Robert LeFevre papers, 1946-1981

Overview of the Collection

| Creator | LeFevre, Robert, 1911- |
| Title   | Robert LeFevre papers |
| Quantity | 36.5 linear feet, (73 containers) |
| Collection Number | Coll 202 |
| Summary | Robert LeFevre (1911-1986) was a conservative and later radical libertarian journalist, writer and teacher. The collection includes correspondence, literary manuscripts, speeches, organizational files, and other materials that reflect his career. |
| Repository | University of Oregon Libraries, Special Collections and University Archives. UO Libraries--SCUA 1299 University of Oregon Eugene OR 97403-1299 Telephone: 541-346-3068 spcarref@uoregon.edu |
| Access Restrictions | Collection is open to the public. Collection must be used in Special Collections and University Archives Reading Room. Collection or parts of collection may be stored offsite. Please contact Special Collections and University Archives in advance of your visit to allow for transportation time. |
| Additional Reference Guides | See the Collective Name Index to the Research Collection of Conservative and Libertarian Studies for a cross-referenced index to names of correspondents in this collection, if any, and 37 related University of Oregon collections, including dates of correspondence. See index instructions on use. See the Current Collection Guide for detailed description and requesting options. |
| Languages | English |
| Sponsor | Funding for encoding this finding aid was provided through a grant awarded by the National Endowment for the Humanities. |

Historical Note

Robert LeFevre was born in Gooding, Idaho in 1911. His family moved to Minneapolis, Minnesota when LeFevre was quite young. It was there that LeFevre developed an interest in the theatre. He attended Hamline University in St. Paul from 1931 to 1932 where he studied English and drama. After leaving the university, LeFevre worked at a variety of jobs, including acting and radio announcing. Upon the advent of World War II, LeFevre enlisted in the Army and eventually became an officer in the education
and orientation division of the Army Air Corps. He spent a year in Europe and was discharged from the Army in 1945 after being injured in a jeep accident in France.

After leaving the Army, LeFevre worked in real estate in San Francisco. In 1949 he became part owner of Falcon's Lair, an estate formerly owned by the silent film actor Rudolph Valentino, and became embroiled in a controversy over turning the estate into a shrine dedicated to Valentino. During this time LeFevre became involved with the San Francisco Group, an organization formed to impart the religious and educational views of its members to the general public. He also represented the Falcon Lair Foundation, which was dedicated to world peace. LeFevre eventually declared bankruptcy because of problems encountered in his real estate business, some of which he blamed on government interference.

Following an unsuccessful run for Congress in Los Angeles' 14th Congressional District in 1950 as a Republican, LeFevre moved to Florida where he worked in radio and television as a newscaster. It was during these years, from the late 1940's to early 1950's, that LeFevre became more involved in right-wing anti-union and anti-communist political organizations. He was a member of the Wage Earners Committee, an organization formed in 1949 to counter unionism, and he eventually founded the Miami Breakfast Club which was associated with Merwin K. Hart's conservative Freedom Club organization. LeFevre served as the Executive Director of the Congress of Freedom and the United States Day Committee, both of which advocated conservative agendas including the demand that the United States should withdraw from the United Nations.

In an article published in Human Events in 1954, LeFevre charged that the Girl Scout Handbook contained "socialist" and "one world government" propaganda. The article attracted nationwide attention from the public and the news media and eventually forced the scouting organization to make changes in the Handbook.

LeFevre moved to Colorado Springs, Colorado late in 1954 to become an editorial writer for R. C. Holies' newspaper, the Gazette Telegraph. While still working at the newspaper where he would eventually become editor, LeFevre started the Freedom School, a small private school dedicated to teaching free market and anti-government principles.

By this time LeFevre's politics had moved from more traditionally conservative positions to more radical libertarian ones. He thought that the ideal state would have no government or political entities and the functions that government would normally be expected to handle--education, policing, and so forth--would be handled by the private sector. He rejected all political action and would eventually even reject the Libertarian Party that formed in the early 1970's.

The Freedom School began with teaching short sessions during the summer months and was not, nor would it ever be, accredited by any educational organization. The school did, however, draw a number of prominent libertarian and free-market thinkers. Ludwig von Mises, Frank Chodorov, Milton Friedman and Rose Wilder Lane all visited the Freedom School at one time or another, some to teach or lecture. In the late 1960's, LeFevre and the school's operations moved to Santa Ana, California. He changed the name of the school to Rampart College and shifted its emphasis from small classroom sessions to lectures, home study courses, and seminars directed mainly at business executives.

LeFevre left the school in 1973 and continued to lecture, write, and publish material on libertarian subjects. He had been a charismatic orator throughout most of his life and he remained a popular speaker on the libertarian lecture circuit until his death in 1986. During his lifetime LeFevre also published a number of books, newsletters, and pamphlets dealing with politics, government, economics, and his libertarian philosophy. In addition to his libertarian writings, LeFevre wrote fiction works late in his life but was apparently unsuccessful in getting them published.
The Robert LeFevre Papers consist of correspondence and a variety of other collected materials dealing with the individuals and organizations with whom LeFevre associated throughout his life. These individuals and organizations are, for the most part, extremely conservative or libertarian in their outlook and the collection contains a wealth of material that reflects these points of view. Additionally, manuscripts, speeches, radio and television scripts, published material, subject files, personal material, photographs, and books are part of the papers.

Regarding the arrangement of this collection, an attempt was made to preserve LeFevre's system of organization which is based on subject matter and relatively distinct periods of LeFevre's life. For this reason correspondence and material that may appear related can be found deposited in different places throughout the collection.

The first series, general correspondence, is arranged alphabetically and includes correspondence LeFevre had with individuals and organizations that dealt with his politics, philosophy and teachings, or his business interests relating to these areas. Some of the more important conservative political organizations included here are the Congress of Freedom, the National Economic Council, Operation America, and the United States Day Committee. The National Economic Council correspondence was authored primarily by Merwin K. Hart. A few of the most notable correspondents include Richard M. Nixon, who exchanged letters with LeFevre during his campaign for the Vice Presidency in 1952 and Robert Heinlein, the prominent science fiction writer.

The Miami Breakfast Club series contains LeFevre's correspondence from the early 1950's with the conservative Freedom Club organization, club members, speakers, and several politicians, including Nevada Senator Pat McCarran.

Documentation of the Girl Scout Handbook controversy consists primarily of correspondence that LeFevre had with individuals who were concerned about the alleged socialist influences that he had uncovered. Human Events editors Frank Chodorov and Frank Hanighen and Girl Scout officials are included among the correspondents. Other material contained in the series consists of articles, clippings, and other items collected by LeFevre that relate to the controversy.

LeFevre's newspaper career is the main focus of the Colorado Springs Gazette Telegraph series. Included are correspondence, personnel records, editorials, and other material from the period when LeFevre was an employee of the Gazette Telegraph. Most of the correspondence deals with editorial subject matter and the day-to-day operations of the newspaper.

Freedom School/Rampart College files include a large volume of material LeFevre generated while teaching and administering the school. The first subseries includes an exhaustive collection of financial records from the period that LeFevre was at the school. A variety of material documenting the school's administration and operation follows. Included are the school's annuals, enrollment and fund raising reports, staff memoranda, and workshop and seminar materials. The last three subseries contain materials published by the school, promotional literature, and publicity items regarding the school. The Pine Tree Features/Press series that follows contains a number of newspaper column manuscripts authored by LeFevre and several other Freedom School employees during 1967 and 1968. The columns reflect the anti-government and pro-free enterprise ideals of their authors.

Manuscripts are comprised of LeFevre's writings from the late 1940's to early 1980's. Article length manuscripts deal primarily with LeFevre's political philosophy and many were printed in libertarian publications. Short story length manuscripts are all fiction pieces LeFevre wrote late in life and none
appear to have been published. Book length manuscripts include drafts of several of LeFevre’s published works regarding government and politics as well as a number of his unpublished fiction works. Also appearing among these manuscripts is LeFevre’s unpublished, untitled, 2000+ page autobiography. Within each subseries, all manuscripts are arranged alphabetically by title.

A small series of speeches is arranged chronologically. Most of these were presentations to various business and civic groups and reflect LeFevre’s political views. Radio program material consists of program scripts from the early 1950’s that LeFevre used in his radio shows, and are arranged chronologically under each program name. The subject matter of the scripts reflects LeFevre’s conservative outlook at the time. There are also several folders of television material consisting of program reports and layouts. The published material is comprised of articles, pamphlets, reprints, and other miscellaneous items of LeFevre’s work that were published in magazines, newspapers, and other media from the 1950’s through the mid-1970’s.

Collected material concerning a number of individuals, organizations, and other topics of interest to LeFevre can be found within the subject files series. A wealth of literature and records regarding organizations with a conservative bent, such as the Congress of Freedom, Operation America, United States Day Committee, and the Wage Earners Committee is included in this series. Many of the files contain correspondence, manuscripts, and an assortment of printed matter and publications. Of interest is the Audio-Forum Cassettes file which contains catalogs listing tape-recorded lectures by LeFevre on his libertarian philosophy.

The personal material series contains correspondence, legal materials, financial papers, publicity items, and files for other family members. Legal documents and correspondence with LeFevre’s attorney, Aaron Sargent, can be found in the Retail Credit Company lawsuit subseries. The unsuccessful lawsuit was initiated in 1955 when LeFevre became aware of an unfavorable credit report being circulated about him that included statements he considered to be libelous. Publicity consists of newspaper clippings and other items LeFevre collected about himself.

Artifacts include microfiche copies of a number of LeFevre’s works. Photographs in the collection are mainly of the Freedom School campus and its faculty and students. Finally, the collection includes several books. The most interesting of these is a volume entitled The Power of Congress (As Congress Sees It), a compilation of sometimes heated correspondence between LeFevre and dozens of Congressmen on the failings of representative government.

Administrative Information

Detailed Description of the Collection

Description

Guide to the Robert LeFevre papers

Names and Subjects

Subject Terms:

Robert LeFevre papers, 1946-1981
http://archiveswest.orbiscascade.org/ark:/80444/xv29769
Anti-communist movements--United States
Conservative literature--United States
Conservatives--United States--Correspondence
Journalists--United States--Correspondence
Libertarians--United States--Correspondence
Propaganda, Anti-communist--United States
Right-wing extremists--United States--Correspondence

Personal Names:
Eisenhower, Dwight D. (Dwight David), 1890-1969
Heinlein, Robert A. (Robert Anson), 1907-1988
LeFevre, Robert, 1911-

Corporate Names:
Congress of Freedom, Inc.
Freedom Club (Los Angeles, Calif.)
Freedom School
Miami Breakfast Club
United States Day Committee
Wage Earners Committee

Finding aid prepared by Peter Backes
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