

Radio Talk, July 13, 1941

Good Morning, Friends:

The taking of young men from their homes and their chosen walks of life for military training and service is tragic and heart-rending business. *It has been a long year and it is a tragedy for the men who have been drafted.* Men have been drafted for one year's training. The War Department has recommended that they be retained for more than the twelve-months' period. This recommendation of the Army Chief of ~~the~~ Staff met with a cold reception in Congress as did the suggestion that the ban, which limits their service to the Western Hemisphere, be lifted. Coming events may change the attitude of Congress, but at present Congress is not inclined to follow either of these recommendations.

The War Department recommended that the service of all men over twenty-eight be deferred. The Senate passed a bill providing for this, and on last Thursday the House passed the bill which was reported favorably by the important House Military Affairs Committee. *distinguished* A member of Congress from Tennessee, the Honorable Cliff Davis of Memphis, is a member of this great committee. He is in the studio and has agreed to discuss briefly the reasons for this deferment of men over 28.

Congressman Davis:

Over one thousand years ago, Norway had its Conqueror and Dictator. The Scandinavian Hitler of that time was the self-made first king of Norway who called himself Harald Fairhair. He was brutal, merciless, and ruthless. He, like Europe's present-day tyrant, attempted absolute control over his countrymen. There was then, as now, a love of liberty inherent in the human heart. To escape the murderous Harald Fairhair, many Nordic peoples fled their homeland, braving the waves in small Norse boats. Many of them landed in far away Iceland. Here on this Northern island, lying across the very threshold of the Arctic Ocean, they settled and built a free nation with representative government and stable national institutions while much of Europe was yet floundering in the dark ages and while America was inhabited only by savages and wild animals. X

(The name "Iceland" naturally suggests a frozen waste but, even though it touches the Arctic Circle, the Gulf Stream which flows from the warm blue waters of the Gulf of Mexico reaches and warms it. until the climate of its Southern coastline is comparable to that of Southern Canada.) On Iceland's ^{which is warmed by the Gulf Stream} coast are thriving little towns with ~~buildings of stone~~, paved streets, electric lights, hospitals, churches, and public schools.

The island is about the size of the State of Kentucky, though only a small portion of it, largely along the coast line, is inhabitable. (Its restricted area, isolated position, rigid climate, and scarcity of resources ^{have} ~~has~~ not been conducive to a great population growth - its total population now numbering something over one hundred thousand.)

(The people of Iceland, instead of being of the fur-clad, igloo-living Eskimo type which some might expect, are pure blonde Nordic. Since the days of the Vikings, they have lived in peace. The island is nearly one thousand miles from Great Britain, over two thousand miles from the United States, and near one thousand miles from Scandinavia. This distance and isolated location no longer affords them safety.) ^{its} Their geographical location which has so long caused ^{it} them to be left in peace and quietude, now, with the speed and scope of modern weapons of war, brings ^{it} them into the very center of the Battle of the Atlantic. Thus the peaceful people of Iceland whose ancestors fled tyranny over one thousand years ago are now asking the United States to protect them against invasion and conquest by the world's fiercest wave of tyranny and enslavement.

President Roosevelt announced to Congress and to the world that the armed forces of the United States had accepted Iceland's invitation and that our forces are now in Iceland, ~~for the purpose of defending Iceland against invasion and occupation by an enemy force.~~ This raised a great stir in Washington.

(Senator Robert A. Taft made a vigorous speech in the Senate on last Thursday denouncing the President for making this bold move.) ^{in a Senate speech last Thursday} Senator Taft said that the President had no legal or constitutional right to send American troops to Iceland. He said that it could not be in the defense of the United States and that, since it was within the blockade area proclaimed by Germany, the move was calculated to bring the United States into war.

~~Now, let us examine the charges of Senator Taft.~~ Under our Constitution, the President is the Commander in Chief of the Army and Navy. There is nothing in the Constitution which says that he can send the army or navy one hundred miles but that he can not send it two hundred miles, or that the navy can be sent where the army must not go. (There is nothing in the Constitution which says that he can send the Navy into the Gulf of Mexico but that he can not send it out into the Atlantic.) There is no limitation in the Constitution upon the power of the President as Commander in Chief to send the army and the navy to wherever the National interests of the United States require the army or the navy to be sent.

(There are nearly a hundred cases in American history wherein the President of the United States has sent American forces beyond our shores without any declaration of war by Congress.) ^(For the past) Marines were sent to Haiti, soldiers were sent to Nicaragua, to Panama, to Honduras, to Mexico, to China, to Cuba. Therefore, in sending troops to occupy Iceland, the President has ample precedent in American history.

Now, as to Senator Taft's second charge that it could not be in the interest of the defense of the United States, we might ask Senator Taft if he believed the United States more secure from air raids by reason of our occupation of Iceland or if Germany occupied Iceland. The day when we can wait until we ~~can~~ see the white of our enemy's eye is gone. Tomorrow's Bunker Hill or King's Mountain may be thousands of miles away.

Iceland occupies a position in the Atlantic of paramount strategic importance in this war. A Nazi occupation of this island would further the possibilities of a German invasion of Britain and would further endanger the Northern shipping lanes from the United States and Canada to Great Britain. Conversely, Iceland affords an excellent base for naval ⁺air forces employed in the protection of this shipping route.

(We breathed a sigh of relief in May of last year when Great Britain occupied Iceland because our naval and military authorities have realized the strategic importance of Iceland in the defense of the Western Hemisphere from the beginning of this conflict.) In hostile hands it would be a hazard to our Atlantic trade routes and a dangerous stepping stone toward Canada and the United States.

(Hitler is busy on his Eastern front with Russia, and from all available reports he has his hands full for awhile.) ^{Hitler's} ~~His~~ attack on Russia afforded the United States an opportunity to occupy the Iceland outpost with only a minimum danger of becoming involved in war. That it was a bold move by President Roosevelt, there is no ^{question.} ~~doubt~~. That it entails dangers, there is no doubt. In this perilous time, there is danger in whatever direction we may go or whatever policy we may adopt.

Some people say that Hitler has no intention of molesting the Western Hemisphere, but we remember that he said he had no intention of molesting Belgium and Holland, and we remember that he made a non-aggression treaty with Russia only two years ago. It would be a reckless risk for this nation to depend upon any promise of Hitler or to be lulled into a sense of false

security by out-of-date references to the width and the depth of the Atlantic and the Pacific oceans. They are still wide and deep all right, but unless we control them they may become thoroughfares for the enemy. We can not afford to allow our enemies to seize outposts from which attacks could be launched against us. (We must recognize conditions as they are in this modern day and we must take whatever steps are necessary to guarantee the peace and security of this country.)

(Hitler will make war upon the United States whenever he thinks it is to his interest to do so, and not before. The treatment accorded Germany by other nations has had little or nothing to do with Hitler's decision to make war upon them. Certainly Russia had given him cooperation. They had even been partners in crime. So let it be said to Senator Taft that there is danger of war no matter which way we go or what we do.) The best way to stay out of war is to ^{prepare} so thoroughly ~~prepare~~ that Germany and every other nation will not doubt our ability to destroy any force which attacks us.

We have sent American forces to occupy Iceland for two purposes: 1. To prevent its occupation by an enemy force, thereby endangering the United States; and 2, to give further aid to Great Britain by releasing the forces she had in Iceland, and what is more important, by giving her assistance in her Battle of the Atlantic to keep open her supply line to the United States without which she could not hope to survive.

This is a swiftly changing and moving world. We can not depend upon the traditions and the precedents of the past for more than guide posts. We must

look about us and accept conditions as they are. We must be alert. We must be determined to make our people safe from this awful wave of enslavement. We must preserve the sacred fire of liberty and exemplify the right and the ability of people to be free and to govern themselves. May this be the mission and the destiny of America.