

Jan. 12, 1941

GOOD MORNING, FRIENDS:

As this series of broadcasts proceed, various members of Congress will be asked to participate. Tennessee's newest Congressman, the Honorable Percy Priest of Nashville, is in the studio and has consented to give us a new man's impression of Congress.

Congressman Priest

Thank you, Congressman Priest. That was fine, and you are right in saying that this new Congress is determined. ^{and well it may be because} It certainly ^{the new Congress} faces momentous decisions in the eventful, tragic weeks and months ahead.

As it began shouldering its responsibility, Prime Minister Churchill said in England that "the whole future of the world and the civilization founded on Christian ethics" depended on relations between Britain and the United States. In practical effect, he said that without the cooperation of the United States, the British Empire could not win.

In considering who will win and who will lose and its effect upon us, it must be emphasized that this war is not going to be lost or won in

the Balkans, in North Africa, or in Spain. Conflict in these areas

may have important bearings, may even be turning points, but the decisive theater is the Island of Great Britain and its surrounding waters; and, we in America who believe that our security from war depends on a British victory must fully realize that the decisive period will perhaps be within the next six months or maybe less.

In his annual message on the state of the union the President fully analysed our danger. He was not only speaking to the Congress which was his immediate audience. He was speaking to the American people, and more than that, he was speaking to the world - to strengthen the morale of the fighting British and to bring a ray of hope to those millions of oppressed human beings in conquered nations. It seemed he had a little touch of his former Chief, Woodrow Wilson, when he looked beyond the conflict and projected himself and this country into the peace which we hope and pray will soon come but which the President said could only come in a lasting manner through victory over aggression and tyranny. One could see the hand and the genius of Cordell Hull when the President spoke of an eventual world-wide reduction of armaments and the working out of economic understanding between nations which would secure to every nation a healthy, peace-time life.

If there was any lingering doubt that the President intended to throw the full weight of this nation into the balance, then it must have been removed when the so-called Lend-Lease Aid Bill was presented to the Congress on Friday. It is a little early to accurately gauge reaction to the bill. *Present indications are that the bill will pass. Amendments will likely be adopted.* It is seldom that Congress is so stunned as it was when this bill, with its breathless sweep of authority, was presented. If the bill is enacted as introduced, it will constitute one of the greatest grants of authority ever extended by Congress to the President, either in peace or in war. Most people interpreted its terms to empower the President to transfer the whole or any part of our navy or our army equipment or any other article of defense, in whole or in part,] to any nation defending itself in accordance with any terms satisfactory to the President. The bill defines as a defense article any weapon, munition, aircraft, boat, machinery, facility, tool, or any material necessary for manufacture or repair. It gives authority "to sell, transfer, exchange, lease, lend, or otherwise dispose of to any such government any defense article." ~~In regard to the terms,~~ The Act states "the terms and conditions shall be those which the President deems satisfactory, and the benefit to the United States may be payment or repayment in kind or property or any other direct or indirect benefit which the President deems satisfactory."

There will be much debate,
perhaps too much. There may
be plenty of trouble in the
senate. The house, ^{however,} is preparing
for speedy action. ~~There is~~
~~no doubt that the bill~~
~~will pass in the house~~
~~in some form~~

The ^{U.S.} Selective Service Headquarters
announced during the week
that Fentress County Tennessee
had the highest percentage
of volunteers of any county
in ~~Tenn~~ the United States. That
makes Tennessee's chest swell
out.

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in her column
~~took the Republicans to task for their failure to applaud. Of course,~~
~~she didn't say "applaud" but that's what it amounted to. This created~~
~~a little furor~~ *among* ~~with the Republicans. Representative Hoffman, a ready~~
~~and nimble-tongued Republican from Michigan, said, "The First Lady's~~
~~statement seems to me that not only are we denied the right to disagree~~
~~with the President, but now must applaud what he has to say." Regardless~~
~~of the lack of applause and agreement on the part of Congressman Hoffman,~~
~~the great majority of Congress and the country both applauded and agreed.~~

On Wednesday, the new Congress was given the President's Budget
Message. SEVENTEEN AND ONE-HALF BILLION DOLLARS. When that figure was
read, one member whistled almost out loud. But this seventeen and one-

half billion, unprecedented in peace-time as it is, is not all that is to

be asked of Congress. *Much more will come.*
~~In addition to that will be a few billion and~~
~~hundred millions of additional appropriations which will be asked for~~

~~by the Executive Department during the course of the Congress; and in~~
~~addition to that there will be the billions of dollars necessary to~~
~~finance the lend-lease aid to Britain program presented to Congress in~~
~~another message by the President on Friday.~~

~~Sentiment is rising in Congress to curb strikes on defense industries~~
~~and to curb any other interference with an expeditious handling of the~~
~~program. The workers who feel that they are imposed upon would perhaps~~
~~feel that they were receiving less imposition if they would consider the~~
~~work being done by President Roosevelt. He is moving swiftly. Frankly~~
acknowledging to Congress on Monday that he was not satisfied with the
progress of our defense program, he thereafter announced the appointment
of the office of Production Management with full authority to direct our
defensive program. William Knudsen will be the Director and Sidney Hillman,
the Labor Leader, Associate Director. Strange though it may seem, both of
these men immigrated to America from Europe in their early years. There
was some disappointment that the President did not name Knudsen as absolute
head of the agency, but everyone recognizes the President's love for labor
and his confidence in labor; and not only that, they recognize the importance
necessity of having labors' enthusiastic support of the *defense* program. Both Mr. Knudsen and
Mr. Hillman are recognized as able citizens, and as long as they agree,
and much gained
nothing will be lost *by* giving both of them authority and responsibility,
and when they disagree, Franklin Roosevelt is still their boss.

The Maritime Commission announced that it is proceeding to build two hundred merchant vessels under the program announced by the President a few days ago. In announcing the program, the President said that it was perfectly obvious that so much shipping was being destroyed during the war that there would be a great need for vessels after the war. In all probability, however, ~~it is hoped that~~ the ships will be used much sooner than "after the war." Again, ^{We see} the President is looking toward a world "after the war"

and in that world he is ^{not} minimizing the importance of the United States.

^{finally} Great Britain ^{through the blockade} relented and has said she would let some American supplies go to the starving people in France and Spain. This came as a soothing

antidote to a Congress ~~not~~ bewildered ^{yet} resolved and determined to

preserve for America a society in which the milk of human kindness ^{can} ~~could~~ continue

to flow and in which ~~the~~ love and ~~the~~ sympathy for ^{humanity finds means} ~~his fellowman was a~~ ^{lodgement} ~~fundamental responsibility.~~ ^{minor opening of the blockade} This is the first flash of hope that has

come out of the whole ~~murky~~ mess in many horrible months. It shows that in a ^{Christian nation} heart, - in the Christian ~~men~~, even in the midst of mass murder, there is still room for mercy.

Copy of Radio Address

I am grateful for the opportunity of sharing this program with my Colleague, Representative Gore. I appreciate also the privilege I have of giving to you my impressions as a new Member of Congress.

Although, I have studied government and the proceedings of Congress as a newspaperman for fifteen years, I find that there is quite a difference in looking on these things from a detached viewpoint and in being a participant.

I am sure that I felt closer to the heart throb of this nation on January 3rd than I have ever felt before.

Shortly after noon on that day I stood with other Members of the House of Representatives and took the oath of office administered by Speaker Sam Rayburn. To speak plainly, it was a thrilling experience to me and one I shall never forget.

The House of Representatives impresses me as being the greatest representative body in all the world today. The Democracy of the House is refreshing in a period when representative government has been crushed in so many other places. Here is a group of four hundred and thirtyfive members elected every two years in their respective districts and who represent one hundred thirty two millions of people, before whom, their every act and word is held up for review and appraisal. I had known, as all of us know it but I had never fully appreciated it more, experienced the real feeling of it until this week. Again, I have been impressed as a new Member by the seriousness with which a great majority of House Members assume and attempt to discharge their duties and responsibilities.

Perhaps there have been times when Congress appeared to move more slowly than circumstances seemed to warrant but for the most part Members impress me as genuinely and seriously conscious of the responsibilities they have assumed. As a new Member of Congress I am sure that I share with all other new members a sincere appreciation for the help given by the older members of the House. Without exception the older members have been willing and eager to help "Freshmen" Congressmen get the ground under their feet and to show them around, not alone through the maze of subways but in a broader sense to guide them as they take their first steps as members of the greatest Legislative Body in the world. In order to appreciate that very fine attitude of older Members it is necessary to be a new Congressman.

In this same connection, I wish to express my deep personal appreciation to every democratic Member of the Tennessee Delegation. Impressions of my first week as a new Congressman naturally include many things of a specific and personal nature and they also include such broad things as the general atmosphere of the National Capitol and of the Congress. In that category, of course, has been the grave sense of the acuteness of these times and of the constant threat to our democratic institutions. It was with a realization of these conditions that a joint session of the House and Senate listened in intense eagerness to the message of the President last Monday. The Chief Executive, himself could not be lighthearted as is his custom at many times, but was on the other hand very deliberate during the

greater portion of his address on the state of the Union and when he warned against those who would clip the wings of the American Eagle in order to feather their own nests, he clipped off each word with deliberate determination and brought from the House and the galleries the most prolonged applause of the entire address.

In this atmosphere which rises from the great question of national defense and preparedness there are many cross-currents and conflicting view-points. That is to be expected in a body representing so many millions of people with such a multitude of interests, but in it all there appears to be one point upon which a great majority meet on common ground and that is the determination to make America so strong that we may remain the "LAND OF THE FREE AND THE HOME OF THE BRAVE".

J. PERCY PRIEST