

5/12/40

Dear Cameron,

There is a great contrast between the last two weeks in Congress. The week just ended was strange by its comparative tranquility and several votes were a bit unusual. For instance, there is a labor victory in the recommitting of the Wheeler-Lea transportation bill to committee. This bill, supported by labor in its original form, was opposed by most representatives of labor and bona fide organizations when the Senate and House conferees voted to strike from it prohibitions on dismissals as a result of modernization. Perhaps the funniest part of this is that Joe Curran and Joe Ryan were on the same side. But it was the several changes, of which the above was typical, that sent the bill to the limbo of a committee. Following the wage-hour vote, it perhaps means something. There were, for the first time this session, thus, two successive weeks with outstanding labor victories in the Congress. This bill is known as S. 2009.

The committee to investigate the migratory worker situation in agriculture was appointed by the Speaker of the House, and seems not to have been reported in the papers. Tolson of California, sponsor of the investigation, is chairman, and the other members are Congressmen Parsons, Sparkman, Curtis and Osmer. None of these has anything in his past record to cause great satisfaction by his appointment. Bob Lamb, by the way, is secretary of this investigation. He had been given the No. 2 slot in the FSA information division and when the investigation

is x is ended he will return there. As secretary he will be the administrative head of the committee. This, on the other hand, is a very good sign because Bob's selection indicates that the committee is willing to accept the recommendation of the FSA and Department of Agriculture boys.

Another of the funny things that happened in the past week is the peculiar flaunting of his fascist sympathies by Congressman Thorkelson (Wheeler's folly) of Montana. This former sea captain, former surgeon screwball actually inserted in the record of copy of a speech he had made. The head he put on the insertion is: "Speech to the Christian Mobilizers". Thorkelson has placed \$10,000 of antisemitic speeches in the Congressional Record, which makes it possible for the various groups of this nature to send them all over the country postage free. Thorkelson has become so bold that he now Jew-baits from the well of the House. He is the fellow who defeated Jerry O'Connell, "The Montana Liberal", when he ran for reelection after a visit to the Spanish front and an "invasion" of Jersey City when Hague was so hot after the unions. Thorkelson was supported by both Wheeler and Anaconda. Wheeler was so anxious to defeat O'Connell, a member of his own party, that he is really responsible for the election of the Republican peewee Hitler. This, in liberal circles, is one of the biggest hurdles Bert Wheeler will have to jump in his campaign for the Presidency.

The WPA vote is scheduled to follow debate beginning Thursday. Probably it will begin with an attack on Mrs. FDR, who will attend the "banquet" of the "Daughters of the Depression", sponsored by the Workers Alliance Tuesday night. The WA today began the convention of ~~the~~ a housewives group to study the problems of the unemployed. Mrs. R. will eat a 5¢ meal. Every time Mrs. FDR goes to such an affair the Republican axmen, notoriously Keefe of Wisconsin (who put into the record a summary of the book by the expelled NLU spies Ralph Emerson and William McCuiston).

Little is heard of amendments to the NLRA, and the talk now is that there will be none in this session. It seems likely that when Pat Boland, Democratic whip of the House, took Eugene Cox, of Ga., out to supper the other night he convinced Cox, leader of the Southern reactionaries and No. 2 man of the powerful Rules committee that it would be disastrous for the Democratic party for this issue to come up for a vote in this session. Boland is from western Pa. and, in the early days of this administration, was a real liberal. Cox was elected by a total vote of 5,000.

In the field of politics there is another encouraging sign for labor. You may remember that Frank Fries, of Ill., one of the floor leaders in the campaign that saved the NLRA, was renominated by a good vote in the recent primaries. Fries comes from an AFL district and opposed the AFL amendments very loud. Well, Abe

Murdoch, of Utah, who is one of the most liberal Congressmen, who has voted against the Dies committee consistently, has apposed the anti-alien laws, etc., is a member of the Smith committee. He has been a bit more active than Art Healey, of Mass., the other liberal on the committee. There has been a real campaign to get him. Rather than getting him, his opponents are now distraught because if he can get enough money together to keep some of his key men back home from being bought out from under him he has an excellent chance to defeat Senator King, long time conservative and antilabor corporatefront. Several weeks ago both were in Utah to attend a State Democratic convention. Murdoch got a tremendous ovation. King was actually booed by some and got a cool reception. Utah is an AFL state, yet it is significant that after his straight record on these issues Murdoch is so popular and is conceded a fine chance of chasing King. Among the devices employed to undermine him is the ~~cas~~ circulation of tales that he is a drinker and a gambler, which is taboo among Mormons. He is a very abstemious guy.

Lost in the recent Nazi debates of Congress was a long attack on the Red Cross by Bennett Champ Clark, Missouri Democrat isolationist. Clark criticized the RC as a recruiting agency for foreign wars. He was particularly vehement about the enlisting of technicians, etc., by the RC. Let me know if you want his speech for your files and I'll get it.

Key Pittman of Nevada is chairman of the influential and important Senate Foreign Relations Committee. He is regarded as an administration spokesman on these matters. Day before yesterday in an address before the "Inquirendo Club", which was holding its annual banquet in the Mayflower, he urged that we not "be caught unprepared if strenuous defense is forced upon us." Later in his speech this became clear. ~~xxxxx~~ The defeat of the Allies would bring us in, through the Monroe doctrine, which is not being enforced in the case of British soldiers landing in Dutch West Indies yesterday. This was ruled no violation of the Monroe Doctrine because these soldiers were intended to police the oil fields, etc. These oil fields send more oil to Europe than the USA.

Hitler's invasion of Belgium, Holland and Luxembourg has caused less comment here than any of his previous adventures. That, to me, is a distressingly clear signpost on the road to American participation. Little by little we seem here to become more and more convinced and to take more and more for granted the eventual entrance of the USA. The Congressional Record for Friday, the day following the invasion, is one of the smallest of the year and the smallest for several weeks. Practically nothing was said, and none of the flamboyant outbursts that are so common in the Congress on these occasions was heard. Several newspaper stories were placed in the Record, and Mrs. Edith Norse Rogers (R., Mass.), who has a good labor record, offered a concurrent resolution (House Concurrent Resolution No. 63), calling for Congress to remain in continuous session "on account of the grave situation abroad". The

resolution has been referred to the Committee on Ways and Means. Nothing has been said about this resolution, and probably nothing will, but it has possibilities. This is a campaign year and Members of Congress cannot run their reelection campaigns by remote control. Hence they will certainly oppose this resolution. But for the Republicans this resolution has definite potentialities. When the administration starts turning the heat on to get the pests out of here, as they will in perhaps two weeks, when they start holding night sessions, which always frays the Members' nerves, the Republicans may well holler that the administration is trying to get Congress out of session because they do not want to keep us out of way, because they want Congress out of the way. However, I still feel that what I told you several weeks ago is more probable, that adjournment will come on the eighth of June and that shortly thereafter ~~there will~~ there will be a special session which may vote on a declaration of war.

For several years past Congressman Louis Ludlow of Indiana and Sen. La Follette have jointly sponsored the Ludlow amendment to the Constitution providing for a referendum before Congress can declare war. Nothing has been done or said about the amendment this session.

I think it would be a good idea if you had copies of the letters of Robert Lansing, Woodrow Wilson's wartime secretary of State. There is an awful lot of good stuff in them. Also, there are many parallels. I also intend to get you in the near future copies of a 1 the State

Department releases since the Norwegian invasion. I still worry about the tone and wording of Hull's messages to the Japanese. The one of which I wrote you several weeks ago, I understand, has been just about duplicated in the past two days. Next week I expect to send you all the data I can get on transferring of American ships to foreign registry. I believe you said you were somewhat interested in this. If my hunch is a good one we will find that the bulk of the tonnage has gone to the Allies. I can recall no transfer to the Nazis. If this is true, and if you are interested, I will then see if I can find out who owns these ships. How much this line should be followed is up to you, but there are several other angles, such as government subsidies to the lines and in the cases of the particular ships. If these ships were built by the government, and transferred to a foreign, an Ally, registry, then, in effect, the government has subsidized the Allies. If I ~~do~~ do not hear from you I will assume you are not very interested in this and will not follow it far.

Speaking of subsidies, the British pulled a fast one on the American drinkers and liquor dealers. ~~Some~~ About a month ago the trade was told to stock up on Scotch, because it was going up a considerable amount "because of the war". Many consumers and many retailers did. For instance, my uncle, a liquor dealer in Delaware, gave me three bottles because from what the salesman had told him it was really going sky high. Just the converse seems to have happened. From what I have heard down here the British have dumped Scotch on the American market,

having used the ruse to empty dealers' shelves, and wholesalers reserves. This should get them more foreign exchange.

Re the insurance story: If there is anything the fellow you have working on it needs, any questions he cant answer, have him write ~~me~~ me a memo that I can present to the committee and I am sure that within a short time I can get him the answers. Also, if he feels he hasn't the whole story let him tell me what volumes he has and I'll get him what might be missing, even if it is not yet set in type.

If you haven't gotten the transcript of the Dies committee hearing from Saul Mills, Harry Sacher or Mike Quill let me know and when they return here this week I'll type it for you. Thinking it over, I have come to the opinion that there is a possibility-a probability- that they may be interested in you. They went much farther than they should have if they intended only to question Quill. Of course, J.B. Matthews "testified" while questioning to get what he did into the record. In any event, you ought to be prepared for them. I'll cover all their hearings this week for you, just in case they carry on.

Please speak to the circulation department and ask them to send the magazine to me at the correct address, 313 H. st, nw., I have written them and ever sent them the post office stamps on the wrapper, to no avail. If I have the magazine at the time it comes out and there is something good from a legislative point of view I can then place it.

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Also, I'd like to leave copies behind on the hill and in the government departments that I visit when I think it'll do some good. When I get them a week late they don't do much good.

Enclosed is a copy of the Department of Justice release on the investigation of the conduct of the FBI agents in the Detroit arrests. What a whitewash. I know Henry Schweinhut-at least, I knew him well before he was promoted to the head of the civil liberties unit of the DJ, a political position compared to his previous one as one of the lawyers in the criminal division of the Department. Frankly, I am surprised by the report and know that it is not at all like him. I am suggesting that the report is not completely his, and that he may have been instructed to prepare the kind of a document he did.

Also enclosed is a copy of the letter I wrote you yesterday re what you owe me. Please let me have it right away.

Harold