

5/20/40

Dear Dick,

Enclosed are:

Japan's Oriental Policy, speech and debate of Key Pittman on 2/10/36;
World Affairs, speech by Pittman on 3/11/40; Senate Joint Resolution
123, 75th Cong., 1st Session.; Neutrality and Peace, speech by Pittman
and debate with Borah and others 10/2, 10/5 and 10/6/39; Neutrality and
Peace, an address by Pittman answering Lindbergh, 10/14/39; Public Resolu-
tion 27, 75th Cong., 1st sess., Public Resolution 54, 76th Cong., 2d sess.,
and a report, The Neutrality Act of 1939, submitted to the Senate by
Pittman, on behalf of the Foreign Relations Committee; The Neutrality
Act and the Far Eastern Crisis (8/25/37), Our Foreign Policy (2/20/39),
and Peace Assured Through Senate Legislation (10/30/39), addresses by
Pittman on the National Radio Forum, sponsored by the Washington Star;
the Johnson Act.

What you want is a rather tall order for the time in which I had to get
it. I don't know how close I came, but here is the best I could do.

First biographical data.

Key Pittman is the senior Senator from Nevada. In the 1930 census his State
had a population of 91,059. He is a Democrat and his home is Tonopah, Nevada.
He was born in Vicksburg, Miss., on September 19, 1872, to William Buckner
and Katherine Key Pittman (hence his first name). His family split during
the Civil War, his father fighting with the Confederacy and his uncle with
the North. . He was educated by private tutors, and at Southwestern Presby-
terian University, at Clarksville, Tenn., and George Washington University.
He began to practise law at the age of 20 in Seattle, Wash. Seven years

with another team. It was thus that he met his wife. The other team was hers. They were married in 1900. Her name: ~~Mina~~ Minna Gates.

Pittman became chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee in the same way that chairmen of committees are always selected. He was ranking member of the side which came into power. His other committee assignments are: Expenditures in the Executive Departments, Irrigation and Reclamation, Judiciary, Mines and Mining, Public Lands and Surveys, Territories and Insular Affairs, (Special) Conservation of Wildlife Resources, and (Special) Silver, of which he is chairman. The wildlife committee has great vacationing potentialities.

During World War No. 1 he was a member of the Foreign Relations Committee and also of the Naval Affairs Committee. It was then that he met FDR, then assistant secy of the Navy. They became good friends. Pittman voted for our entrance into the war.

I gather from my conversation with you and Cameron's brief note that you regard Pittman as a great enunciator of our foreign policy and changes in it. This is not true. From all that I can discover he is rather a great stooge. He is personally very friendly with both FDR and Hull and goes along with them on almost everything. The only exception I can find is the Reciprocal Trade Treaty program, which he opposed, unsuccessfully in the Senate (vote; 3/29/40). I can find no case of his having called the turns. The closest thing to this is his having shouted long and loud against Japanese aggression before the 1911 trade treaty was abrogated, but it was not because of his shouting that the treaty was cancelled. His predictions in the field of ~~East~~ foreign affairs are distinctly on the amateur side. The day before the invasion of the lowlands he told two newspapermen, "you can take this as

definite--there will be no invasion of the Netherlands". He said that on the basis of information he had the next move would be in the Balkans. The press corps regards him as irresponsible and screwy on the Silver question. He is one of the dullest speakers in a Senate in which orators are decreasing in number. When there is real work to be done in his field, like getting an important bill through, some of the old masters are called in to manage it, men like Jimmy Byrnes of South Carolina or Pat Harrison, of Mississippi, now back in the New Deal fold. Pittman is a gin fighter and has been noticed a bit wobbly around the knees during some of the more important debates, such as the Neutrality debate. Some of the Senate reporters swear that he enunciated his famous 4-point program a year ago shortly after getting a case of gin from an admirer. Some of the occasions on which the Pittman has sounded off have, according to State Department informants, embarrassed the State Department, particularly in the case of Japan. These same people say that he does not follow the New Deal line, but "happens" to agree with it(!). He is an administration man and does the administration's work. He cuts no great influence in the Senate nor in the committee by virtue of his ability, but he is one of the oldest members in point of service. While he, as chairman of the foreign relations committee might cause the administration considerable embarrassment by opposing its position on an important issue, such as the war, it is not likely that he could prevent the passage of any administration measure. If he were to try any parliamentary tricks with the committee he bucks up against Senators Harrison, George, Wagner, Connally, Elbert Thomas, Van Nuys, Murray, Pepper, Green, Barkley, Reynolds, Guffey, Gillette, Johnson of Calif., La Follette, Vandenberg and others.

I couldn't get to see him, but I asked the secretary of the committee to have Pittman write you a brief note telling you whether or not he thinks we will get into the war and how we can stay out. I did that because you said you wanted this Tuesday morning. You probably won't get it. He had no connection with the White Paper, so far as I can discover. I will write you on what I have been able to discover about that tomorrow or Wednesday.

Personally, if I understand what you are looking for, you haven't a story. He couldn't stop the war resolution or anything remotely connected with it. Just about nothing can now, anyway. The boys are hopped up. Conversely, he couldn't be the deciding factor in getting such a thing through unless it were very close, which such things never are. He is an administration spokesman in his field, as is any chairman of any committee under any administration, unless he is on the outs with the administration which seldom happens, though it did with the southern reactionaries, who control many of the committees. If I understand what you were looking for, I'd recommend that such an angle on the control and domination of Senate and House committees by the Southerners would give you a better story. They really have some influence and have a real effect on legislative action, especially in times of stress. But the way things are going now all the purges etc. are coming back into the fold on foreign relations and the way. For instance, Senator George of Georgia has come out solidly behind FDR program and is trying to get him the vote.

To get back to Pittman, he is a rather amiable and personable fellow, but a lightweight when compared with some of the others on his committee.

8

I hope that from the enclosures you can get some of the quotes you might want. The resolution he ~~is~~ introduced, enclosed, is really aimed at Japan. I haven't had a chance to read it or the other stuff, but I have a hunch that if it ever came out of his own committee it might be very broadly interpreted.

There doesn't seem to be much chance that the neutrality act or the Johnson Act will be amended through this committee. The talk of revoking the Johnson Act comes from the House side, when Andrew May, chairman of the Military Affairs Committee, first suggested it several weeks ago. May comes from the county north of Harlan, Letcher County, Ky. Some other Southern Congressmen have also suggested this.

I tried to get you several times tonight, without success. If you want to get me in the morning, you'd bet er do it about 10 o'clock your time, or 9 ours. I am going to the Dies committee hearing, which will begin with a continuation of Rathborne's testimony and will continue with Nicholas Dozenberg, Nee Dallant, who will testify to Soviet secret police in this country. From there I will probably go to the doctors because the infection I had a month or so ago is returning and I am sick again. If you should call me after I leave send me a wire and I'll call you as soon as I return.

By the way, I am hoping to have a decent story on the reports of the Naval Affairs Committees, which I'll mail in in a day or so. I am going to get the reports first.

Harold