

Eisenhower: "I Strongly Favor" Atlantic Union Bill

Freedom & Union, June, 1966

On March 2 Rep. Findley made public letters endorsing the Atlantic Union bill from Richard Nixon, Barry Goldwater, and Governors Nelson A. Rockefeller, George Romney, William Scranton and Mark Hatfield.. The Eisenhower letter now puts GOP leadership solidly behind it. This assurance of full bi-partisan support makes it much more practical for President Johnson to back this bill, while pinning on him the responsibility for the consequences of any failure to do so.

FORMER PRESIDENT Dwight D. Eisenhower has given his powerful endorsement to the Atlantic Union Delegation resolution, in a letter to its Republican initiator in the House, Rep. Paul Findley of Illinois. In it he wrote: "I strongly favor your undertaking; let there be no mistake about this."

Rep. Findley hailed the General's action as an "historic milestone" for Atlantic federation. He stressed that this was the first time that any of the four resolutions introduced in Congress since 1949 which called for a convention to explore the possibility of transforming NATO into a "federal union" had ever gained endorsement by a former President. He noted further that the text of the resolution which won this support was "more specific and forthright" than the language of its three predecessors, introduced in 1949, 1951 and 1955.

His resolution (HJR 769) calls for a NATO-wide convention to explore the possibility of agreement not merely to transform the alliance into a "federal union" as "eventual goal," but to fix "a tentative timetable for the transition" and set up "democratic institutions" and achieve the objective in safe time. Its text is the same as S. Con. Res. 64, initiated by Senators Eugene McCarthy (D., Minn.) and Frank Carlson (R., Kans.). In all the above provisions it is also the same as H. Con. Res. 523 introduced at the same time--Oct. 18--by Rep. Clement Zablocki (D., Wisc.), ranking Majority member of the House Foreign Affairs committee.

Ike Differs from State Department

The Eisenhower letter, which Rep. Findley made public May 17, was dated April 6. It was thus written a fortnight after Assistant Secretary of State John Leddy called the bill "impractical" at the Senate hearing on it March 24.** He based this view entirely on the assertions that Europeans were not interested in federating with the U.S.A. and that even an Atlantic "partnership" must await creation of a European Union.

The Eisenhower letter does not allude to the Department's opposition, but the bill's supporters believe that this strong endorsement by a former President--the one with the most firsthand knowledge of Europe--will prove to be a convincing answer to the Department's arguments. They recall that before his eight years in the White House, the General was NATO's first Commander-in-Chief, and before that led the Allied Forces in Europe to victory in World War II. They recall

that he was, moreover, an early advocate of the policy of European Union as a prerequisite of Atlantic unification, on which the Department still insists, and consequently was fully cognizant of the case for that approach when he decided to back instead the Atlantic Union solution.

In these circumstances, Rep. Findley believes the Eisenhower endorsement will add "new momentum " in Congress to the resolution. It now has a total of 115 cosponsors and known supporters in both Houses, including 18 Senators and 97 Representatives, 75 Democrats and 40 Republicans.*** The new Senate backer is Robert P. Griffin (R., Mich.) who had cosponsored the bill as a House member before Governor George Romney named him Senator in May to fill the vacancy caused by the death of Pat McNamara.

The resolution would set up a delegation of 18 eminent citizens with former Presidents Eisenhower and Truman as co-chairmen to organize and participate in the proposed Convention with such NATO nations as desired to take part. General Eisenhower's letter stated he regretted he could not serve as co-chairman because of "considerations of health which have imposed upon me very explicit medical disciplines for some considerable time to come," and "not by a reluctance to become identified with this effort." He added: "I would prefer to respond favorably; and if I could, I would."

Former President Truman has not yet taken position in this regard. It is feared that he will find he should not accept because of his age. It has been suggested that to make the co-chairmanship honorary might be a solution, at least as regards one reason why the bill named both men, viz., to assure that the delegation would be of "blue ribbon" quality.

General Eisenhower as President signed in 1960 the Atlantic Convention bill which Congress approved that year, but it carefully avoided such words as "federal" or "union" and aimed only at "greater cooperation and unity of purpose." The resulting convention met in Paris in January 1962 under the presidency of Christian Herter, Secretary of State, 1959-61. His successors in that office have pigeon-holed the Convention's unanimous recommendations. The strongest one called on the NATO Governments to "promptly establish a Special Governmental Commission to draw up plans within two years for the creation of a true Atlantic Community, suitably organized to meet the political, military and economic challenges of this era."

Last August Senator Frank Church (D., Ida.) sought to revive this by S. Res. 128, which asks the President to bring about the above commission. At the March hearing the State Department lumped it with the stronger Atlantic Union resolution as "impractical."

The full Eisenhower-Findley Correspondence, climaxing with the General's endorsement of the Atlantic Union bill, follows, taken from the Congressional Record.

Mr. FINDLEY. Mr. Speaker, former President Eisenhower's strong endorsement of the Atlantic Union resolution is a historic milestone. It will give new momentum to fast-growing congressional support for the resolution.

This is the first time General Eisenhower-or any former U.S. President-has endorsed publicly a proposal looking toward free world federation. His action has special significance because the resolution now before Congress is the most specific ever introduced.

I am placing in the RECORD correspondence with General Eisenhower, in which the former Chief Executive commented on the resolution and said:

"I strongly favor your undertaking; let there be no mistake about this."

The resolution would authorize an 18- member U.S. delegation of citizens of "high stature and wide influence" to meet with similar delegations from other NATO nations to seek agreement on first, a declaration that the eventual goal is to transform the Atlantic alliance into a federal union government; second, a tentative timetable for the transition; and third, the interim institutions needed to keep the project on schedule.

Senate hearings have been held, and House hearings are expected to be scheduled soon. Ninety-seven U.S. Representatives and eighteen U.S. Senators are either cosponsors or supporters of the resolution. Forty of them are Republicans and seventy-five Democrats.

General Eisenhower's letter expressing strong endorsement will, I am sure, encourage still greater support in Congress. Equally important, it will help to convince people in other NATO nations that the United States is serious about wanting to strengthen the Atlantic community ties along lines that are fair, equitable, and effective.

Here is the correspondence:

FEBRUARY 25, 1966.
Gen. DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER,
India, Calif.

DEAR GENERAL: One of the most promising developments in my six years in Congress is the bipartisan support already apparent for the "Atlantic Union Delegation" resolution. I enclose a copy of H.J. Res. 769. Senators CARLSON, FANNIN, PROUTY and Representatives MORTON, ELLSWORTH, MICHEL, QUIE and myself-all on the Republican side--have introduced either this identical language or language that differs only in minor details of the "preamble." ...

A number of prominent Democrats in the House and Senate have also endorsed it.

In a few days I plan to announce to the press the measure of support already received from prominent Republicans. It would indeed be most gratifying to have an expression of attitude from you.

I hesitated to intrude upon your vacation with this matter but decided to do so knowing of your long-standing and deep concern about the Atlantic Alliance and its future.

Sincerely yours,

PAUL FINDLEY,
Representative in Congress

*

INDIO, CALIF.,
March 3, 1966.

DEAR MR. FINDLEY: I have long urged closer association and better cooperation among the Free Nations of the world. I am quite sure that steady steps toward this goal, particularly among the North Atlantic Community, are essential to progress toward security and peace with justice.

I note that the final section of your Resolution is a proposal that former Presidents Truman and I act as co-chairmen of the American delegation contemplated by the Resolution. To participate with other nations in exploring steps toward a gradual accomplishment of a "Federal Union," I suspect that the necessary travel and other activity might be far more suitably and efficiently done by young men. Would it not be preferable, if the delegation should be established by law, to have the sixteen members appointed by the President and the Congress make their own selection for the two co-chairmen?

Sincerely,

DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER.

*

MARCH 7, 1966.
Hon. DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER,
Indio, Calif.

DEAR GENERAL: I am grateful to you for your kindness in replying so promptly to my letter in regard to the Atlantic Union delegation resolution.

The final section of the resolution which proposes that you and former President Truman serve as co-chairmen of the American delegation was included after much reflection and discussion. Both of you, of course, had intimate association with the steps leading to the formation of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. You yourself provided most of the inspiration and the leadership which brought the original group of nations into agreement.

Those of us who shaped up this resolution realized that you have reached the time of life when leisure time is especially prized. Certainly no one could be more deserving than yourself of retirement free of public responsibility. However, it is our belief that you and you alone could provide both the leadership and worldwide inspiration which an Atlantic Union Convention must have. We are hopeful that you would give serious thought to returning to public life from your

richly deserved retirement long enough to give your tremendous ability and rich knowledge to this great and vital undertaking.

The success of the convention might very well depend upon your leadership. It is interesting to recall that in 1786 a convention intended to improve the Articles of Confederation failed before it started for want of the right leadership. Less than a year later a second convention was called, and the announcement that General Washington would be a member of the Virginia delegation caused an outburst of joy and enthusiasm throughout all of the 13 states.

Here is a quotation from pages 220-221 of "The Critical Period of American History" by John Fiske:

"The events of the year had worked a change in the popular sentiment in Virginia; people were more afraid of anarchy and not quite so much afraid of centralization; and now under Madison's lead, Virginia played her trump card and chose George Washington as one of her delegates. As soon as this was known, there was an outburst of joy throughout the land. All at once people began every-where to feel an interest in the proposed convention, and presently Massachusetts changed her attitude.

Up to this time Massachusetts had been as obstinate in her assertion of local independence, and as unwilling to strengthen the hands of Congress (under the confederation) as any of the 13 states except New York and Rhode Island. But the Shay's rebellion had served as a useful object lesson...Every week saw fresh converts to the party which called for a stronger government (for the confederation). Then came the news that Virginia had chosen delegates and Washington was one of them; then that New Jersey had followed the example; then Pennsylvania, North Carolina, Delaware, had chosen delegates. It was time for Massachusetts to act."

It is our conviction that you would provide the same inspiration and leadership to the Atlantic Union Convention as did General Washington in 1787.

You will recall that the Paris Convention to strengthen NATO held in 1962 (authorized by Resolution in 1960) did not measure up to expectations. This was due mainly to the fact that, with a few exceptions, the U.S. delegation did not consist of our most eminent citizens.

Your leadership of the U.S. delegation would assure that this mistake would not be repeated in the Convention now proposed.

Just as General Washington's name brought success in 1787 on the heels of 1786's failure, so your name would assure success to this new Atlantic Community undertaking.

With you as co-chairman, the Congress and the President would assuredly exercise great care to fill the rest of the delegation with people of highest competence-and I am sure all other participating nations would be similarly motivated.

You mention youth. One of the most active and effective figures in the Convention of 1787 was Benjamin Franklin, who was then 81 years old.

As a Republican, you will be pleased, I am sure, to note the breadth of support which has already developed for the resolution in what I might term the "presidential level" leadership of our party. I enclose herewith photocopies of letters I have received endorsing the resolution from former Vice President Nixon; Governors Scranton, Romney, Hatfield and Rockefeller; and former Senator Barry Goldwater. I am also attaching a statement that I made last week at which time I released these letters to the press.

The interest you have already expressed in the resolution is most gratifying. I will prize very highly your further comments to aid in preparation of Senate hearings on the Resolution which are scheduled for March 23-24. Best wishes.

Sincerely yours,

PAUL FINDLEY,
Representative in Congress.

*

INDIO, CALIF.
April 6, 1966.

DEAR MR. FINDLEY: If a more persuasive reclama to my reluctant declination of your invitation to co-chair the Atlantic Union Delegation could be written, I hardly know how. Thank you for writing again and for the high compliment expressed and implicit in all you have stated in your March seventh letter.

A careful reading of your letter suggests there may be some misunderstanding of my position. First, I strongly favor your undertaking; let there be no mistake about this. Second, I warmly appreciate the invitation to share the chairmanship of the delegation with former President Truman and would like very much to be able to do so. Third, my declination of the invitation is dictated therefore, not by a reluctance to become identified with this effort, not by a desire for leisure, not even, by a personal awareness of increasing years, but instead by considerations of health which have imposed upon me very explicit medical disciplines for some considerable time to come. In short I would prefer to respond favorably; and if I could, I would.

Recently I found it necessary to decline, also, an invitation from the entire House Republican Leadership to become Chairman of a proposed Hoover-type commission on re-organization of the Executive Branch. My explanation to Gerry Ford was the same as I have found it necessary to communicate to you. Again I was regretful; again I had no option but to decline.

I wish your undertaking well and wish I could personally help to advance it as you have suggested.

Sincerely,

DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER.

*

HJR 769's Enacting Text

Text of enacting section of Findley bill HJR 769 (same as S.C.R. 64):

Resolved by the House of Representatives (the Senate concurring). That (1) The Congress hereby creates an Atlantic Union delegation, composed of eighteen eminent citizens, and authorized to organize and participate in a convention made up of similar delegations from such North Atlantic Treaty Organization allies as desire to join in this enterprise, to explore the possibility of agreement on:

(a) A declaration that the eventual goal of their peoples is to transform their present alliance into a federal union;

(b) A tentative timetable for the transition to this goal; and

(c) Democratic institutions to expedite the necessary stages and achieve the objective in time to save their citizens from another war, depression or other man-made catastrophe, and let them enjoy, as soon as possible, the greater freedom and higher moral and material blessings which federation has brought to the free in the past;

(2) The conventions recommendations shall be submitted to the Congress for action by constitutional procedure;

(3) Not more than half of the delegation's members shall be from one political party, and all shall be citizens of high stature and wide influence, representing together a broad range of experience in the various major challenges facing this undertaking, and so conscious of its importance and urgency as to be willing to give it personally the necessary priority and time, in the spirit of 1787 which one member of that Convention thus expressed: "Inconvenient" as it was "to remain absent from his private affairs * * * he would bury his bones" in Philadelphia, if need be, to unite the free;

(4) Eight of the delegation shall be named by the Congress and eight by the President of the United States, and all shall be as free from official instructions and as free to speak and vote individually as were the drafters of the United States Constitution:

(5) The Congress hereby requests former Presidents Harry S. Truman and Dwight D. Eisenhower to serve as cochairmen of the delegation.