

Radio Broadcast
February 16, 1941

Good morning friends:

Events which in normal times would have caused headlines transpired during the week without attracting much attention - such as passage by the House of two huge appropriation bills, extension of the Dies Committee by the House, and the raising of the debt limit to 65 billion by both the Senate and the House. Important acts they are, nevertheless, the big news in Washington continues to revolve around aid to Great Britain. Other things *is now debating the aid to Britain Bill.* fade in relative importance. The Senate, having received a favorable report from its foreign relations committee on the Aid-to-Britain Bill, will begin debate on it tomorrow. The last witness before the Senate Committee was Wendell Wilkie. Spectacular indeed was the appearance of this man who only a few months ago was President Roosevelt's contending opponent for president. In that race he severely castigated the President for centering more and more power into the hands of the Chief Executive. And yet in his appearance before the Committee as the chief rebuttal witness in support of the foreign policies of the man whom he so recently and vigorously tried to defeat, he advocated the passage of a bill which would place unprecedented power in the hands of the Chief Executive. He was an impressive witness - this man who in December was vacationing, a defeated and apparently a soon-to-be-forgotten candidate.

Mr. Wilkie certainly went to the heart of the question when he advocated "effective aid." What good would it do America to give aid to Great Britain unless we ^{aid} ~~gave~~ them enough to survive? We are building a great navy, a two-ocean navy, but what good would it do us to have a navy just big enough to get licked?

Certainly if we are not going to give "effective aid," we might be better off to give no aid at all.

Mr. Wilkie was fresh from the counsel of the leaders in Great Britain. Doubtless bespeaking the British mind, he said in order to give effective aid, we must immediately let Great Britain have more destroyers, more bombers, and more merchant ships in order that they could keep open the North Atlantic passage as a supply line from this great continent of resources. This, he said, is their most urgent need.

Secretary of the Navy Knox, ~~another former Republican candidate~~, created a controversy by saying that the United States navy could spare no more destroyers. Wendell Wilkie answered the next day that he was surprised to hear of Secretary Knox' making this statement since high officials of the Government with whom he had talked after his testimony had indicated to him that the United States could transfer ^{more} ~~some~~ destroyers to Great Britain. No one knew of any official ^{to whom} ~~that~~ Wendell Wilkie had talked ~~to~~ after he testified except President Roosevelt himself. Thereupon, the President called Secretary Knox to his office. No one seems to know whether or not the President told Secretary Knox that he had talked out of turn or just exactly what was said, but the press was soon given to understand that the President and Mr. Wilkie and Secretary Knox were in accord upon the question. Just what is ^{is} ~~that~~ accord? Shall we transfer to Great Britain destroyers which we need in our own navy. That is a serious ^{We will hear more about it.} question. / It will likely constitute the most hotly contested amendment

offered to the Aid-to-Britain Bill in the Senate. Senator David I. Walsh of Massachusetts, Chairman of the Naval Affairs Committee, plans to offer an amendment prohibiting the transfer of any naval vessel. If adopted, it will forestall any considerable transfer of existing equipment. The House, you will remember, placed a limit on the transfer of existing equipment of all kinds at one billion, three hundred million. Some of the Senators seem to think that this would serve as an invitation to the President to lease, lend, or transfer that much of our equipment. Maybe they are right.

(a controversy is raging as to whether or not we should let B.B. have more destroyers.)

Unless Great Britain can keep open her supply line to the United States and Canada, her cause will be hopeless. It may be that she could manage to keep it open without more of our destroyers, but if she can not ^{make} the decision on this question will indeed be ^a ^{one} ^{new} ^{now} ^{have} ¹⁶⁰ ^{destroyers} after letting Great Britain have 50. Of this 160, 74 are old age world war types. We have 86 new type which have been built since 1934. 14 more are scheduled to be delivered this year. ^{45 more next year in 1942. 204 are ordered.} The destroyer is the most effective

weapon against the submarine. Suppose Great Britain absolutely had to have ^{of our destroyers} ~~50 or 74~~ more to maintain her life line? Remember the story in one of our elementary readers - for want of a nail a shoe was lost. For want of a shoe a horse was lost. For want of a horse a battle was lost - and all for want of a two-penny nail.

To further complicate the matter, Adolph Hitler's axis ally, Japan, immediately began to make ominous moves in the Pacific - moves calculated to call to the attention of the American statesmen and to the American people

the need, perhaps the early need of naval strength to protect our interest in the Pacific. It reminds one of a slow but deliberate checker game with the domination of the world depending upon its outcome. This move was calculated to check any possible transfer of naval vessels to Great Britain by us, but if those scrubby, ^{malignant} ~~posse~~-tail Japs think they are going to scare the American people they have another thought coming which will open their eyes wider than the ⁱⁿusual oriental slant.)

A few months ago, Great Britain faced and made a terribly tragic decision. When the German army was marching through France, slicing to pieces the French army, one of our ^{own} high army officials, when asked for his explanation of the failure of the French to give more successful resistance, said, among other things, that the French army had no eyes. This did not mean so much to a layman, so he explained that he meant by having no eyes that the Germans had destroyed the French air force and that they only had ^{a few} ~~very~~ old model planes which they could only send aloft at night. Therefore, he went on to say, with the Germans having mastery of the air, they could detect every move, every concentration, and every maneuver of the French army, and that when the Germans saw efforts being made for a French counter offensive, they ^{or more} would immediately dispatch not only planes but tanks and other mechanized equipment to break up the movement before it could be coordinated; whereas, on the other hand, ^{not being able to} the French ~~could not~~ go into the air for observation

~~and they~~ could never know, when and where ^{or how} the Germans were preparing to strike.

The army officer was then asked why the British did not send to the aid of the French army the ⁵~~six~~ or ⁶~~seven~~ thousand planes they were estimated to have in the British Isles at that time. The army officer ^{preferred not} ~~declined~~ to answer.

Obviously the British thought the French cause was lost beyond redemption.

This conversation ^{with the high army officer} is related at this late time to emphasize and illustrate the awful decision which Great Britain made. She decided, as she had a right to do, to preserve ^{her planned} ~~them~~ for the defense of the British homeland.

Our situation is different from that of the British at that time in several respects. For one thing we do not think the British cause is hopeless by any means. The French were torn with internal dissension and the morale of her soldiers and people were wrecked. Their fighting spirit was gone. They were whipped. England is today magnificiently united and determined and they are fighting like bulldogs. At that fateful hour the British knew that their Homeland faced an immediate aerial ^{assault} ~~overlaught~~ and an invasion attempt. We know that, even though Great Britain should go down, Hitler has ^{now} ~~now~~ ^{few if any} ~~no~~ planes which could attack America and return to Europe. Even though the Atlantic has been diminished by speed and time, it is still wide and deep.

We know that he could only operate from bases which would take time to establish. All the while our enormous industrial machine ^{is speedily being} ~~would have been~~ geared for mass production of not only destroyers and battleships but of war equipment of every kind.

It does not seem to be the thought of our military experts that we face an immediate invasion attempt in any event. Our immediate danger would be in ~~a~~ a Nazi penetration of South America and subsequent economic encirclement forcing further domestic regimentation, prolonged armament, ^{constantly growing} higher debt, and a lowering of our standard of living all of which would ^{likely} cause internal social and political upheavals and, maybe, a loss of our free way of life. To prevent this, it will be necessary to maintain control of the sea. As long as the British navy remains intact and collaborates with ours, we can dominate both the Atlantic and Pacific. ^{otherwise we would soon face a shambles.} Of first importance to us, then, is the survival of England ^{and her friendly navy;} and, of almost equal importance to us, is the prolongation of the fight in Europe until we have time to fully prepare to defend not only the United States but ~~the~~ ^{our} entire Western Hemisphere. With this state of affairs, are the American people ~~(are you)~~ willing to take the chance of furnishing Great Britain the necessary equipment and supplies ^{with which} to withstand this tyrannical attack on liberty? Or, are we just going to say to them: "Yes, we'll let you have what we don't need, provided you will deal with us on a strictly cash and carry basis?")

We have already gone further than this regarding planes, though this is somewhat different, ^{production problem} to naval vessels. We still require cash, ^{on the barrel head for all planes} but we are at least letting planes go to England which we ^{do} need here. Upon a visit to the Panama Canal for four days ^{during} Christmas, it was plain to be seen that there were very few modern pursuit or bombing planes stationed there. Where are the hundreds ^{of planes} recently manufactured? We have taken the chance of allowing

these new planes to go to Great Britain, keeping only enough here for

training purposes. If England ~~holds out~~^{mines}, that is all we will need here. If ^{we will have gained desperately needed time; and} England goes down, we will have an industry geared to produce many thousands

of planes per year, ~~and~~. In this connection, production capacity for planes

is more important in the long run than having a store on hand, though it is

better to have both. ^{Of} what good would a few thousand planes be in an all out

war if we were not able to replace and reproduce the ~~supply on hand~~^{fleet} which

would soon wear out or be destroyed ^{in combat}.

~~Back comes~~^{recurs} The thought that if we are going to aid Great Britain at all, we should extend effective aid.

Mr. Wilkie advocated writing into the bill a limitation which would prevent the powers conferred by the bill from being used to assist ^{any} nations

other than Great Britain, Greece, and China. This would certainly appear ^{We cannot tell what new situation might arise requiring speedy action} inadvisable. There are signs now that Hitler may be planning a drive through

Roumania and Turkey to capture the Suez Canal, thereby, to all practical effect, isolating the British from Australia and ^{her strategic supplies in} the Orient. In such event

would we want to push Turkey into ^{Hitler's} ~~the lap of the Axis~~ by writing into this bill a prohibition against giving her any assistance? This is advocated for

the sake of unity. Unity is vital, but it is also vital in this ^{hour of} danger ~~period~~

when aggressors make the first moves that America's hands should be free, ready, and strong - ready to act when and where necessary for our defense and strong

enough to act decisively.