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Abstract

Shortly after Christmas in 1942, the U.S. minister to Australia, Nelson Trusler Johnson, decided the time was right for a break from his wartime duties. Johnson and his wife, Jane, agreed that a seaside vacation with their young children was in order. The Johnson family duly motored to Narooma, about 150 miles southeast of Canberra, for what they expected to be a three-week holiday during the peak of the Australian summer. They chose the spot for its beauty—and because the children would be able to swim without worrying about sharks. The Johnsons' holiday was cut short on January 8, when wire copy began circulating in Australia with unexpected and unwelcome news. Johnson was to be replaced as minister by a political confidant of President Franklin D. Roosevelt—Democratic National Committee Chairman Edward J. Flynn of New York. Not only would Flynn succeed Johnson in Canberra, he would be given an upgraded title—Ambassador Plenipotentiary—and expanded duties as a “roving Ambassador” in the South Pacific. He would also get nearly twice the salary Johnson was making. (Johnson was paid \$10,000 a year; Flynn's salary would be \$17,000.) [*excerpt*]

Keywords

Franklin D. Roosevelt, World War II, Australia, Ed Flynn

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The Battle FDR Lost: The Failed Nomination of Boss Ed Flynn as Minister to Australia

Michael J. Birkner

Shortly after Christmas in 1942, the U.S. minister to Australia, Nelson Trusler Johnson, decided the time was right for a break from his wartime duties. Johnson and his wife, Jane, agreed that a seaside vacation with their young children was in order. The Johnson family duly motored to Narooma, about 150 miles southeast of Canberra, for what they expected to be a three-week holiday during the peak of the Australian summer. They chose the spot for its beauty—and because the children would be able to swim without worrying about sharks.¹ The Johnsons' holiday was cut short on January 8, when wire copy began circulating in Australia with unexpected and unwelcome news. Johnson was to be replaced as minister by a political confidant of President Franklin D. Roosevelt—Democratic National Committee Chairman Edward J. Flynn of New York. Not only would Flynn succeed Johnson in Canberra, he would be given an upgraded title—Ambassador Plenipotentiary—and expanded duties as a “roving Ambassador” in the South Pacific. He would also get nearly twice the salary Johnson was making. (Johnson was paid \$10,000 a year; Flynn's salary would be \$17,000.)

Contrary to protocol, the well-known Boss of the Bronx announced his own appointment prior to any formal news release from the White House.² Two days would pass before President Roosevelt's spokesman, Stephen Early, made it official: Johnson, Early said, had requested recall and put in retirement papers; Ed Flynn was the president's choice to succeed him in this important theater of the war.³ The fact that Johnson had *not* asked to be replaced and had *not* intended to retire while the war was in progress was known only to the minister, his wife, and a few baffled State Department officials. The appointment had not gone through the regular channels, nor had the president's choice been vetted by the secretary of state.

In an instant Nelson Johnson's life was turned upside down. Little did Ed Flynn know it when he made his announcement, but his appointment was to bring him more grief than glory. Moreover, the president whom he had long served as a trusted political adviser would be seriously embarrassed by the headlines generated in course of the confirmation process and by its unlikely outcome.

As soon as news of Flynn's nomination reached him in Narooma, Nelson Johnson packed up his belongings and returned to Canberra to begin the process of closing out his affairs. He did not hide his disappointment from friends, nor from his associates in the diplomatic corps. As Johnson pointed out to a number of people, including Stanley Hornbeck, then assistant secretary of state for Asian affairs, he did not want to leave Australia while the war continued. He was annoyed that this was how the administration spun the issue. However, if retirement or reassignment was the

president's wish, he would return to Washington as soon as his successor was confirmed by the Senate.⁴

No one in the Australian government knew what to make of the president's decision to replace the hard-working and popular minister. In private, reactions to the Flynn appointment among Australian officials ranged from resignation to anger. Notes of appreciation sent to Johnson by leading figures in the Australian government, among them Prime Minister John Curtin, former Prime Minister William (“Billy”) Hughes, and Labor Party stalwart Arthur A. Calwell, made him feel he had accomplished something, but they also reminded him that his job was not yet fully done. Noting his “profound regret” that Johnson was going to leave Australia, Calwell observed that “in our hour of greatest danger from invasion you were Australia's first and one of its greatest friends.” No stranger to hyperbole, Calwell went on to say that “but for you and General MacArthur [*sic*] we might easily today be a Japanese Colony—a fate too terrible almost to contemplate.”⁵ Prime Minister Curtin could barely restrain his irritation with the president's decision to name a political crony in Johnson's place. According to the editors of Curtin's backroom briefings, Curtin's comments to the Australian press about the replacement of a well-respected minister with a partisan wirepuller were “etched in incredulous contempt.”⁶

Private expressions of support for Johnson from within government circles were one thing, but there would be no official protest from Canberra. Given the Australian government's dependence on American support in its hour of peril, there was no choice but to accept the president's decision. Curtin acknowledged this in his backroom press briefings.⁷ As an American observer, John Holland, put it, “Australia . . . dare not say anything openly for in her desperate military plight she can not afford to question any act of [the] U.S.A., no matter how unprincipled.”⁸

Trained to accept things beyond his control, Johnson intended to maintain a dignified silence on the controversy swirling about him. No public protest would emanate from his lips. As he told his friend Hornbeck, he would be a “good soldier” and “let nature take its course.”⁹ Nature's course, however, proved to be anything but smooth for Ed Flynn's ambassadorial ambitions. Commentators suggested that the nomination would not be cut and dried, owing to question marks about Flynn's qualifications for the position and recent charges, made by the Scripps-Howard newspapers that Flynn had ordered Bronx County public works crews to install 8,000 Belgian paving blocks in the driveway of his upstate New York vacation home. Seemingly a faux scandal that Flynn had brushed off successfully through two grand jury investigations, those paving blocks would prove to be the single most potent argument against Flynn,

and certainly the easiest for an interested public to grasp.¹⁰ Why had FDR nominated Flynn in the first place? The question begs for an answer. Flynn's explanation was that Roosevelt wanted a person who got along well with others to manage an important diplomatic relationship. The fact that Flynn was friendly to organized labor—and that his ethnic heritage was Irish—would presumably help him in the work he was going to be doing in Canberra. Moreover, Flynn claimed, the president told him he “needed someone whom he could trust implicitly for this wartime post.”¹¹

The official explanation for the appointment was terse: this was the president's choice, Stephen Early had noted, and Flynn was qualified for the post. Privately, FDR told an old friend, the Rev. Anson Phelps Stokes, that he needed something other than a “very old and experienced” diplomat in Canberra. (Johnson was surely experienced, having been a member of the foreign service since 1907; but at age 56, he was hardly “very old.” Indeed, he was five years younger than the president.) “What I need [is] a practical politician, thoroughly familiar with and acceptable to labor circles and, if possible, an Irishman because of the fact that nearly half of Australia is Irish in descent.”¹²

There may have been some truth in that, but FDR's remark to Stokes seems more rationalization than rationale. Syndicated columnist Ernest Lindley may have come closer to the point when he observed that Flynn had stood by Roosevelt through “thick and thin” in the political wars. That was reason enough for his appointment, said Lindley. Another columnist, Gould Lincoln, offered a variation on this theme. He suggested that Roosevelt—ever the canny political operator—wanted someone he could trust to “keep an eye” on General Douglas MacArthur, a potential challenger for the presidency in 1944. David Lawrence of *U.S. News and World Report* said Roosevelt was simply paying off a political debt to Flynn, who had engineered FDR's third-term victory in 1940 and remained a key political adviser. His appointment, said Lawrence, was “an unfortunate mistake,” given that Australia was “in the active theater of war” and relations with its leaders should not be put in the hands of “a politician.”¹³

Other observers were more sardonic in their response to this evident political payoff. Syndicated columnist George Sokolsky asserted that Flynn's incompetence at the Democratic National Committee was the real reason for FDR's move. Scripps-Howard press syndicate chief Roy Howard, a burr in Flynn's saddle for more than a decade, suggested that the Bronx boss's qualifications for the Australian post were “about equal to my qualifications for being Pope or for fulfilling the functions of the Dalai Lama.”¹⁴

It would have been difficult to sustain the argument that Flynn was an incompetent politician. He had done yeoman work for Roosevelt for nearly two decades, most especially in securing the president's third-term nomination against a backdrop of public ambivalence about breaking the two-term tradition. Flynn would exert himself usefully for the president in 1944 and for President Harry Truman in 1948. But being a canny politician cut two ways. All observers recognized that this appointment represented first and foremost the payment of a political debt the president owed to Flynn. As matters unfolded, it became more evident that Roosevelt was not the engine behind the appointment; Flynn was.

How can one draw that conclusion? By 1942 Flynn was increasingly the target of sniping from the media and fellow politicians, and he was tiring of the political game. He wanted to burnish his resume before returning to private law practice. Only months before the Australian appointment was announced Flynn had pressed Roosevelt for an appointment as ambassador to Mexico. That proved an impossible gift for Roosevelt to make. Australia seemed right, both to the ambitious boss and the grateful and

increasingly weary president.¹⁵ In this instance, Roosevelt's normally acute instincts proved fallible.

There may never have been a nomination that received worse press than Flynn's. Editorial writers for every New York newspaper, including the normally pro-Roosevelt *New York Times*, castigated the nomination of a native New Yorker.¹⁶ The chorus was taken up across the country, with even reliably Democratic newspapers expressing their surprise, chagrin, or anger that the nomination had been made. An editorial writer in the *San Francisco Chronicle*, for example, suggested that FDR had appointed Flynn as a way to “get rid” of him as Democratic National Committee chairman. The *Nashville Banner* wrote that the appointment “offends Australia. It sickens America. Why, then make it.”¹⁷ One writer suggested that if Flynn were “eligible” for the Australian post, then “why not choose boss Eddie Kelly of Chicago as Envoy Extraordinary to China and issue to Boss Frankie Hague of Jersey City Plenipotentiary credentials to the Court of Saint James?” The nomination was “revolting to all decent citizens,” Edith Harmon of Palo Alto, California, told the president. A disappointed Democrat chastised the president: “How could you do it? Why make it so hard for us who are doing all we can to back you up?” Helen Clymer wrote from New York City to ask, “Why victimize Australia?”¹⁸

Private correspondence addressed to the president, like Harmon's and Clymer's, was surprisingly negative and often caustic, with the most prominent metaphor relating to the “stink” of it. The “stink” motif featured prominently in editorial cartoons as well.¹⁹ The upshot of the sour reaction to the nomination was readily apparent: the Flynn nomination provided an opening for Republicans—until the 1942 elections largely helpless to block New Deal measures—to attack the administration. With the Republican contingent substantially increased in Congress as it commenced business in January 1943, GOP leaders sensed an opportunity to bloody the president's nose. The Flynn nomination offered an ideal test case.

Three days after the president officially nominated Flynn, Senator Styles Bridges (R-NH) said he would fight to block the nomination, which he called “an insult to Australia” and “the most despicable yet made by the President of the United States.” He promised to testify against Flynn at Foreign Relations Committee hearings.²⁰ Bridges cited four grounds for his opposition: first, that Flynn had represented a New Yorker who had large “Jap” interests in the United States before Pearl Harbor; second, that Flynn as chancellor of New York City had invested and lost more than a million dollars in public funds in a firm that later employed him as general counsel; third, that he had appointed the “noted criminal and murderer” Dutch Schultz as an honorary deputy sheriff of Bronx County back in the 1920s; and finally, that the grand jury investigation of the use of city-owned material to pave Flynn's Lake Mahopac estate was “improperly handled.”²¹ As a symbol of the fight he planned to wage, Bridges kept on his desk a five-pound paving brick presented to him by a New York delegation as a “tombstone” for Flynn's career in public life. The delegation told Bridges it hoped the brick would serve as a warning to Australians “to nail down all public property when Flynn arrives [there] . . . as a fugitive from justice.”²²

While the national media saw the Flynn story as good fodder, few observers anticipated that the nomination would do more than generate interesting headlines and editorial commentary. Not since 1889 had the Senate rejected a diplomatic appointment.²³ All Flynn needed was a solid phalanx of Democratic support in the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and then in the up-or-down Senate vote scheduled for the latter part of January. The Democratic Senate leader, Alben Barkley, said he was confident Flynn's nomination would sail through after a lot of what he called

“political noise.”²⁴ Democratic senators, it seems, were prepared to carry FDR’s water for him, meaning Flynn would win.²⁵ Back in Canberra the Australian government anticipated Flynn’s easy confirmation, as did Nelson Johnson, who continued carrying out his duties, but also stepped up plans for his return to the United States and the enrollment of his children in private schools in Washington.

But the Flynn issue had legs. Although Australians remained anxious about a possible Japanese assault on the homeland, with the Japanese air attacks on Allied positions having for the moment ceased and the Japanese expelled from Guadalcanal, “there was little possibility of Australia being invaded, even had Japan the will to do so.”²⁶ Hence the Flynn nomination fight, ballyhooed by the media, was not going to be crowded out by war news.

As a witness before the Democrat-dominated Foreign Relations Committee, Flynn was prepared to deal with the charges that Bridges had already announced he would make. He confidently brushed them off, pointing out that committees had investigated his official investments and found no wrongdoing and that the appointment of the gangster Dutch Schultz was under his real name—Arthur Flegenheimer. In addition, he asserted that the appointment was honorific only and was soon revoked. A Democratic senator, seeking to be helpful to Flynn, argued that the Schultz appointment was no more meaningful than being named a Kentucky Colonel. The fact that Schultz/Flegenheimer would be allowed to carry a concealed weapon was not mentioned in any defense of Flynn’s unusual dispensation of honorifics.²⁷

Addressing the much-hyped paving blocks issue, Flynn reminded senators that he had nothing to do with sending Bronx workmen to his home. He was unaware, he said, that work was being done until it was already completed; and once he learned about it, he reimbursed the city for the paving blocks. Flynn emphasized that two Bronx County grand juries had accepted his explanations.²⁸ For his part, Committee Chairman Tom Connolly of Texas attacked Bridges for implying that Flynn was somehow disloyal. When Connolly said he had not “heard of any objections to Mr. Flynn coming from Australia,” Bridges retorted, “No, and you haven’t heard them shouting with glee about his nomination, either. The Australian people probably feel that they aren’t in a position to object to anything the President does concerning them, because American soldiers are defending their shores and they are getting lend-lease aid from us. But that does not mean that they are happy about having this war politician foisted on them.”²⁹

The problem with Flynn’s explanations about the paving blocks was not that he was necessarily lying or even stretching the truth. There was no smoking gun proving he ordered the paving blocks installed in his vacation home driveway. Rather, the problem lay in the *perception* that something was fishy in the arrangement. For most Americans, it seemed obvious that even if Boss Ed Flynn didn’t order anyone to do anything for him, underlings in the Bronx Public Works Department *did not need* any explicit go-ahead. They knew what Boss Flynn wanted, or they thought they did, and they acted accordingly; that’s the way the boss system worked. Flynn, in short, was damned regardless of what he did or did not do. It did not help, either, that at various points in the confirmation hearings, Flynn claimed to have paid different sums for the labor of the men who placed the blocks in his driveway—\$80, \$88, and \$750—while his law partner Monroe Goldwater referred to a repayment of \$450.³⁰ The lack of consistency in this testimony hurt his case.

Worse, Senator Bridges laid a trap for him on another, more basic, matter: his qualifications for the Australian job. Bridges began by peppering Flynn with questions about his knowledge of Australia that the ambassador-designate found frustrating and at times impossible to answer. How

many states are there in Australia? Bridges asked. “Four or five,” Flynn responded. Name them, said Bridges. Flynn conceded he could not, adding that this was no different than being unable to name the counties of England. Asked to enumerate Australia’s current population, Flynn replied, “approximately 10 million, I am told; I have never counted them.” Bridges told him he was wrong on all counts and continued asking questions. Flynn was able to name the capital of Australia and when asked about parties, replied that they were “Conservative and Labor, with Labor in control.” Bridges was unmoved. “You do not know a great deal about Australia,” he told Flynn. “I know enough,” Flynn replied.³¹

At this point Bridges, who was not a member of the Foreign Relations Committee, but rather its guest, had tested the patience of several Democratic members. “Does the senator want him to give the whole history of Australia?” asked Senator James Tunnell of Delaware. Consequently, Bridges began pursuing the other issues he had said he would raise at the hearing. He elicited no new information about Dutch Schultz or the state investments Flynn had allegedly mishandled, but the damage was already done. The hearings were devastating to the nomination. As an observer quoted in the *New York Herald Tribune* put it, anyone who followed them would not know if the United States was “trying to export Mr. Flynn as a diplomat or deport him as an undesirable.”³²

Although the Foreign Relations Committee ultimately advanced the nomination by a 13–10 margin, three Democrats had voted against Flynn in committee, and several others—doubtless reading their mail and the newspapers—began expressing doubts. Publicly, the White House remained committed to the nomination and Flynn expressed confidence he would be confirmed.

But it was not to be. The critical wedge against the nomination was driven by Ed Flynn’s old political enemy, Ed Crump, the Democratic boss of Memphis, Tennessee. Crump had long nursed a grudge against Flynn on several counts. His preferred vice-presidential nominee in 1940, Senator Alben Barkley of Kentucky, had been nixed by Flynn, a supporter of the more liberal Henry A. Wallace, who got the nod. Further, Crump’s nominees for patronage positions in the Tennessee Valley Authority were usually ignored—a slight he blamed on Flynn, who may in fact have had nothing to do with the matter. Whatever the reality behind the Memphis boss’s grievances, Crump passed the word to Tennessee’s senior Democratic senator, Kenneth McKellar, that he wanted Flynn’s nomination to fail. On January 28 McKellar announced he would oppose the nomination. It was the tipping point in the confirmation battle.³³ Although the Washington press suggested that Flynn might be confirmed with a margin of one or two votes, the fight had gone out of the boss.

As opposition to Flynn built, Roosevelt said not a word in public on behalf of his long-time associate. To an experienced politician like Flynn this was a sign that he needed to take the fall. And so he did. On February 1, Flynn announced that while he was confident he would have been confirmed in a full Senate vote, he was withdrawing his nomination and would seek to return to his life in politics. It was a stunning setback for the president. As Roy Howard vividly put the matter in a private letter, the Flynn nomination had “just exploded like a can of fermented tomatoes.”³⁴

Australians were delighted with the news, though at this stage they still anticipated Johnson’s departure and remained wary about whom FDR might nominate next. Some observers suggested that the former U.S. minister to New Zealand, Patrick Hurley—a close associate of General MacArthur—was lobbying for the post. No one knew what the president would do. Johnson, on tenterhooks, went about his daily business as minister. For nearly two

months the president kept his counsel on the subject of a new minister for Australia. Perhaps Roosevelt felt it would be unseemly to have a second name at the ready so quickly; perhaps he was preoccupied with more pressing matters on the war front. During the period of watching and waiting, Johnson's friends, including Stanley Hornbeck in Foggy Bottom, reminded Secretary of State Cordell Hull that the present incumbent wanted to remain on the job and deserved to stay. Meanwhile, reporters—notably those working for Scripps-Howard papers—were pressing Hull on Johnson's status. Well aware of Johnson's attributes, Hull was not unsympathetic.³⁵ In the latter part of March, Hull was finally able to get Roosevelt's attention and on March 24 received the go-ahead to inform Johnson, by telegram, that he could continue in Canberra.³⁶ The news reached the pages of both American and Australian newspapers on March 25.³⁷ "Hearty congratulations," wrote Stanley Hornbeck to his old friend. "It's been nasty—but it ends well."³⁸

Australians expressed themselves satisfied with the outcome, among them former Prime Minister Hughes and current Prime Minister Curtin. Curtin issued a statement: "I feel that I cannot exaggerate the value of Johnson's work in Australia. This country is deeply indebted to him." In a handwritten note the day he learned of FDR's decision to keep Johnson on, Curtin told Johnson that it was with "deep pleasure" that he received the announcement from Washington. "You know that it would be presumptuous for me to hold opinions regarding the appointments your country makes. But I can express my delight when they keep valued friends within my small orbit. And if, as I hope, the delight is mutual, then heaven be praised."³⁹ The delight was mutual. In responses that became formulaic in the telling, Johnson assured Curtin and his other correspondents that he was "content" with the outcome and looked forward to staying on the job until the war was won.⁴⁰

Johnson's friends' reactions ranged from relieved to ecstatic. Former diplomat and Undersecretary of State W.R. Castle told Johnson that the Flynn "business" was "so disgusting that it really shocked the whole country, and it added to your popularity because, as you know, we Americans always like the fellow who has been unfairly treated." Keeping a low profile during the Flynn nomination, he added, had been the right way to handle the matter—making it possible for FDR to ask him to revoke his (bogus) retirement request and to assure him that he wanted him to remain on the job.⁴¹

Johnson remained in Canberra until 1945. He did not quite finish out the war in Australia, but by the time he departed, its outcome was not in doubt. He would subsequently serve as secretary general of the Far Eastern Commission, and upon concluding his labors there he retired from the Foreign Service. He spent his remaining years writing and lecturing about China and Australia, mentoring apprentice Foreign Service officers and enjoying life with his family in Washington, D.C. Johnson died of a heart attack in December 1954, while in the middle of an expansive oral history project conducted by Columbia University.⁴²

Ed Flynn took the humiliation of his failed nomination without public recriminations. He soon reclaimed his role as head of the Bronx Democratic organization, though he was not offered a similar opportunity to regain the chairmanship of the national committee of the Democratic Party. Flynn remained in Roosevelt's inner circle and was part of the remarkable deliberation among Democratic bosses in the summer of 1944 that led to the replacement of

Henry A. Wallace on Roosevelt's ticket by Senator Harry S. Truman of Missouri.⁴³ Perhaps as a way of making amends for the embarrassment Flynn suffered in 1943, the president had Flynn invited to serve as a presidential aide at the Yalta Conference of 1945. But in the end he was probably better known as a whipping boy for Republican politicians in New York, including two-time presidential nominee Thomas E. Dewey.⁴⁴ By 1947 Flynn, having dictated his memoirs but still active in politics, was increasingly incapacitated by heart trouble and related ailments. He died in August 1953 while on a visit to Ireland.⁴⁵

What were the implications of the battle that FDR lost? At a minimum, it was an ill-thought-out appointment that inflamed Roosevelt's opponents and gave them a stick with which to attack the administration. It resulted in what *Time* called FDR's "worst political defeat" since the Supreme Court packing debacle of 1937.⁴⁶ *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* editorial writer Irving Dilliard may have written the most perceptive account of the president's stumble. How was it, Dilliard asked, that the "power and influence"

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of the Roosevelt administration could not get Flynn confirmed, when six months before, the administration had no difficulty getting Jersey City Boss Frank Hague's man, Thomas F. Meaney, a lifetime appointment on the federal bench? The answer, he said, lay in the November election results. Thanks to a Republican resurgence in the midterm elections that brought nine new GOP senators into office, a coalition of Republicans and Southern Democrats was now able to stymie New Deal

proposals it disliked. "The Flynn debacle," Dilliard wrote, was the "number one manifestation" of the new clout of this coalition. FDR's defeat on the Flynn nomination was, Dilliard noted, a serious strike at New Dealers, if not the New Deal itself.⁴⁷

This was a sensible assessment. As historians have recently noted, by 1943 the New Deal was in effect blunted, first by the war, then by FDR's loss of leverage in the wake of the 1942 elections.⁴⁸ The Flynn nomination was a symptom, not a cause, of FDR's declining domestic clout. That it caused the president only some temporary heartburn was small solace to Ed Flynn. That the president made this nomination, and lost by it, was no one's fault but his own.

Notes:

1. See, among other documents, Nelson T. Johnson [hereafter NTJ] to Major Joseph S. Diasio, April 6, 1943, Box 41, NTJ Papers, Library of Congress [hereafter LC]; NTJ to the former U.S. minister to Australia, Christian Gauss, April 15, 1943, and NTJ to Hugh Gibson, March 11, 1943, both in Box 42, NTJ Papers, LC; NTJ to Stanley Hornbeck, January 12, 1943, Box 67, NTJ Papers, LC.
2. See James M. Minifie, "Diplomatic Surprise: Flynn Says He's Been Named Ambassador—Australia Bound," *Washington Post*, January 9, 1943, A1, A7; on the salary, see "Johnson Retiring Voluntarily: Flynn to Have Varied Duties," *Washington Star*, January 11, 1943. A copy of FDR's letter on January 8 to "Dear Eddie" announcing the nomination is in Box 1, The President's Official File 5224 (hereafter OF), Franklin D. Roosevelt Library, Hyde Park, NY (hereafter FDR Library). On Johnson's "shock" at hearing the news, see his letter to William A. White, April 8, 1943, Box 43, NTJ Papers, LC.
3. On Flynn announcing his appointment before Early did, see Hearings Before the Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate, Seventy-Eighth Congress, First Session, on the Nomination of Edward J. Flynn to be Minister to Australia (Washington, DC: United States Government Printing Office, 1943), 4; and Harold Callender, "President Names Flynn Minister; Senators to Fight," *New York Times*, January 12, 1943.
4. NTJ to Stanley Hornbeck, January 12, February 1, 1943, Box 66, NTJ Papers, LC. Johnson pointedly told White House Press Secretary Stephen Early that he did not want to retire, and

he objected to Early saying otherwise in announcing Flynn's appointment. NTJ to Early, January 14, 1943, Box 41, NTJ Papers, LC. Johnson told a foreign service friend, J.B. Hayden of the University of Michigan, that he would go wherever the State Department wanted to post him, but he wanted his friends all to know that contrary to the administration's public statements, he had no desire to retire. NTJ to J.B. Hayden, February 26, 1943, in Box 42, NTJ Papers, LC.

5. Arthur Calwell to NTJ, January 21, 1943, and William Hughes to NTJ, February 2, 1943, Box 41, NTJ Papers, LC. Hughes quipped that "you may properly claim to remain in a country until you have learned the language."

6. Clem Lloyd and Richard Hall, *Backroom Briefings: John Curtin's War* (Canberra: National Library of Australia, 1997), 32. On the Australian press's perception that the Curtin government was unhappy with the appointment, see "Australia Cold on U.S. Nominee to Canberra," *Canberra Times*, January 12, 1943, copy in Box 63, NTJ Papers, LC.

7. An undated editorial in an Australian newspaper indicated that Australia was in no position to oppose the Flynn nomination. It is attached to Mrs. Frederick Hargee of Belmont, MA, to President Roosevelt, January 16, 1943, Box 1, OF 5224, FDR Library. See also Ambassador Owen Dixon of Australia to Undersecretary of State Sumner Welles indicating that Australia would accept Flynn. That letter is dated Dec. 30, 1942, and is in Box 1, OF 5224, FDR Library. For more on Curtin's reaction to the appointment of Flynn, see Lloyd and Hall, *Backroom Briefings*, 32, 122, 124. Curtin noted that apparently Johnson's politics were wrong for FDR. It is difficult to know if this had much to do with the decision to replace him. It is true that Johnson was a nominal Republican, as he acknowledged in his interview with Dean Albertson of the Columbia University Oral History project. *Reminiscences of Nelson Trusler Johnson: Oral History, 1954* (New York, 1972), 673.

8. Typescript dated January 13, 1943, in Box 41, NTJ Papers, LC. This may have been a radio script. On the document Johnson wrote "destroy." Evidently he did not get around to doing that.

9. NTJ to Stanley Hornbeck, January 12, 1943, Box 66, NTJ Papers, LC.

10. For a summary of the controversy from Flynn's perspective, see his memoir, *You're the Boss: The Practice of American Politics* (1947; repr. New York: Collier Books, 1962), 185–93. For greater detail from a variety of angles, consult the hearings on Flynn's nomination.

11. Flynn, *You're the Boss*, 188.

12. FDR to Stokes, January 12, 1943, Box 1, OF 5224, FDR Library.

13. See "Flynn Nomination: Why It Was Made," *Washington Post*, January 15, 1943. For a similar analysis, see Raymond Moley, "Flynn-Walker Duo Appraised," *Los Angeles Times*, January 12, 1943, copy in Box 9, Edward J. Flynn Papers, FDR Library. For columnists' remarks see David Lawrence, "Flynn Choice as Envoy is Blow to Unity," and Gould Lincoln, "Flynn's Appointment to Australian Post Attacked Along a Wide Front," both in *Washington Star*, January 12, 1943.

14. George Sokolsky, "These Days," no date, copy in Box 1, OF 5224, FDR Library; Roy Howard to NTJ, January 11, 1943, Box 42, NTJ Papers, LC. It was Howard's *World Telegram and Sun* in New York that originally broke and highlighted the paving blocks story back in early 1942.

15. On the Mexican ambassador position, see Roy Howard to NTJ, January 11, 1943, Box 42, NTJ Papers, LC; Styles Bridges' reference to it is in *Hearings*, 9. Asked by Republican Senator Arthur Vandenberg about Flynn's interest in the Mexican ambassadorship, Flynn denied that he had sought the nomination but conceded he had discussed it with FDR.

16. For the reference to "every" New York paper opposing Flynn's nomination, see the remarks of Senator Arthur Capper (R-Kansas) at the nomination hearings in *Hearings*, 20–21. *The New York Times* editorial, "Mr. Flynn in the Wrong Place," appeared on January 12, 1943. A January 20 editorial about the nomination in the *New York Times* called Flynn's appointment "extravagantly bad."

17. *San Francisco Chronicle* editorial dated January 12, 1943, copy in Box 1, OF 5224, FDR Library; Nashville Banner, "Let's Reopen the Flynn Case," undated editorial in Box 1, OF 5224, FDR Library.

18. All letters are from *San Francisco Chronicle*, Box 1, OF 5224, FDR Library. The Harmon letter is undated; the letter from the disappointed Democrat, Irene P. Smith, is dated January 13, 1943; the Clymer letter to FDR is dated January 14, 1943.

19. See the correspondence in Box 1, OF 5224, FDR Library. Insofar as there was any positive response to the nomination, it came from individuals in the Bronx who knew Flynn and Democrats

across the country who were on the party payroll.

20. W.H. Lawrence, "Bridges Denounces Flynn; Falsehood Charged in Turn," *New York Times*, January 14, 1943; John M. Fisher, "Senators Vote Open Hearing in Flynn Row," *Washington Times-Herald*, January 16, 1943. For a copy of Bridges' remarks on the Senate floor, January 12, 1943, see File 69, Styles Bridges Papers, New Hampshire State Archives, Concord, NH. I am grateful to state archivist Frank Mevers for providing me with copies of this document and transcripts of subsequent speeches regarding Flynn dated January 14 and February 1, 1943.

21. See Robert St. John radio transcription for his NBC broadcast, January 14, 1943, Box 28, Flynn Papers, FDR Library; see also, "Paving Block Grand Juror to Fight Flynn Nomination," *Washington Daily News*, January 14, 1943, 12. Schultz/Flegenheimer held the honorary post of Deputy Sheriff in the Bronx from July 1925 until the winter of 1926, when he was picked up in a raid on Jack Diamond's Bronx club after a shooting there. According to one account, "that arrest made Schultz [Flegenheimer] an ex-Deputy Sheriff, but it did not inconvenience him in any other way." For this story see Paul Sann, *Kill the Dutchman! The Story of Dutch Schultz*, chap. 10 (New York, 1971).

22. Lawrence, "Bridges Denounces Flynn," *New York Times*, January 14, 1943.

23. See Raymond Clapper, "Intolerant Utterance," *Washington Daily News*, January 20, 1943, and "Exit Ed Flynn," *Time*, June 15, 1943, 15.

24. Robert St. John Radio Broadcast transcript, January 14, 1943, Box 28, Flynn Papers, FDR Library.

25. The hearings of January 20, 22, and 23, 1943, show that several Democrats on the Foreign Relations Committee asked softball questions of Flynn or simply disparaged witnesses' criticisms of him. See, among various examples, comments by Senator Elbert Thomas (D-UT) and Senator Tom Connolly (D-TX), the committee chair, in *Hearings*, 6–7.

26. David Day, *Claiming a Continent: A New History of Australia* (Sydney, AU, 2001), 229. See also Day, *Reluctant Nation: Australia and the Allied Defeat of Japan, 1942–1945* (Oxford, UK, 1992), chap. 7.

27. The reference to "Kentucky Colonel" was made by Senator Frederick Van Nuys (D-IN). See *Hearings*, 28–30. On the gun issue as it related to the honorary deputy sheriff position, see Sann, *Kill the Dutchman!*

28. *Hearings*, passim; Flynn, *You're the Boss*, 185–88.

29. Quoted in Drew Pearson's column, "Washington Merry-Go-Round," *Washington Post*, January 22, 1943. Given that the committee hearing was held in private, it appears that someone had leaked a transcript to Pearson.

30. *Hearings*, 20, 21, 42, 54–55.

31. For Australian coverage of this exchange, see "Envoy Can't Name States of Australia," *Sydney Sunday Telegraph*, January 24, 1943, copy in Box 63, NTJ Papers, LC.

32. For Bridges' interrogation, see *Hearings*, 38–44. The quote from the Herald Tribune made its way into the *Sydney Sunday Telegraph*, January 31, 1943, copy in Box 63, NTJ Papers, LC.

33. See, for example the Associated Press article, "[McKeller] to vote against Mr. Flynn," published in the *Sydney Morning Telegraph*, February 1, 1943. The article quoted the influential Senator Alben Barkley (D-KY) as calling McKeller's the "swing vote" on the nomination. Copy in Box 63, NTJ Papers, LC. For *Time* magazine on the Crump factor, see "Exit Ed Flynn" (February 8, 1943 issue) as reprinted in the February 7, 1943 *Sunday Telegraph* [Sydney], Box 63, NTJ Papers, LC. The *Time* piece said that McKeller's motives in opposing Flynn were unclear. In his memoirs, Flynn blamed Crump, not McKeller, for his troubles, saying it was pure payback for FDR having prohibited Crump's interference with TVA appointments. *You're the Boss*, 190. For a somewhat longer version of the "paving bricks" story from Flynn's point of view, see the 1946 draft of *You're the Boss* in folder 1, Box 27, Flynn Papers, FDR Library).

34. Howard to NTJ, March 27, 1943, Box 42, NTJ Papers, LC.

35. On Hull's attitude, see Roy Howard to NTJ, March 27, 1943, Box 42, NTJ Papers, LC. Howard inferred that Hull was unhappy with the Flynn affair and was sympathetic to Johnson's situation.

36. On the Hull telegram, see NTJ to Stanley Hornbeck, March 25, 1943, Box 66, NTJ Papers, LC. In a letter to William Allen White on April 8, 1943, Johnson says he received a message "from the President" on March 24 that "he would be gratified if I would continue here as Minister." Box 43, NTJ Papers, LC. Presumably this message was delivered through the offices of Secretary Hull.

37. For specific examples, see Box 42, NTJ Papers, LC.

38. Hornbeck to NTJ, March 27, 1943, Box 66, NTJ Papers, LC.

39. W.J. Hughes to NTJ, April 1, 1943, Box 42, NTJ Papers, LC; Curtin's statement is in United Press news service report, March 26, 1943, Box 41, NTJ Papers, LC; Curtin to NTJ, March 26, 1943, Box 41, NTJ Papers, LC.

40. Shortly before the reappointment, Johnson had told his friend Hugh Gibson that all he wanted to do was "see the war through with the Australians." NTJ to Gibson, March 11, 1943, Box 42, NTJ Papers, LC; for similar comments, along with the observation that in view of bad publicity Flynn would have had difficulties being taken seriously, see NTJ to Gibson, April 6, 1943, Box 42, NTJ Papers, LC. Johnson called the Flynn appointment "a meteor." On his "shock" at the original decision to relieve him, see NTJ to the American journalist William Allen White, April 8, 1943, Box 43, NTJ Papers, LC. January, Johnson told White, was a very difficult month for him. In his letter of March 25 to Stanley Hornbeck, Johnson referred to a difficult three months. Box 66, NTJ Papers, LC.

41. Castle to NTJ, November 20, 1943, Box 41, NTJ Papers, LC.

42. On Johnson's career as minister to Australia, see Michael J. Birkner, "Did He Matter? Nelson Johnson as Minister to Australia, 1941-1945," paper delivered at Australian and New Zealand Studies Association of North America, March 23, 2007. As a bouquet to Johnson, whom he had come to know and admire during a stint in Australia on behalf of the Office of War Information in 1943, historian Allan Nevins observed in the *New York Times Book Review* (July 23, 1944) that it was "positively outrageous that so wise and effective a diplomat" as Nelson Johnson should have potentially been ousted for Flynn. Nevins was reviewing Hugh Gibson's book, *The Road to Foreign Policy*.

43. On 1944, see especially Robert H. Ferrell, *Choosing Truman: The Democratic Convention of 1944* (Columbia, MO, 1994), passim; John Morton Blum, *V was For Victory: Politics and American Culture*

During World War II (New York, 1976), 288-92; and Flynn, *You're the Boss*, 193-99.

44. For jibes Dewey made about "Paving Block Flynn" while running for re-election as governor of New York in 1950, see transcription of Dewey's remarks for radio in Box 28, Flynn Papers, FDR Library. In speeches that fall, Dewey also repeatedly associated Flynn with New York gangster Frank Costello. For context on Dewey's repeated use of Flynn as a campaign whipping boy, see Richard Norton Smith, *Thomas E. Dewey and His Times* (New York, 1982), 568-70.

45. On Flynn and his memoirs, see his correspondence with *New York Times* columnist and Washington bureau chief Arthur Krock in Box 25, Krock Papers, Seeley Mudd Library, Princeton University, Princeton, NJ. Apparently Flynn handed over his rough recollections to his old friend, the political columnist Raymond Moley, who shaped the memoir. Moley asked Krock for a pre-publication critique, which was duly provided. Interestingly, Krock suggested that Flynn should trim down the section on the failed nomination for the Australian ambassadorship, advice that Flynn evidently took.

46. "Exit Ed Flynn," *Time*, February 8, 1943, 15.

47. Dilliard's column was titled "Flynn's Dramatic Defeat Reveals How Congress is Coming Back into Its Own." Undated copy in Box 1, OF 5224, FDR Library.

48. Among other sources, see Brian Waddell, *The War Against the New Deal: World War II and American Democracy* (DeKalb, IL, 2001); Blum, *V Was for Victory*, 221-45; and Thomas Fleming, *The New Dealers' War: Franklin D. Roosevelt and the War Within World War II* (New York, 2001), 189-213.

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