

## Sparks Writes a New Chapter

C. Nelson Sparks, the former Akron Mayor who loosed a political tempest when he published the so-called Hopkins letter in his book on Wendell Willkie, says now that he got the dainty document from George N. Briggs, \$5600-a-year assistant to Secretary of the Interior Harold L. Ickes, who told him he got it from Ickes himself.

In Washington for the current probing, Sparks issued a 20-page statement "because there is so much confusion about this whole matter." He asserted that when he received the letter he had every reason to believe it was genuine and still believed it despite the assertions of Hopkins and the Justice Dept. that it is a forgery.

The letter, on White House stationery, said Willkie would be the 1944 GOP Presidential nominee. It was addressed to Dr. Umphrey Lee, President of Southern Methodist University, who has said he never received it.

With Briggs in seclusion awaiting a session with the grand jury, Ickes told his press conference that the whole case represented "an effort to discredit anyone who believes in international co-operation in the postwar period." Without amplifying, he charged that a "relationship" existed between Sparks,

Col. Robert R. McCormick, publisher of the *Chicago Tribune*, and "the isolationist group in Chicago."

In his statement, Sparks related that he had known Briggs since 1939, when he (Sparks), as manager of Frank Gannett's Presidential campaign, appointed Briggs as a regional manager. In 1943, when he started writing a book to show that Willkie "was close to the New Deal," Sparks said, he contacted Briggs for help in documenting parts of the volume.

"Briggs told me," he related, "that when Ickes learned I was interested in the Hopkins angle of Willkie's global tour, he asked Briggs to find out whether I would be interested in a letter which Hopkins had written, involving Willkie."

He said his only financial dealings with Briggs involved sending \$125 to Briggs to pay his expenses to Texas to get the letter, and a loan of \$40 "which I never got back."

Meanwhile, FBI experts were said to have concluded that the letter was written on a typewriter found in Briggs' outer office but had not decided who operated the machine. The United Press reported that the writer of the letter failed to put spaces after commas, which is also Briggs' habit.