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Letter from R[obert] U[nderwood] Johnson to [Theodore Roosevelt], 1908 Apr 28.

Robert Underwood Johnson

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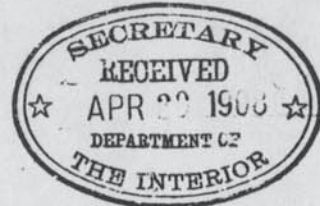
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EDITORIAL DEPARTMENT
THE CENTURY MAGAZINE
UNION SQUARE NEW YORK

April 28, 1908

FILE

R. W. GILDER, EDITOR.
R. U. JOHNSON,
ASSOCIATE EDITOR.
C. C. BUEL,
ASSISTANT EDITOR.



Dear Mr. President:

Please do not misunderstand my position on the Hetch-Hetchy question.

Human life is more sacred than scenery, and if it were the only alternative, sooner than see the city of California go without an abundant supply of good water I would cheerfully dam up the Yosemite itself!

Both as concerns the city and the Yosemite National Park this is a matter of colossal importance. You say:

"The question is simply whether they can get, on substantially as good terms, substantially as good a supply from some other source. If they cannot, the Hetch Hetchy Valley will have to be given them, as a matter of course. No other action could even be thought of."

I should be inclined to state it thus— The question is simply whether they can get an adequate supply from other sources. If they cannot, the Hetch-Hetchy Valley will have to be given them, as a matter of course — after Lake Eleanor is found insufficient, as Pinchot says.

With a view to aiding Secretary Garfield in determining this question I requested Mr. W. B. Bourne, President of the Spring Valley Water Company, to write out for me the substance of a conversation he had with me on the subject,

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which he did with reluctance, as he felt he might be thought an interested party. This statement, which raised some important practical questions, I sent to Secretary Garfield.

Of course you know that the Sierra Club, of which our high-minded and disinterested friend John Muir is President, is vigorously opposed to the project as unnecessary and otherwise objectionable. Its secretary, William F. Colby, writes me: "The whole scheme is a political job to do up a local water company." (I think he refers not to the Spring Valley but to the Bay Cities Company).

Success to your May conference! I see signs of great public interest in it. In this matter of our national-resources we are all in the same boat and nobody must be permitted to scuttle it!

As ever,

Respectfully and sincerely yours,

R. U. Johnson

To the President
The White House,
Washington, D. C.