

Thursday, May 16, 1940

Dear Cameron,

This is to supplement yesterday's letter.

Re: Senator Elmer Thomas' speech. The local papers complete ignored it. I don't know what the wire services did with it, if anything. Enclosed are pages 8387-9404 of the Congressional Record, containing all of Thomas' observations as well as those of some of his colleagues. Thomas' statements commence on p. 9388. I haven't had the opportunity of reading the entire speech, but I have read enough of it to feel that you might want to go through it or have some one go through it. He has a lot of good stuff, for a preparedness guy. I particularly recommend the last paragraph on p. 9390, ~~extending through~~ through the first two thirds of the first column on p. 9392 and the "statistical data on pp. 9388-9389. You will notice that of all the many ships under construction the two kinds that are essentially defensive in nature, mine sweepers and mine layers, both under construction and included in the 1941 appropriation bill, total 4, 1 mine layer and 3 mine sweepers. This, to me, gives the lie to all the propoganda of defending ourselves against foreign invasion. The enclosure ends with a table of military expenditures beginning in 1890 that I think might interest you.

You will notice that throughout Thomas' remarks he is heckled by Senator Minton (Sherman H., Dem., Indiana). Minton here speaks not as an individual member of the Senate but as the administration whip. When he attempts to destroy the arguments of Thomas he is speaking the mind and the piece of the White House.

Among the other things you will find in this debate is the fact that in

the course of appearing before Congressional committees and asking for appropriations, responsible officials of the military establishment have presented figures on capacity for aeroplane production so different that it is hard to consider them accidental mistakes (4080 vs. 17,000 annually). This appears on pp. 9396-7. I think you will also be interested in the figures on the immediately available manpower, exclusive of veterans of previous wars, the regular army and navy, and also exclusive of the National Guard. Hardly a Lilliputian force, as Lundeen put it in the debate. In case you are interested in the Senators who participated in the debate Minton, in addition to what I have said above, is one of the more forceful New Dealers in the Senate, a McNutt guy, and the chairman of the Lobby committee of which Hage Black was formerly chairman. Lundeen is a Farmer-Laborite gone sour with the passing of Elmer Benson. Lundeen is a bug on airplanes and has held forth for hours on the glories and beauties of flying over the seas. He is one of the fair-haired boys of the native fascists. Josh Lee, De., Oklahoma, is one of the Senate's most ~~passix~~ polished orators and a former Oklahoma schoolteacher. Until recently he has been well-regarded by leberals and has taken a good position on civil liberties. Last week he made a ringing and inaccurate defense of J. Edgar Hoover and the G-men.

Night before last General Pershing came to town, just in time. This is the statement he released:

Preparedness is as necessary today as it was ~~shax~~ for us when war was declared in 1917, and we find ourselves in practically the same conditio.

Congress has made certain appropriations for materiel, but that is far short of what I think Congress must do.

Every energy in this country should be devoted to the idea of the putting the United States in a condition of thorough preparedness against the possibility of war.

None of us can tell when we may become involved in the struggle now raging with such tremendous fury in Europe. In my opinion, the very life of this Republic depends on the energy and determination with which our people undertake the task of placing the United States in a state of thorough preparation in both men and equipment.

The time factor should be the dominant consideration. In 1917 I sailed for Europe with nothing material available other than the will to do and a hasty plan as the basis for doing it.

Our Allies protected us during more than a year of preparation. They provided us with this materiel.

Today the situation is utterly different. This great country must, within itself, ~~prepare~~ be prepared for whatever instant action is required for our security. We must not delay longer in our preparations.

As I said yesterday, Dies postponed his speech because it was late before his time came and he would have had no audience and would have missed the evening papers. He had the gall to ask that an hour out of the very limited time allotted to the WPA debate (he is opposed to WPA and the appropriation measure) today be allowed him.

I also told you that the Oppressive Labor Practises Act would come up soon. It came up today. La Follette was in charge of the bill. He made a speech on it (the same as he used last year in getting the sanction of the Committee on Education and Labor) and answered the criticisms fairly well. Senator Wiley, his colleague, a Republican, went after the bill hammer and tongs. Then a strange thing happened. Puddler Jim Davis, Republican, of Pennsylvania, undertook to defend the bill and to educate Wiley. All in all, it was a pretty good performance and spoke well for the bill. However,

there will be no vote until Monday, and the NAM boys and their cooperators will undoubtedly do their best over the weekend. I am afraid that their best will be none too poor. Though the bill may pass the Senate Monday there is little chance that it will come up in the House in this session. If it should, it has little chance of passage.

On the 12th Senator Capper, Kansas Republican, released a speech prepared for a radio broadcast but apparently never made. He recommended that we use "some of our gold" for the development of the rubber industry in Brazil because, "we would be better off if we were ~~in~~ getting our rubber from Brazil than to have to continue on the Dutch East Indies". He said that we would be called upon by Britain to send our fleet to the Pacific to protect Britain's rubber interests there in the event either Germany or Japan menaced these islands.

Capper forgot that our fleet has been in the Pacific for some time, and that, as soon as Holland and Belgium were invaded, the fleet, which was preparing to steam out of Honolulu was ordered to remain there. To the best of my knowledge, it is still there.

Day before yesterday Admiral Samuel M. Robinson, coordinator of the Navy's ship construction plan, testified before the House Naval Affairs Committee demanding an additional \$300,000,000. Robinson, who comes from a section of the Navy which several months ago was in hot water over the construction program and the condition of some of the ships under construction, had three demands: permission to award contracts without competitive bidding; an ~~increased~~ increased work week, 40 to 48 hours and shipyards to work a 24-hour day; precedence for naval construction over commercial and Maritime construction.

Enclosed is a memo in the transferring of American ships to foreign registry. These ships were transferred for the purpose of trading on behalf of the concern under whose flag it sailed after the transfer with the United States. In other words, to do what American ships couldn't, following the passage of the Neutrality Act, do. Thus are so many American sailors beached, because they cannot violate the act.

I can give you the names of each of the ships, its age, tonnage, the company to which it was sold, the registry, the type of ship, whether or not it was ever subsidized by the govt, what conditions or restrictions, if any, there were to the transaction, and something on the labor relations of most, I believe, of the American companies involved. However, unless you want it, I'm not going to continue with the memo.

I still haven't received the letter from Dick Boyer.

Harold