

Herald
2/5/40 - 1-4*

FR. COUGHLIN KEPT OFF AIR IN MYSTERY

Events of Coming Week Hinted as Sole Clue

DETROIT, Feb. 4 (C.T.P.S.). The Rev. Charles E. Coughlin, crusading radio priest, baffled thousands of his Sunday listeners today by a mysterious absence from the air.

After exhorting the radio audience to "call all your friends on the telephone and tell them to listen to this program," an unidentified announcer stepped to the microphone, after an interlude of music, with this statement:

"And now for the first significant announcement!"

Refuses Explanation

"I am instructed to say 'Father Coughlin will not address you today. No person will address you today over this microphone. I am not authorized to give any explanation.'"

The mystery, originating in the Shrine of the Little Flower at Royal Oak, Father Coughlin's parish, was deepened when the announcer, after another musical interlude, returned to say:

"I am instructed to say, 'Pay no heed to idle rumors which will be circulated this week. Be assured Father Coughlin knows what he is doing. He knows why neither he nor any other person is speaking over this microphone. The events transpiring this week will enlighten you.'"

Continues With Music

The program, on the air from 4 p.m. to 5 p.m., continued with music and choral singing, and then the announcer made his final statement:

"Ladies and gentlemen! Do not be alarmed, we confidently expect that Father Coughlin will return to the microphone next Sunday. By all means do your share to have his largest audience ready to hear his message."

The program is transmitted from the shrine to Detroit's station WJR, whence it is broadcast over the nation. Officials of WJR insisted they were absolutely in the dark concerning the mystery, and no one at the Shrine of the Little Flower would talk.

In Washington, George B. Porter, assistant counsel in charge of the broadcasting division of the Federal Communications Commission, was frankly amazed.

"If any official action had been taken," he said, "I would have known about it, and I do not hesitate in speaking for the commission in saying that no Federal intervention has occurred."

Offers Explanation

The Rev. Edward J. Hickey, chancellor of the Detroit Archdiocese, offered a possible explanation.

"The officially appointed persons who each week examine Father Coughlin's radio speeches before they are broadcast may have found something that caused cancellation," he said.

However, he declared, Archbishop Edward A. Mooney, who has chided Father Coughlin on occasion for some of his broadcasts, has not interfered today. Archbishop Mooney is out of the city on vacation.

In some quarters the mystery was viewed simply as a buildup for next Sunday's broadcast to obtain as large an audience as possible.