

Fish Denies in House Free-Mailing Abuse Charged by Legion

By the Associated Press, *Star* 9-28-43

Representative Fish, Republican, of New York shouted a denial to the House today that he has abused the congressional free-mailing privilege and expressed regret that the American Legion "should permit its great name to be linked with any effort designed to destroy free speech in America."

He referred to a resolution adopted at the Legion's Omaha convention last week which charged that Mr. Fish "with certain other isolationist members of Congress, allowed his congressional frank to be used by certain groups and individuals, including George Sylvester Viereck and the America First Committee" in disseminating "propaganda inimical to the United States."

Mr. Fish said the Legion "has seen fit to permit persons who have been engaged in a concerted 'smear' campaign against me to use that organization for their own political purposes."

Reiterating a denial of the Legion charge which he issued in New York shortly after the resolution was adopted, Mr. Fish told the House:

"I emphatically deny the alleged abuse of the franking privilege as set forth in the American Legion resolution.

"It is a sad commentary that such an organization as the American Legion—of which I have been proud to be a member since the World War and was chairman of the subcommittee which drafted the preamble to the American Legion constitution, which has never been changed one iota to the present time—should permit itself to be used inadvertently for political and smear purposes.

"It is more to be deplored that it should permit its great name to be linked with an effort designed to destroy free speech in America and to deny to American citizens the right guaranteed to them under the Constitution. * * *

"My outspoken opposition to Gestapo methods in America and my efforts to uphold the Bill of Rights has invoked the enmity and animosity of certain persons who would destroy every vestige of freedom of speech in America."

Mr. Fish said the resolution "was sponsored by yet unknown individuals and aimed against me and other members of Congress who happened to oppose our entrance into war before Pearl Harbor and who have been unafraid to stand up and fight for the freedom of speech in America while supporting all war measures since war was declared"