

5/2/42

Dear Cameron,

In order to get this to you in time I am going to have to do it in pieces. Consequently, it will jump all over the place.

I have just learned that 3 and 4 weeks ago two retired Army officers, both colonels and one a cavalry man, were given physical examinations by the Army, quietly, in a down-town hotel room as a preliminary to returning them to active service. In the case of one, who was found to be unfit for active service because of a tropical disease he contracted in the Philippines, he was offered a desk job.

I have also been informed that employees of the Federal Government who have had ROTC experience, are being listed.

This would indicate that prior to the president's speech he had become interested in what we now call broadly "the national defense". In this connection, and also on the q.t., last July FDR initiated a special study of recent legislation increasing the emergency powers of the President, especially in war-time. He had appointed several economists from a Government bureau, unfamiliar with military matters, to assist in this project.

There is again talk of reestablishing the war-industries board which Bernard Baruch headed during World War I. A similar board was set up last year, with U.S. Steel's Stetinius in charge, but this is inactive. If you are interested in the minutes of the old board you can obtain them in an out-of-print document printed by Senator Nye's Munitions committee, not available through the Government Printing Office and not generally

circulated, but in the possession of the New York Public Library. It is identified as "Committee Print No. 2" of that committee.

Lindbergh's speech created a stir, ~~and it was widely reported in~~
~~administration circles it was not well received.~~
 Majority Leader Sam Rayburn of Texas criticized him for it and said
 he didn't know what he was talking about. When Edith Norse Rogers/^{Republican,}
 of Massachusetts attempted to incorporate the text as part of her remarks
 in a short address he prevented her, but finally agreed to several
 paragraphs, which she quoted.

I have received the following information from someone pretty high up
 in the State Department. There is no concern there over South
 America and a feeling that there is no chance of our being involved in
 the war through events that might transpire there. This information,
 by the way, I got several days before FDR's speech. All the many Nazi
 agents in South America who were, in the main, loud Nazi propagandists
 before the outbreak of the war, have now given up all their activity of
 this nature and are concentrating upon keeping track of and reporting
 the movements of Allied ships or ships bearing cargo's destined for the
 Allies. There is concern over the far-Eastern situation, and my belief
 that we may become involved through the Dutch East Indies was, substantially
 confirmed.

The President's speech caught everybody, even his closest, by surprise.
 Nobody knew anything and several mistakes were made. I am enclosing a
 copy of a little-publicized report of the Senate Committee on Naval

Affairs, made by Senator Walsh of Massachusetts, chairman, on May 15. The other members of this committee are: Tydings, Smith, Russell, Bone, Byrd, Gerry, Holt, Andrews, Gillette, Lucas, Ellender, Hale, Davis, Hiram Johnson of California, Gibson and Barbour. Walsh is an administration guy. He made this report to the Senate the very day before Roosevelt made his unusual (and strictly speaking, illegal) appearance before the joint session. I strongly recommend that you read this report carefully, because it says many things that contradict FDR, and some of the things it says are surprising. For instance, on pp. 2-3, it says, "The armies of Europe and Asia do not menace us," etc. Also especially interesting is the section beginning on p. 8, "America and the war in Europe", which, in part, says, " We are not prepared to participate in the European war, as we do not possess the necessary weapons to make our efforts effective.....our industries should must not become too greatly compromised by foreign war orders....some naval experts point out that the view that we ought to fight now when we have allies , etc." I believe this is an amazing document which can be used to argue two different points rather effectively.

I have obtained a ~~proposed~~ bill introduced just this past Monday. It was offered by Chairman Vinson, of Georgia, of the House Naval Affairs Committee and, after presentation, was referred to the committee which he heads. The other members of this committee are: Drewry, Schuetz, Sutphin, Shannon, Magnuson, Lyndon B. Johnson, Jacobsen, Havenner, Bradley (Pennsylvania), Griffith, Vincent (Kentucky), Darden, Cannon (Florida), Fay, Mass, Church, Mott, Cole (N.Y.) Bates (Mass.), Hess, Darrow, Jenks (N.H.), Jefferies, Anderson (Calif.), King, Dimond (Alaska).

The provisions of this bill make it possible, upon enactment, to forget about the social legislation of the New Deal with respect to Naval building and it is also an opening wedge. Note also that if it is passed competitive bids will not be necessary, hence will not be. To date, there is nothing on war profiteering other than FDR's "hope". Note also that he hopes there will be no war profiteering, as he did yesterday, when we are not at war. Of the same kind is his frequent references, both in his speech and in his statement yesterday, to "the enemy" when he meant the Germans. The probability is that the administration will be forced to amend the Vinson bill. It is still too early for anything that drastic. Perhaps Mrs. FDR indicated this the other day when she said she didn't believe the administration planned any retreat from the gains for labor.

Tactically, it was bad for the President to take such a step and make such recommendations without working out some of the more important details and tipping off some of his lieutenants. For instance, the detail about financing. It would have taken less than a month, and perhaps only a week or so, to iron these things out. Such a short time could make no difference if we are as far behind as he said in mechanization, aviation, etc., and too-great haste could, conceivably, cause trouble and delay later. He rushed in, (I have heard this opinion from several Congressmen) because the Republicans and Hitler forced him. Every once in a while, recently, the Republicans have sounded off on our aviation unpreparedness. Senator Elmer Thomas of Oklahoma (one of whose speeches I sent you last week), had this to say yesterday during the debate:

"The recent message of the President, and the recent proposal to expand the bill to almost double its original figures were the direct result, I understand, of the invasion of Holland and Belgium by Germany". There were no contradictions, or even observation, following this statement. On Monday Ham Fish, the President's representative, said, in part, "The President has been in office for 7 years, and the European war has been going on for 9 months before the Commander in Chief discovered the deplorable condition of the Army for purposes of defense. Instead of praising the President, he should be condemned for ~~allowing~~ permitting this condition to develop." Then he said that the Republicans should cast partisanship aside and support all legislation to equip the Army with "all the new weapons of war". Congressman Rankin of Mississippi, of course, a Democrat, replied, in part, "In my humble opinion, no nation or set of nations could land an army on America's shores of sufficient size or strength to give us trouble today."

There were only two criticisms of the President's message that I have seen or heard. John Coffey, Dem., Wash., leader of the so-called House "liberal bloc", a pretty ineffectual and small band of rumormongers from the storm, made a mild observation about the things that were not in the speech. I regret I haven't the quote now. Vito Marcantonio, A.L.P., N.Y., called it "a blitzkrieg on the peace of the American people." To date there has been no action here in Washington pursuant to this speech except in the case of the United Shoe Workers, the executive board of which, following its meeting here yesterday, visited some 30 Congressmen in whose districts they are organized and told them, organized labor demanded peace.

Following this message a change has come over the complexion of Congressional debates. Everything is "for the national defense". Most ~~the~~ of the many "extensions of remarks" are on this subject, or at least are so represented. Editorials from all the small papers from all over the country are going in, as well as just about every column written by the better-known columnists. In vetoing an appropriations for rivers and harbors work~~o~~ pork-barrel stuff- Roosevelt said (yesterday)," Regardless of every other consideration, it seem to me that the nonmilitary activities of the War Department should give way at this time to the need for military preparedness. This is a need, not so apparent at the time that the bill was under consideration by the Congress, that must now be recognized by all as a matter demanding priority of attention. With respect to the few items in the bill that are of national defense value, I would be glad to approve separate legislation covering these ~~projects~~ projects." Note that "the time whattthe bill was under consideration by the Congress" could not have been more than 10 days earlier. In other words, the need was not apparent 10 days ago!

Opposition to the Oppressive Labor Practises Act was ~~voiced~~ voiced by Senator Wiley of Wisconsin, Senator Lundeen of Minnesota and Senator Reynolds (who praised Hitler) of North Carolina on the grounds of impairment of the National defense. Wiley placed in the record a telegram from General Robert E. Wood recommending that the bill not pass because it would "Permit communistic activities to go unreported". There was no final action on the bill, and Senator Alben Barleky, the Majority leader of the Senate, indicated the desire of the administration to have the bill enacted this session, requiring House approval before Adjournment.

Another major issue into which the "national defense" line was injected by opponents of labor was the WPA debate, as yet unfinished. After the length of debate was set and knowing that regardless of how much time was allotted it would be insufficient to allow all Members to say as much as they desired, Sam Rayburn, the administration's leader in the House opened with a plea for brevity so that important matters (read "national defense" appropriations) could be reached with greater dispatch. Thereupon each side yielded Dies a half hour for an address which he postponed from a previous occasion upon which he had an hour that would not come from the time allotted to so important a subject. Dies harrangued for the hour on the red, fifth column, Trojan horse menace, mentioning WPA exactly once, and then he told a lie. He casually referred to a witness before the committee. James Hulse Dolsen, of Pittsburgh, the fellow who was practically kidnapped by the committee's agents, as a Communist on WPA. As a matter of fact, he wasn't, as Dies knew, because his committee's record showed that Dolsen was on relief at \$4.40 a week. Thereupon they all followed that line, except those who opposed the bill, meager as it is, because, as they stated, there had been graft in Louisiana. Just yesterday Rayburn, though only 2 hours were to be spent on the debate before its conclusion, pled for brevity that the time might be reduced. Today the House resolved itself into the committee of the whole to consider amendments. The vote will come tomorrow. It now looks as though Roosevelt's \$875,650,000.00 request for 8 months will be passed, practically without amendment. It is possible that the 18 months provision will be amended so that it wont apply to persons over 45. On this bill Marcantonio has made several swell speeches.

He followed Dies and lampooned him on the Trojan horse stuff, saying that where baseball and football had been the National pastime, that was no longer true in the Congress, where members were now Trojan horse jockeys. Today he made a ten-minute speech (five minutes of which the Republican's voluntarily gave him at the conclusion of the five minutes which had been granted him) several quotes from which follow. The speeches, I should have pointed out, were 5-minute speeches. He got considerable applause. The quotes are from the uncorrected stenographic notes and may be slightly altered in the Record when it comes out tomorrow.

He said that never had less attention been paid to relief and never had it been needed more. Then he gave the reason: "The reason is that this Congress has been worked up into a state of war hysteria/~~.....~~ that as a result of a blitzkrieg on the peace of the American people that was pulled here last week, as a result of a lot of war talk. What are we thinking of just now? in the minds of many, many Members today there is the proposition that the problem of unemployment will be solved by giving them uniforms ~~and~~..... As long as you have a citizenry which is deprived of the opportunity to earn a decent American living your national defense will not be bolstered by giving them guns and bullets, and your national defense will be weakened by an internal and fundamental weakness."

(At this point Congressman May, chairman of the House Committee on Military Affairs and one who last week demanded the repeal of the Johnson Act interrupted as follows:)

Mr. MAY. Will the gentleman yield?

Mr. Marcantonio. I yield to the gentleman from Kentucky.

Mr. May. The gentleman referred to a blitzkrieg here last week. As chairman of the Committee on Military Affairs I want to find out if there is such a thing as that going on. Will the gentleman tell us what it was?

Mr. Marcantonio. The gentleman knows what it was. There is no Member of this House who has followed the President more loyally than I, but I say that when the President came here and in a Orson Wells-like manner frightened the country out of its wits by (can't read this word) airplanes going over St. Louis, this Congress was frightened to such an extent that it today is not giving adequate and proper attention to the unemployed of this country, which it should be doing (Applause). **.....Do not drive America into war by starving the unemployed in this country (Applause). "

Here the gavel fell.

During the speech he showed pretty effectively that the war, rather than bringing on greater employment and prosperity, has had the opposite effect. In the earlier speech he pulled a crack about the unemployed wanting overalls, not uniforms.

Another campaign is being waged in Congress against Harry Bridges. It quieted down during the Landis hearings, but several resolutions and bill have been introduced to deport him. One is indirect, a bill by Congressman Leland Ford, of California. Another was introduced on May 14 by Congressman Allen of Louisiana and referred to the

Committee on Immigration and Naturalization, of which Sammy Dickstein is chairman. The bill was reported out by this committee in the phenomenally short time of 2 days, and on May 16 was referred to the House sitting as the committee of the whole. It thereupon became necessary for the Rules Committee to give a rule, i.e., schedule it on the calendar and specify time for debate, if any. The reactionaries had it all planned out to report a rule today, but there were quite a few Members who went before the Rules committee in a brief hearing beginning at 2 o'clock this afternoon and objected. Congressman Eugene Cox of Georgia, a Democrat and ranking majority member of the committee told liberal Congressman Lee Geyer of California, also a Democrat, that he was so unimpressed by Geyer's statement that he, for one, was going to throw it in the wastebasket. Marc. followed and said that the reason the antilabor forced in and out of Congress wanted to report Bridges was because he was an incorruptible leader of labor who had improved the lot, particularly the salaries, of the longshoremen. Then the committee came to no decision, but it is likely that they will quietly give a rule for sometime next week, probably Tuesday. The Rules Committee is the most powerful and the most completely reactionary committee in either House. It is the bottleneck in the House. I am enclosing a copy of the Bridges bill and the Committee on Immigration's report on it. I trust you will like the logic. This is a private bill and I believe will require unanimous consent. However, since the forces controlling the time at which the bill can come up are those who want to pass it they might, by calling up the bill when there are no opponents on the floor, pass it. That is what happened last session to the Hobbs "concentration camp" bill.

I am told by lawyers that this is clearly unconstitutional because it is a bill of attainder, against which there is a specific prohibition in the Constitution. Ford of the Associated Farmers will support this bill in preference to his own, known as H.R. 8310.

Tomorrow I will get the complete text of Marc. speech today and mail on the floor it to you. I think he is saying/what you are trying to say to the people. I have noticed that since his first criticism of the President ~~xxx~~ quite a few members of Congress have approached him and discussed his position with him, on the floor. He says that some of the Republicans now, privately, agree with him. If you would like something along the line of this speech from him for you let me know and I'll see what I can do

On several occasions recently I have been told by government people who wanted extra copies of the magazine to use because the articles were of use to them that they could not get copies. Heber Blankenhorn at the National Labor Relations Board tried unsuccessfully to get a dozen copies of the issue with the Ford Dallas story. He got 5 and wants 5 or 6 more. He needs them for Members of Congress. Will you please send them to him, c/o the Board, Shoreham Bldg., Washington, D.C.?

Also, will you please have the circulation dept. send the magazines to my correct address? I write them weekly, without success. I haven't received last week's yet.

How's everything?

Harold.

I enclose a copy of the President's message, from the Record.