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ACCESSION SHEET

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Title Free Trade League. Records.

Approximate inclusive dates 1916-33

Date of receipt 1935

Received from Trumbull White

Volume on arrival

Number of boxes (after reboxing) 6 RC

Condition Good, excepting for extremely fragile and deteriorating out-going correspondence in first box of collection  
Restrictions: None

Description The Free Trade League owes its origin to the American Free Trade founded in Boston shortly after the Civil War. The economist and free trade theorist David Ames Wells was one of its founders. From the 1890's until the First World War the league appears to have been dormant. In 1916 the N.Y.C. publisher George Haven Putnam (1844-1930) was elected its president. A staunch free trade advocate and disciple of Wells Putnam launched a vigorous campaign aimed at combatting the protectionist sentiment that was being generated by the war in Europe. Putnam correctly anticipated the wave of protective tariff legislation that was to follow the war. He believed that tariff barriers were one of the leading causes of war, and that their elimination would usher in a new era of peace and economic prosperity. Until 1919 the headquarters of the AFTL, its secretary (Kenneth B. Elliman) and most of its executive committee were located in Boston, Putnam carrying on the duties of president from New York. A growing dispute between Putnam and some members of the Boston group resulted in the splitting up of the organization in 1919 and the founding of the Free Trade League in New York under the presidency of Putnam. The members of the Boston group carried on for a short time under the title International Free Trade League. Putnam's dispute with his Boston associates arose from his objection to their pacifist views and from their attempts to combine free trade theory with single tax theory, a practice which he thought only served to alienate respectable scholarly support. During the 1920's the work of the league was carried on mainly by Putnam and Richard Rogers Bowker (1848-1933), but they were hampered by lack of funds and dwindling public support. Following Putnam's death (February 1930) the FTL continued until 1933 under Bowker's presidency but to no avail for the deepening depression and the Smoot-Hawley Tariff (1931) signified the defeat of the free trade movement. A final attempt at breathing new life into the cause occurred in 1931 when Trumbull White and other members of the league formed the Council for Tariff Reduction which sought to achieve modest reductions in tariff levels by exerting pressure on Congress. The  
Special Formats ☐ Photographs ☐ Maps ☐ Audio Tapes ☐ Films ☐ Graphics  
☐ Artifacts ☐ Machine-readable records  
☐ Other (list) \_\_\_\_\_

Temporary catalog card added entries

American Free Trade League  
Congresses and conventions-London, Eng., 1920  
Council for Tariff Reduction  
Free trade and protection  
Tariff-U.S.  
Paris Peace Conference, 1919-20  
(cont'd.)

Accessioned by

John Stinson

Date

11/6/85

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Council urged prompt and moderate tariff reduction and not free trade. Its immediate objective was to agitate for revision of the Smoot-Hawley Tariff. Its organizing committee distributed a printed statement to scholars, academicians, businessmen and others who were asked to endorse the statement and become members of the Council. There is no evidence that the Council ever got off the ground. It appears to have ceased its functions in 1933.

The bulk of the records of the FTL consist of correspondence. There are some unsorted administrative records, financial records, printed ephemera, and essays on free trade. The correspondence (incoming and outgoing) is arranged alphabetically by two-year intervals. The bulk of the correspondence is that of George Haven Putnam with officers and members including Richard Rogers Bowker, Kenneth B. Elliman, A. Augustus Healy, George Foster Peabody, Edward J. Shriver, Edward N. Vollandigham, and Irving Winslow. The correspondence relates to membership, annual dinners, the publication of the league's bulletins, rivalries and ideological quarrels between Putnam and other officials, a memorial on free trade that was submitted to the Paris Peace Conference, the London conference (1920) on free trade, congressional tariff policy, the Fordney Tariff Bill, and other matters. The correspondence with Vollandigham relates in part to labor relations during the war period. Other correspondents include Edmund J. Burke, The Cobden Club, John S. Codman, George H. Grubb, and . . . . . A few letters by prominent persons are present including James Bryce, Cordell Hull, David Starr Jordan, Franklin D. Roosevelt, Ida M. Tarbell, Henry Van Dyke and William Allen White. The administrative records include minutes of meetings, membership lists, constitution, form letters, and some correspondence of Bowker with office secretaries. Some minutes are also filed in the correspondence for 1922-23. The financial records consist of financial statements (1919-29), cash book (1919-23) and a few cancelled checks. The printed ephemera includes pamphlets, flyers, press releases, circular letters, and clippings some of which was generated by the FTL. The essays on free trade (three items) were prepared by students.

The records of the Council for Tariff Reduction consist of correspondence (1931-33) of Trumbull White, its organizing secretary, with businessmen, merchants, scholars, academicians, and others who were requested to sign a printed statement on the need for tariff reduction. Some of the correspondence overlaps with that of the FTL as White was also at the same time corresponding secretary of the FTL. Correspondence include Whidden Graham, George Foster Peabody and F.W. Taussig. Included also are index card files of members (?) of the Council.

## Temporary catalog card added entries (cont'd.)

Bowker Richard Rogers, 1848-1933  
 Burke, Edmund J.  
 Cobden Club, The  
 Codman, John S.  
 Elliman, Kenneth B.  
 Graham, Whidden, 1863-1944  
 Grubb, George H.  
 Healy, A9aron Augustus, 1850-1921  
 Ligue du Libre Echange  
 Peabody, George Foster, 1852-1938  
 Shriver, Edward J.  
 Taussig, Frank William, 1859-1940

Vollandigham, Edward N.  
 White, Trumbull, 1868-1941  
 Winslow, Irving

## Free Trade League

### Container No.

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 1 | Correspondence<br>1916-17 (A-Z)<br>1918-19 (A-Z)<br>1920-21 (A-Z)<br>1922-23 (A-Sha)   |
| 2 | 1922-23 (Shr-Z)<br>1924-25 (A-Z)<br>1926-27 (A-Z)<br>1928-29 (A-Z)   |
| 3 | 1930 (A-Z)<br>1931 (A-Z)<br>1932-33 (A-Z)<br>Paris Peace Conference (1918-19)<br>Administrative records<br>Financial records<br>Printed ephemera<br>Essays |
| 4 | Council for Tariff Reduction   |
| 5 | Correspondence (A-G)   |
| 6 | " (G-R)  |
|   | " (R-Z); index card files  |