

Chet Bowles

November 23, 1949



Dear Chet:

Many thanks for your note of November fourteenth. I was glad to hear such encouraging news from Connecticut. I wish you every success in the great work you are doing.

My office is looking into the case of Allen Leftridge, and you can be sure we will do everything we can to make sure that justice is done.

Cordially,

DAVID K. NILES
Administrative Assistant
to the President

Honorable Chester Bowles
Governor of Connecticut
Hartford, Connecticut

mailed

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CHESTER BOWLES
GOVERNOR



STATE OF CONNECTICUT
EXECUTIVE CHAMBERS
HARTFORD



November 14, 1949

Dear Dave:

I am sending you a memorandum which was sent to me by Alfred Duckett, a very capable young Negro correspondent who lives here in Hartford. Duckett's memorandum concerns the death of a Negro boy, Allen Leftridge, at the hands of military police during the war.

The military people evidently made a decision that Leftridge had not died in line of duty and, as a result, his family was not eligible for pension rights.

This case has apparently created a great deal of excitement among Negroes, and according to Duckett the Communists, with their usual desire to take advantage of any gaps in our democratic procedures, are using it very effectively in some Negro circles.

Duckett, who happens to be a very capable and a thorough-going Democrat, feels that the War Department in an early stage took the wrong stand on this case and that since then there has been such a desire to save face that no one has dared reverse the earlier stand. The net result has been that Mrs. Leftridge has been deprived of the normal pension which she would have received as the widow of a soldier who had been killed either accidentally or in line of duty.

I hate to bother you with this, Dave, but I have looked into it enough to convince myself that there is a very real possibility that a serious injustice has been committed.

Duckett tells me that from his experience any normal inquiry of the War Department will simply result in everyone springing to the defense of those who have made the original decision - a decision which most qualified people who have studied the case seem to feel was a bad mistake.

If anything could be done on this case, I think it would mean a good deal.

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Duckett's interest in the case originally was based on his friendship with Leftridge. He told me, in all frankness, that he was now engaged to Mrs. Leftridge. I am passing this on to you for your own information. This would seem to put him in the position of profiting by the decision which he is trying to get the War Department to make. However, I think it would be most unfair to assume that this is his basic motive because he has been working on the case for a long time, and also he has stated that if the money is secured from the government, it will be placed in a trust fund for the education of the Leftridge child, who was born after her father left this country.

We were all tremendously pleased about the elections generally. There were only four cities at stake here in Connecticut. Two of them had Socialist Mayors and two of them had Republican Mayors. We did substantially better in three of these cities, and I believe we laid the basis for a stronger party organization in the Fall of 1950. In the fourth city, the Democratic organization fell to pieces. On the long range basis, this may be a good thing because it makes it entirely clear that we have got to have a house cleaning in the Democratic Party in that city. In 1944, they were barely able to carry the city for Roosevelt and our majority there a year ago was only 3,800.

I believe that we have been gaining ground steadily in Connecticut and that with any luck we will be able to elect two Senators, six Congressmen, and a Governor in the Fall of 1950. If so, it will be the second time we have won an off year election in fifty years.

My best to you, Dave.

Sincerely,



Mr. David K. Niles
The White House
Washington, D. C.