

Appendix: F. Edward Hébert, Tulane and Beyond

The following document was prepared by Justin Wolfe, William Arceneaux Associate Professor of Latin American History, and informed the Task Force's analysis of the history of F. Edward Hébert.

Hébert at Tulane

F. Edward Hébert (1901-1979), a native New Orleanian, graduated from Jesuit High School before attending Tulane University from 1920-1924. Hébert's life at Tulane centered on his lifelong passions: sports, journalism, and politics. He was a leading member of Tulane's debating societies and the drama club, was twice elected class president, served as student manager of the football team, and inaugurated the position of sports editor for the Tulane Hullabaloo. Hébert left Tulane after three years without obtaining a degree. Although Hébert remained fond of his alma mater, his support appeared thin. His connections seemed to be with Tulane's football team, for which he served as student manager in 1922, and the university's ROTC programs.

Hébert's Career in Journalism

Hébert's career in journalism began in high school. While still at Jesuit High School, he started working as a stringer for the Times-Picayune. He continued this practice at Tulane, pulling double-duty as a part-time assistant sports editor for the Times-Picayune and as sports editor of the Hullabaloo. After three years at Tulane, Hébert responded to the strain his work produced on his academics by enrolling as a part-time "special student" in the Fall of 1923. By the Spring of 1924, he had left Tulane without a degree to accept a full-time job at the Times-Picayune. He

¹ On the scandals and Hébert's political fortunes, see, Betty M. Field, "The Louisiana Scandals," in *The Age of the Longs: Louisiana, 1928-1960*, ed. Edward F. Haas, *The Louisiana Purchase Bicentennial Series in Louisiana History*, v. 8 (Lafayette: Center for Louisiana Studies, University of Louisiana at Lafayette, 2001), 271-84; Harnett T. Kane, *Huey Long's Louisiana Hayride: The American Rehearsal for Dictatorship, 1928-1940* (1941; repr., Gretna, La.: Pelican Publishing, 1971); Michael G. Wade, "Villainy, Virtue, and Louisiana Political Culture: Paul Hébert and the Augean Stables at LSU, 1939-1941," *Louisiana History* 49, no. 1 (Winter 2008): 21-29; Jerry P. Sanson, "Reflections of Reform, Shadows of War, and a Portent of Things to Come: The Louisiana 1940 Congressional Elections," *Louisiana History* 33, no. 4 (Autumn 1992): 341-61; Robert D. Leighninger, Jr, *Building*

Hébert's Politics and His Congressional Career

Riding the fame generated by the reporting and the upsurge in anti-Longite sentiment, Hébert ran for Congress, winning his first term in the House of Representatives in 1940.² He remained in the House until 1977, when he retired. During that time, he became the senior representative from Louisiana and an aggressive supporter of the US Military, particularly the Navy.³ While serving on the House Armed Services Committee, he worked simultaneously to uncover fraud and overspending within the military while also expanding its budget and focus to areas that he deemed essential. At the same time, he proved remarkably canny in bringing millions of dollars of federal funding, resources, and jobs to Louisiana, especially to his congressional district in Orleans and Plaquemines Parishes. For example, beginning at the end of the 1950s, Hébert began

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Arguing that the plank, read “almost word for word similar to Josef Stalin’s ‘All Races’ provision of the Russian Soviet Constitution,” Hébert supported Strom Thurmond’s candidacy

The end of his career in Congress began with the arrival of the Watergate class of representatives in 1973. These new congresspeople arrived with a mandate to clean house and to instill a new level of accountability. He decided in 1975 not to seek reelection and retire when his term expired on January 4, 1977. At the same time, although it was not announced publicly, Hébert was struggling with congestive heart failure, from which he would die on December 29, 1979.

The Hébert Foundation Gift and the Naming of Hébert Hall

In 1973, as Hébert neared retirement, the F. Edward Hébert Museum (later renamed the F. Edward Hébert Foundation) was formed to begin collecting donations for an eventual memorial to the congressman. Ernest A. Carrere, Jr. was its President. Soon after its creation, the Hébert Foundation began negotiating with Tulane to house a planned museum of Hébert's mementos at the Belle Chasse facility¹⁰. That plan collapsed, however, because of the location's remoteness. By 1975, the plans had shifted to a standalone museum in Lake Oaks Park, just to the east of the University of New Orleans. The land, owned by the Orleans Levee Board, authorized the lease of the land on January 16, 1974, with a formal agreement signed on F(r)-2 (l)-Inne aiess.

corruption and the “spoils system” of the Long era.¹³ The Levee Board won the case in Civil District Court a month later, but the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals annulled the decision on February 10, 1976. On remand to the Civil District Court, the judge issued an injunction against any construction unless and until the Hébert Foundation won the lease by public bid.¹⁴

The controversy over the Orleans Levee Board lease stung the Hébert Foundation, both because it delayed construction and because the lawsuit against the lease had connected it with an emerging public debate about corruption at the Levee Board.¹⁵ On December 21, 1978, the Foundation voted unanimously to cancel the lease. Its president sent the request to the Orleans Levee Board on January 2, 1979, noting that “This action has the approval of Congressman F. Edward Hébert.”¹⁶ The Levee Board voted to drop the lease at its subsequent monthly meeting, but when a reporter from the Times-Picayune reached out to Hébert regarding the situation, he responded that “he was unable to say anything because had nothing to do with the foundation.”¹⁷

During the time the Hébert Foundation remained publicly committed to the Lakefront location, pursuing legal and legislative remedies to main ()5 n2>BDC 1 gb5u(f) BT 0 g 12 0 0 12 72,(ui)-2 (ng

“substandard” ROTC barracks, located where the Law School now stands, with a single facility for all three ROTC units. Hébert and Carrere reportedly “bought the concept enthusiastically,” which subsequently appeared in the new master plan documents produced by the design firm Sasaki Associates.²⁰ In a letter to Ernest Carrere dated January 10, 1979, Clarence Scheps wrote to indicate, “It is a privilege for Tulane to participate in a community effort memorializing the services of an outstanding Congressman. It is particularly appropriate to Tulane, since Congressman Hébert is a distinguished alumnus of the institution and has been among its foremost supporters for many years.”²¹ The next day, Carrere responded, acknowledging Scheps’ letter, but noting that he had failed to mention the named professorship in Hébert’s honor, which Scheps and President Hackney had agreed to in conversation with Hébert’s daughter Dawn Duhé.²²

A little over a week later, Carrere, representing the Hébert Foundation, presented a draft memorandum of understanding to President Hackney, noting:

We understand that Tulane has selected the “History Department Building,” which originally housed the Physics Department, to name, in perpetuity, the “F.

to a degree and in a manner at least equal to that of other buildings on the uptown Tulane campus.”

Hébert on Civil Rights and Segregation

Hébert was a staunch segregationist throughout his life. Publicly he claimed these views in support of states' rights; privately he called himself one of the last “unreconstructed rebels.” a retrospective of his career, published a few years before he died, Hébert claimed that throughout his life, he based his refusal to support civil rights legislation on principle, not prejudice, a position for which “I need not apologize.” A review of his life and politics, however, reveals that Hébert believed in white supremacy and worked aggressively to undo efforts at

Tonight, I come to you with a solemn warning of an insidious movement being fostered in the city of New Orleans and urge you to ta

equality by Federal fiat, regulations of private employment practices, voting, and local law enforcement.

6. We affirm that the effective enforcement of such a program would be utterly destructive of the social, economic and political life of the Southern people, and of other localities in which there may be differences in race, creed or national origin in appreciable numbers.³⁰

Hébert's growing seniority in the House of Representatives did not keep him from inserting himself into local issues back home. In 1949, members of the Young Men's Business Club of New Orleans (YMBC), alerted Hébert to the participation of several Tulane faculty members in the Southern Conference of Human Welfare (SCHW), an interracial organization dedicated to supporting New Deal reforms in the South and the end of segregation.³¹ Founded by some of the South's leading liberal and leftist leaders, its civil rights advocacy put it squarely in the crosshairs of Southern segregationists who labeled it a Communist front organization, a practice that provided cover for their segregationist attacks.³²

Hébert, then serving as a member of the House American Affairs Committee, excoriated the university stating, "I am from Tulane," before blasting it as home "to more Communists...than Americans."³³ In correspondence with Tulane President Rufus Harris, between December 1948 to January 1949, Hébert complained of subversive faculty at the university who supported the "the so-called Civil Rights plank" of the 1948 Democratic Platform. Hébert argued that the plank, read "almost word for word similar to Josef Stalin's 'All Races' provision of the Russian Soviet Constitution."³⁴

Although Southern Democrats retained a stranglehold over civil rights legislation in Congress, (g)5 (-)-

Perez spoke at a dinner celebrating his 35th year in office, declaring, "I am dedicating the rest of my life to the fight to prevent the relaxing of segregation policies." Hébert responded by hailing the judge with a nod to the Trail of Tears and ~~not~~ confederacy: "Perez is a man who, like Jackson, believes no just cause is ever a lost ~~cause~~^{cause}. A few months earlier, Hébert had made the same reference to Jackson in what Ellen Blue has called "the most blatant foreshadowing of

integration deadline to November 14, Perez held a public meeting in New Orleans attended by 5,000. "Don't wait for your daughter to be raped by these Congolese. Don't wait until the burrheads are forced into your schools," he warned them. The next day 2,000 whites rioted in New Orleans. A week later, Hébert offered the valedictory speech at Perez's retirement party, praising his "farsightedness, vision, judgment and knowledge of what the future holds⁴³ for us."

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worth only half of one “regular” member, so he added only one seat to the committee room and made Ron and me share it.

Despite the chilly reception, Schroeder made an effort to smooth things over with Hébert. As she explained, “When I first came to Congress, committee chairmen were demigods.” Hébert’s control of the Armed Services Committee was ~~if not~~ ⁴⁶ absolute. According to his former press secretary, Hébert “basically ran the military.... Nothing went into or came out of committee without his stamp of approval.” For example, House Speaker Carl Albert named Schroeder to a House delegation advising on ~~USSR~~ ⁴⁷ Soviet disarmament talks in Geneva, but the State Department required that she request authorization from Hébert to travel “on official committee business.” Hébert refused, writing to Schroeder, “I am unaware of my having designated you to represent the Committee on ~~Armed~~ ⁴⁸ Services for this purpose. Therefore, I regret that I am unable to send the letter you request.”

If Schroeder hoped for comity, Hébert seemed disinclined to negotiate a truce. In Schroeder’s memoir of her years in Congress, she explained:

I tried to come to some sort of truce with Hébert. I paid a call on him in his office. He was the only congressman with a patio entrance and a ~~separate~~ ⁴⁹ suite, including an “adultery” room with nude paintings, a bar, a couch and no windows. There were hundreds of ~~copies~~ ⁵⁰ pictures of Hébert in his office, and one likeness etched in marble that he planned to use for a tombstone. Back in his Louisiana district, he had named streets, hospitals and other institutions after himself. He was an ego run amok. He had long ago lost all sense of the Armed Services Committee as a democratically run body. “The Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away,” he told me, “and here I am the Lord.” He had outlived all rivals for the chairmanship and thought he was above challenge, literally stomping in

powerful House committee chairmen filing in one by one to be looked over by freshman Democrats who will decide if they deserve re-election.” Although many grumbled at the freshmen’s impertinence, it was Hébert who “challenged fate by addressing the caucus members as ‘boys and girls.’⁵⁰ Within a fortnight, Hébert had been stripped of his chairmanship, and soon after that, retired.⁵¹

The Hébert Naming and Protest

On October 13, 1979, Tulane held a dedication ceremony for F. Edward Hébert Hall that featured speeches from Ernest A. Carrere, Jr. (President of the Hébert Foundation), Rev. Phillip Hannah (Archbishop of New Orleans), and General Bernard W. Rogers (Supreme Allied Commander Europe).⁵²

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I would be ashamed to admit that the “Hébert History Building” was part of the Tulane University I regard so highly.⁵⁶

The students continued to press their case and while Hackney noted that plans for the renovation were too far advanced to back out, he “also agreed to form a committee, which would be partly comprised of students, that would serve as an advisory committee on any gifts the University should receive.”⁵⁷ Nothing indicates that the administration followed through on this plan.

The issues of racism, inequality, and Tulane’s history of white supremacy and segregation continued to find voice on campus over the succeeding decades.⁵⁸ By the early 2000s, Students Organizing Against Racism (SOAR) had established itself as the leading activist organization on campus, promoting campus activism and organizing workshops, teach-ins, and other activities. In 2005, SOAR put together the first of several tours of campus that highlighted the university’s long history of resistance to desegregation and the continuing historical presence of naming related to this history, including Tulane’s namesake, whose donation for the creation of a

leading a new tour of Tulane's "history of white supremacy and student activism." These efforts finally moved from discussion to action in Fall 2017 when undergraduate students Shahamat Uddin, Sonali Chadha, and Juhara Worku proposed a resolution through the Undergraduate Student Government (USG). They collaborated with the Graduate and Professional Student Association (GAPSA), which passed the resolution in Spring 2018. Executive Director of Public Relations Mike Strecker noted that Tulane took no action because, "The gift agreement requires that the building remain F. Edward Hébert Hall in perpetuity and that any replacement building bear the same name." By contrast, in February 2020, Tulane did respond when alerted to the plantation origins of the ~~called~~ "Victory Bell" that had been placed in front of McAlister Auditorium. Without the financial or legal difficulties inherent to the Hébert Building, the university acted quickly to remove the ~~bell~~.

In June 2020, responding to the long disquiet about the name on the building that housed the History Department, Africana Studies and the Center for Academic Equity, and elaborating on the efforts of Uddin, Chadha, and Worku, a group of 14 History faculty (out of the Department's 22), took it upon themselves to rename the building. In place of Hébert, they chose to honor of Gwendolyn Midlo Hall, a renowned historian of Black enslavement and author of the groundbreaking study, *Africans in Colonial Louisiana: The Development of Creole Culture in the Eighteenth Century*. A native of New Orleans, Midlo Hall attended Sophie Newcomb College in the early 1940s where she studied history and engaged in interracial organizing across Tulane, Loyola, Xavier and Dillard—the same institutions that now participate in the Martin Luther King, Jr. Week for Peace, which Tulane students first organized in the 1980s. That said, Mike Strecker, executive director of public relations, had to explain that while "Tulane is committed to building a more diverse, equitable and inclusive academic community," no official change of name had been made.

⁶¹ Luo Qi Kong, "SOAR Guides Students through Tulane Racial History in 'Tours of Truth,'" Tulane Hullabaloo, March 29, 2017, sec. Intersections, <https://tulanehullabaloo.com/22651/intersections/issues/5.6/> (l)5.6 (t)5.6 (u)6 (aijke)-