

Letters to Congress Show People Are Against Convoys

Legislators' Mail Drops Off as Nation Waits for Roosevelt to Set Course

By JACK PURCELL

A survey of war sentiment in the country, as evidenced by constituents' letters to Congressmen, yesterday, showed a preponderant distaste for American participation, even in the flood of mail to the Administration's most rabid advocates of warlike measures.

Sampling interventionist and noninterventionist offices on Capitol Hill, it was found that legislators' mail had dropped off in the last week, evidently a sign that the American people were tensely waiting for President Roosevelt to "cast the die" one way or the other.

Interventionists' Mail Split

Significant of public opinion on the issue of convoys and war was the general attitude expressed in letters to Senator Tom Connally, of Texas, and Senator Claude Pepper, of Florida. Connally, representing the supposedly war-minded State of Texas, is an ardent advocate of convoys. Pepper has spearheaded the Administration drive for naval escorts of munitions to Britain, and even called for seizure of Vichy-owned Dakar in West Africa and the Caribbean Island of Martinique.

Since May 6, when War-Spokesman Pepper proclaimed that "our people are willing to shed their blood," his office mail has increased from 1,000 letters a day to about 5,000. But, according to Pepper's office, opinion is 6 to 5 against the use of convoys. While this is the ratio for all of the mail sent from widespread areas of the country, 8 out of 10 correspondents from Pepper's home State, the South and Eastern Seaboard favor naval escorts.

Less Mail for Connally

Connally's office reported that the influx of mail had dropped off in the last two weeks from 500 a day to 400. Practically all of it came from Texas. But while it was stated that sentiment for convoys was growing, most of the correspondents appealed to the Senator to "keep us out of war."

On the House side, it was reported that a daily average of 125,000 communications has been maintained consistently since January 1. During debate on repeal

of the arms embargo, 180,000 to 200,000 letters were received daily. Telegraph agencies reported that they had no particular increase this month.

Surprisingly enough, the issue of convoys, brought to the fore by Secretary of War Stimson and Secretary of the Navy Knox, has not elicited any heavy flood of messages to the Capitol. According to Senate Postmaster Jack W. Gates, the volume of letters is "heavy for this time of the year, but not extraordinarily so in view of events."

Gates estimates that from 75,000 to 80,000 a day have been pouring in for the past four weeks. During debate on the war power bill, H. R. 1776, a "conservative estimate" would place the daily mail at 125,000. The furious battle over the Supreme Court packing bill in the spring of 1937, he said, precipitated a deluge of 165,000 letters a day.

Letters Below Embargo Period

On the House side, it was reported that a daily average of 125,000 has been maintained fairly consistently since the first of the year. During debate on repeal of the arms embargo, from 180,000 to 200,000 letters were received daily. Telegraph agencies likewise reported that they had noticed no particular increase this month.

Here are the results of the poll as reported by congressional offices:

NEW HAMPSHIRE—Senator Charles W. Tobey (Republican—non-interventionist): "Mail for the last four weeks has run about 2,000 a day. These letters represent country-wide opinion with only 10 or 15 letters a day advocating convoys."

NEW YORK—Representative Sol Bloom, chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, (D-Interventionist):

"Our mail is so heavy we don't even count it. We just stack it. It takes four hours every morning to do that. Perhaps it's because of my position as chairman, but I get letters and postcards from most of the 48 States. Ninety-five per cent of the cards are against convoys, but it must be remembered that they are printed form cards or organized propaganda. I

should say, too, that the majority of the letters are against convoys."

VERMONT—Senator Warren R. Austin, (R-Interventionist):

"Our mail has increased but not to any tremendous bulk. As regards reaction to the convoy issue, we are not in a position to give a statement. The letters and messages all carry a note of deep earnestness. It is safe to say that Vermont's people will do everything they can for the Allies."

NEW YORK—Senator Robert F. Wagner (D.): "Since the 1st of May we have been receiving from 6,000 to 10,000 letters a day. A little more than half are opposed to this country using convoys. About 90 per cent of the mail comes from New York city."

NORTH CAROLINA—Senator Robert R. Reynolds (D-Noninterventionist): "In the last two weeks our mail has jumped 20 per cent to about 400 a day. At most, 10 letters a day are prowar. This mail represents a country-wide attitude; it is not restricted to North Carolinians."

KENTUCKY—Senator Alben W. Barkley, majority leader of the Senate (D-Interventionist): "Our mail has decreased about 50 letters a day in the last two weeks. It now runs about 150 daily. Correspondents are from all over the country, and are divided 50-50 on the convoy issue."

Antiwar, Says Gillette

IOWA—Senator Guy M. Gillette (D-Noninterventionist): "We have had a steady flow of mail the last two weeks, although the increase is not comparable with that during the lend-lease debate. However, fully 80 per cent of it is anticonvoy and antiwar."

INDIANA—Representative Louis Ludlow (D., noninterventionist)—Mail is 99 9/10 per cent against any step that will lead us to war. A large number of letters favor aid to Britain provided the aid is honestly short of war. Mail hit its peak about two weeks ago when 30 to 40 letters a day were received. At present it runs from 10 to 12. The mail is nothing to compare with that which was received on the neutrality legislation in 1939, when 10,000 letters were received in a few weeks.

ILLINOIS—Senator C. Wayland Brooks (R., noninterventionist):

"While our mail is much heavier than usual, it has not approached the volume of the lease-lend debate, when it hit around 3,000 a day, for seven days a week. Now it is up to between 400 and 500, and better than 90 per cent of it is anticonvoys and antiwar."

Unanimous for Peace

MICHIGAN—Senator Arthur H. Vandenberg (R., noninterventionist): "Correspondents are practically unanimous in their opposition to convoys and war. Last week we received 150 letters a day relating to this issue, a decrease from 350

daily for the preceding two or three weeks."

MONTANA—Senator Burton K. Wheeler (D., noninterventionist): "Practically 100 per cent against convoys and war. Our mail for the past two weeks has averaged about 700 daily; the preceding two weeks counted from 200 to 300 per day."

SOUTH DAKOTA—Senator William J. Bulow (D., noninterventionist): "One letter urging convoys has been received from South Dakota in the last 10 days. It's such a rarity that we've saved it to show around the office. All the other letters from back home on the war have demanded that this nation stay away from convoys or any step of any kind that might involve the United States in Europe. These letters run on an average of about 40 to 50 a day from South Dakota. Remember this is the planting season, and the veterans haven't the time to write as they did during the fight over H.R. 1776 or the repeal of the arms embargo in the fall of '39."

"Letters received here from outside of South Dakota, including many from New York and California, are eight to two against convoys."

8 Per Cent for Convoys

WASHINGTON—Senator Homer Bone (D., noninterventionist): "Mail is running from between 92 and 94 per cent against convoys or any steps by the United States which might further involve the nation in the European war. Mail on the war and convoy problem runs about 100 a day for the last fortnight. This is a dropping off, particularly in the rural districts where the farmers are now busy."

CALIFORNIA—Senator Hiram W. Johnson (R., noninterventionist): "Sixty per cent of our 200 letters daily come from California. They're 50 to 1 against convoys and war."