

# Probe Proposed In Kellems Case

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## 'Intercepted' Mail Used as 'Small Talk,' Senator Reed Says

By Mary Spargo

A demand that a Senate committee spread a dragnet embracing every person in any Government agency who saw or handled the love letters of a Connecticut woman industrialist to a German businessman in Argentina was voiced yesterday by Senator Clyde M. Reed (R., Kans.).

"Censorship is so loosely handled," Reed asserted, "that Washington's social-political cocktail parties are flooded with choice bits of gossip gleaned from reading of people's personal mail. Various officials in Government agencies appear to depend upon 'intercepts' or quotations from letters sent out by the Office of Censorship for their cocktail party small talk."

Reed said yesterday that whoever gave out copies or parts of copies of the letters of Miss Vivien Kellems of Westport, Conn., to Count Frederick Karl von Zedlitz, Argentine representative of the German steel trust, to a radio commentator or even to a member of the House had violated censorship regulations, mail regulations and laws governing the use of confidential Government documents.

### Domestic Censorship

The question of domestic censorship of mail of members of the armed forces stationed in the United States was also raised by Reed, who said that he had received complaints that the FBI is censoring letters exchanged between husbands in United States camps and their wives in this country.

Inquiry last night disclosed, however, that any domestic censorship of mail of members of the armed forces is done by the Army and Navy, and not by the FBI, the Office of Censorship or postal authorities.

So-called "spot checks" of mail are made by Army and Navy authorities at Army posts or naval bases in this country, particularly at seaports and in staging areas, when men have been alerted that

they are to be sent to ports of embarkation, The Post was informed. On occasion, The Post learned, enlisted men are called together and told that the mail is to be "spot checked" to see that no information of military value is disclosed. Letters are taken at random from mail bags and censored by military or naval authorities.

### FBI Not Censoring Mail

An FBI spokesman said that the FBI does not censor mail, and any statement that the agency has anything to do with censoring soldiers' or sailors' mail is "absolutely untrue."

A War Department spokesman, asserting he was "not making an official denial" of the spot-check censorship story, said last night that "the Army has no control whatever over soldiers' mail except at ports of embarkation. Soldiers' mail, like that of civilians, is wholly under the control of the United States postal system," the War Department insisted.

The Kansas Senator, ranking minority member of the Senate Postoffices and Post Roads Committee, said he was confident the majority of the members of the Kellems letter investigation when the Easter recess is ended. Two other members of the committee, Senator Josiah W. Bailey (D., N. C.) and Senator William Langer (R. N. Dak.), have indicated already that they favor Reed's proposed resolution.

### To Start With Postoffice

Reed said that the inquiry would have to begin with the Postoffice Department, but said it would undoubtedly hinge upon the testimony of officials of the Office of Censorship, who read and made intercepts of Miss Kellems' correspondence.

Reed said he had been informed that neither the FBI nor the Justice Department had found anything seditious in the letters, which had been described as simply "mushy."

He defended the constitutional right of "fond, foolish women" to write "silly" letters, and remarked that if all members of Congress who had ever written "silly love letters" were to be prosecuted, it would be "impossible to get a quorum around here."

Byron Price, director of Censorship, said last night he would be glad to cooperate in the investigation.

Reed asserted he was anxious to know what person in one of three or four Government agencies thought to have received the intercepts, had given Drew Pearson, radio commentator and newspaper columnist, and Representative John Coffee (D., Wash.), copies of them. The State, Justice and Navy Departments and the FBI, are be-

lieved to have received these intercepts.

Before the Senate's Judiciary Committee last year Price, Attorney General Francis Biddle and other officers testified concerning the intercept system in order to obtain a bill permitting Alaskan censorship.

#### **32 Agencies in War Effort**

It was explained then that there are some 32 Government agencies involved in the war effort. A group of censors in Alaska, for example, finding a letter considered questionable, make a copy of it or of parts of it, and send it on its way to the addressee. The excerpts or intercepts are sent on to Washington, where the Office of Censorship determines what Government agencies would be interested.

If the information contained in the letter seems of immediate importance, the censors in Alaska turn the matter over directly to FBI agents.