professional factions but between governmental officials and members of the public service. A clear indication of his talent as a mediator at conferences is revealed in a discussion of a housing conclave which he chaired, found in Volume III, pp. 522-27. All of these qualities made Brownlow an important figure in the first administration of President Franklin D. Roosevelt. With the expansion of government in order to meet the crisis of the depression, Brownlow was consulted on a number of appointments, as well as with respect to the institutionalization of the prolific bureaus. The culmination of this activity was his selection by President Roosevelt to head the President's Committee on Administrative Management in order to recognize the executive branch of the federal government. The formulation of the PACM and Brownlow's role in it may be traced in the last several volumes of the diary.

Set in the hectic early New Deal period, the diaries capture all aspects of Brownlow's activities and personality. While the entries are made daily in chronological order, each of the first five volumes contain a comprehensive subject index which refers to specific pages in the text. A wide variety of subject headings are found in the diaries. Among the most extensive is one devoted to the personnel problems of the New Deal's burgeoning agencies. Here Brownlow discusses background that led to important appointments, such as Leonard D. White as Chairman of the United States Civil Service Commission. Moreover Brownlow follows and evaluates the appointee's subsequent performance on the job. The same detail is true with respect to the accounts of negotiations with other noteworthy public servants, such as Clarence Dykstra, whom the Director of the Public Administration Clearing House was attempting to induce to come to Chicago. In the same vein, Brownlow provided his readers with candid opinions of such important New Dealers as Harold Ickes and Harry Hopkins.

Scope Note

Louis Brownlow's diaries, preserved in seven typewritten volumes totaling 1428 pages, cover a period from November 12, 1933 to December 14, 1936. During this period the author was Director of the Public Administration Clearing House with his headquarters on the campus of the University of Chicago.

The present set of diaries, complete with an extensive subject index, is apparently one of six existing copies. It was deposited in the Department of Special Collections on April 28, 1966 by the University President's Office and was the copy sent to Robert M. Hutchins, President of the University of Chicago during the period that Brownlow kept the diary. Although the diaries themselves were never published, much of their contents were incorporated in the second

volume of Brownlow's two-part autobiography, *A Passion for Anonymity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958). Another copy of the diary may be found in the papers of Charles E. Merriam, who also served as a trustee.

Besides a discussion of personnel problems, each volume concerns itself with the actual operation of agencies at all levels of government. The same is also true in Brownlow's account of the performance of the professional organizations. Much space is devoted to a description of the internal affairs of the Public Works Administration and the Civil Works Administration and their relations with the President and Congress. In addition Brownlow deals with inter-governmental relations between state and local agencies and regional planning boards. In each instance the theme is usually with regard to their coordination with corresponding federal agencies.

Besides being indexed according to specific agencies, certain projects dealing with important matters of public policy, such as housing, planning, and social welfare, are cross-referenced by subject. Aware of its future significance, the author was careful to trace the progress of social security legislation.

From Brownlow's position as head of PACH the reader can witness the formulation of new professional associations and groups. The collection reveals the interrelationship of the groups composing the clearinghouse and their methods of policy determination. Among the groups served by PACH were the American Legislator's Association, the American Municipal Association, the Governmental Research Association, and the International City Managers Association. The diaries are replete with original newsletters, conference documents, and reports distributed by these organizations. Brownlow allows the reader, who it will be remembered was a trustee of the clearing house, to share his observations with respect to policy differences among the member organizations.

These professional associations became known as the "1313 Organizations" because of their location at 1313 E. 60th Street. The diaries provide an interesting and complete description of the negotiations that led to the construction of that building by the University of Chicago. Furthermore, the journal enables one to gain some perspective on the relationship of the 1313 organizations to the university of Chicago in general and the Department of Political Science in particular. Brownlow, who was the intimate friend of Charles E. Merriam, the Chairman of the Department of Political Science, also served as a lecturer in public administration. Some discussion is devoted to the author's duties at the University of Chicago and as a guest lecturer at several other institutions.

The Public Administration Clearing House's dependence on the Spelman Fund and other foundations provides yet another focus for the diary. Here the importance of Brownlow's connections with Beardsley Ruml can be ascertained. An understanding of the author's connections with the Social Science Research Council is also revealed by the diaries.

Brownlow's wide assortment of duties assured him of a great degree of travel outside his home base in Chicago. His contacts were not limited to the United States. He was constantly attending or presiding over international conferences in the field of public administration. His trips

were so extensive that Brownlow, partly in jest, felt compelled to include in the diary a chart diagramming the time spent in different cities since he began the journals. (This document appears in Volume VI, p. 1145). Since the diary was composed almost daily, it not only reflects Brownlow's activities but also his impressions of the city in which he happened to be writing his immediate entry.

The diary also includes copies of miscellaneous correspondence, confidential memoranda, and pertinent materials from various conferences, such as the convention of the American Political Science Association, which Brownlow attended as an observer rather than a participant. While the diary is basically a document of Brownlow's professional activities, it does include material about his personal affairs and his health. In summary, while the diaries deal with only a relatively brief period of Brownlow's long life, they provide a complete picture of the man during that time span. A clear indication of the compassion of the man is provided by a touching digression in Volume III, pp. 595-96. Here Brownlow comments on the plight of exiled German public officials of excellent reputation who seek his assistance in finding them employment at virtually any wage in order that they may establish themselves in the United States.

Other holdings in the Department of Special Collections which contain material on Louis Brownlow or the Public Administration Clearing House include the papers of Charles E. Merriam, Robert E. Merriam, and Beardsley Ruml.

Related Resources

The following related resources are located in the Department of Special Collections:

<http://www.lib.uchicago.edu/e/spcl/select.html>

Subject Headings

- Ickes, Harold L. (Harold LeClair), 1874-1952
- Brownlow, Louis, b. 1879
- Hopkins, Harry Lloyd, 1890-1946
- Roosevelt, Franklin D. (Franklin Delano) 1882-1945
- Ruml, Beardsley, 1894-1960
- White, Leonard D.
- Public Administration Clearing House
- United States. Public Works Administration
- United States. Federal Civil Works Administration
- United States. Social Security Administration
- University of Chicago. Political Science Department
- Public Policy
- New Deal, 1933-1939
- Diaries

INVENTORY

Box 1

Volume I November 12, 1933-March 6, 1934

Box 1

Volume II March 8, 1934-July 1, 1934

Box 1

Volume III September 15, 1934-January 7, 1935

Box 2

Volume IV January 9, 1935-June 29, 1935

Box 2

Volume V July 13, 1935-January 7, 1936

Box 3

Volume VI January 11, 1936-May 12, 1936

Box 3

Volume VII May 13, 1936-December 14, 1936