

January 19, 1941

Good Morning friends

We have witnessed a historic week in the history of our government - historic not alone in the transpiring of events which will be chronicled in the story of mankind but in a much broader and deeper sense - a mile stone ~~in American public opinion~~, in American official pronouncements and in American foreign policy.

The fight over enactment of the Administration's so-called Aid-to-Britain Bill has quickly assumed surprisingly intense proportions. Never in the President's public life has he used more severe language than when he referred to Senator Wheeler's charge that the bill would plow under every fourth American boy as being "untruthful, dastardly, and unpatriotic." No one should underestimate the ability and resourcefulness of Senator Wheeler. He is able, fearless, and versatile, both in strategy and in the rough and tumble of debate. In fact, several of the Senate's strongest debaters are arrayed against the bill. Senator Vandenberg, Senator LaFollete, Senator Clark, the Senate's best parliamentarian, Senator Taft, and ~~perhaps~~ ^{others.} Senator Tydings.

The Senate added Senators Byrns and Glass, strong supporters of Administration foreign policy, to vacancies on the Foreign Affairs Committee. This is calculated to bolster committee support of the bill. Just why the Senate should bide its time until the house has completed action is beyond the reasoning of many who believe that immediate consideration is imperative. It may be that the bill has stronger support in the house and that Administration leaders think that a strong vote for it in the house will have a bolstering effect in the Senate.

Sentiment is solidifying behind certain proposed amendments. It now seems certain that a time limit on the powers conferred will be written into the bill. In fact, none of the administration spokesmen have opposed this. The members realize that it takes two-thirds majority of both houses to repeal a law, if the President opposes repeal. Who ever the President may be, it is hard to pass a measure over his veto in both houses. Members further say that there is no justification for vesting this enormous power in the executive after the emergency is over. Sentiment is developing behind a two-year limitation because in two years the people will have elected a new house of representatives and many feel that upon such a vital matter the people should speak through their elected representatives again at that time.

Considerable support is being rallied for various proposed amendments, but nothing defeating the [^]main [^]purposes of the legislation looms ahead. The Administration leaders have characterized as preposterous the charges of dictatorship and belittled the suggestions that the President would use the full powers granted by the language of the Bill. It is difficult to believe that one could sense the tenseness and the drama of the situation quite as realistically without being in the committee room. Even the committee members, ordinarily the closest and the best of friends, have shown barbed and repelling attitudes toward each other.

~~Four~~ ^{Five outstanding} great men have made great statements before the Committee: Secretaries Hull, Morgenthau, Stimson, and Knox. ^{Like Henderson} Incidentally, several Democratic Congressmen who ranted and railed six months ago about the appointment of Stimson and Knox

to a Democratic President's Cabinet secretly, though reluctantly and sheepishly, now congratulate the President upon this action. ^{the sea} ~~Their~~ statements were clear and forthright as indeed was the statement of Secretary Morgenthau. Naval Secretary Knox pointed out the value to us of the British Navy. He said that there were only three passages from the continent of Europe into the Atlantic - the North Sea, the English Channel, and the Straits of Gibralta. As long as the English control these outlets, he contended, we ^{are} ~~were~~ safe from attack from that direction. Admitting that we only have a one-ocean navy and that it will be six years before our two-ocean navy will be finished, he said that we needed time in which to prepare and that the survival of the British was the only factor which could insure us of that time. He advocated passage of the bill and said that he had no fear whatsoever of the President improperly or unreasonably using the enormous powers thus vested in him.

Representative Ham Fish, after commenting that we were already manufacturing everything possible for warfare asked how the passage of the bill would help Great Britain. "Tremendously," Knox replied. "It would do more to put resolute courage and determination in the British than anything we could do. Wars are not fought alone with guns, tanks, ships, and planes," he continued, "but with the morale of a people."

Secretary Stimson insisted that we were in greater danger than in 1917.

He ably recalled that at that time the French, Italian, British, and Japanese navies were allied and cooperating to absolutely blockade the central powers, and that the front line was being held in France. He drove home the point that in 1917 practically all of our artillery and artillery shells, planes and much other equipment were furnished by the French and British and that now we not only had to equip and supply ourselves but also must be an arsenal for Great Britain. He was a forceful and effective witness and urged passage of the bill ~~as saying, "We do not require in 1941 large armies from over-seas."~~ in order to allow more coordination and facilitation of our armament work.

Secretary Morgenthau surprised the committee and the nation by presenting an unprecedented balance sheet of British assets which showed them able to pay for what they had thus far ordered, but without money to "anything near" pay for what they needed and must have.

Prime Minister Churchill made a speech in England yesterday pleading for *For the most part* help. It was in close harmony with the statements of our own cabinet members.

Churchill made one statement which will not be overlooked by the opponents of the pending bill. He was quoted by the Associated Press as saying, "We do not require in 1941 large armies from over-seas."

We will hear that repeated many times with ringing emphasis.

Five outstanding men have made great statements before the House Foreign Affairs Committee in support of the Administration's so-called Aid-to-Britain Bill

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All of the witnesses have been forceful indeed, but the most effective voice raised in support of the legislation was that of Secretary of State Cordell Hull. His formal statement has been so thoroughly publicized that it is unnecessary to give a synopsis of it. He proved himself adapt in fencing with foreign-affairs committee-men like Representative Tinkham and Fish. He gave and took without hesitation and came out at the big end of the horn.

In order to give something of the committee atmosphere, some questions propounded to Secretary Hull and his answers thereto have been selected.

Mrs. Gore will give the name of the interrogating Congressman and read his question. I will read Secretary Hull's answers.

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~~Mr.~~ ^{Mr.} ~~Congressman~~ Johnson: "With your knowledge of world conditions during the past eight years, I understand it is your conclusion that legislation such as this is absolutely necessary for the defense of the United States?"

Secretary Hull: "I have unwillingly been driven to that conclusion."

~~Mr.~~ ^{Mr.} ~~Congressman~~ Shanley: "I wish to express my appreciation to you, Secretary Hull, and to commend you for a most forthright description of world conditions today."

Secretary Hull: "Thank you. I could not in good conscience advise my fellow citizens to follow the example of Holland and Belgium, who tried to rely on the principles of neutrality. There is a time for neutrality and a time for self-defense."

~~Mr.~~ ^{Mr.} ~~Congressman~~ Jarman: "Mr. Secretary, is not time of the very essence?"

Secretary Hull: "Unquestionably." That is always so when danger threatens a nation. When I say danger I mean danger to this hemisphere, which includes the United States."

~~Mr.~~ ^{Mr.} ~~Congressman~~ Burgin: "Mr. Secretary, in your opinion, are we more in danger of war if we pass this legislation or more in danger if we do not?"

Secretary Hull: "I reached the definite conclusion that to keep out of trouble and prevent an invasion of this hemisphere, most likely to occur in the south, we should not wait until an invader made an attack."

Hull, Continued:

I came to the conclusion that if we began to resist frankly under the law of self-defense, invading nations would have more respect for us. I came to the conclusion that it would be wiser for us to prepare to defend ourselves instead of being swallowed up like a squirrel by a boa constrictor. My view is that there is danger in any direction. ~~We may see a new world of the vintage of ten centuries ago.~~"

Mr.
~~Congressman~~ Fish:
of New York

"Would you have any objection if the committee rewrote this bill so that it would come within the Constitution of the United States?"

Secretary Hull:

"I'd want to have something to say about what the Constitution ~~does~~ provides."

Mr.
~~Congressman~~ Fish:
of New York

I assume that if the Monroe Doctrine was violated by Germany or any other nation, the United States would go into action. Why not announce that?"

Secretary Hull:

"That is about the only law that hasn't been violated."

Mr.
~~Congressman~~ Tinkham:
Massachusetts

"Mr. Secretary, I hold in my hand an article which describes this measure as one for the destruction of the American Republic and for the setting up of a dictatorship in the United States."

Secretary Hull:

"I suppose the man who made that statement has no idea of the danger to America from invasion. There are statesmen in Belgium, Denmark and other countries invaded by Germany who used to make statements of that kind. They are now on the chain gang."

Mr.
~~Congressman Tinkham~~: "Mr. Secretary, I do not like to confound you with interrogations, but I must insist on having information."

Hull: "My door has been open for eight years and you have never darkened it in quest of information."

Mr.
~~Congressman Tinkham~~: "I must say, Mr. Secretary, that the information emanating from your office was very disturbing to me as, in my opinion, it showed a trend to war."

Secretary Hull: "Perhaps you were anxious to be disturbed."

Mr.
~~Congressman Tinkham~~: "At any rate, Mr. Secretary, I am glad to know that I would be welcomed."

Secretary Hull: "Yes, I would feel that I was welcoming a long-lost and erring friend."

Mr.
~~Congressman Tinkham~~: *Mr. Secretary,* "Are you personally in favor of attempting to break the blockade either of England or Germany?"

Secretary Hull: "I haven't heard that matter discussed."

Mr.
~~Congressman Tinkham~~: "Mr. Secretary, are you in favor of convoying American ships of supplies with our Navy?"

Secretary Hull: "I will discuss that question with anyone privately. There are press and other representatives here from all over the world. I must be circumspect in discussing details of certain problems."

Mr.
~~Congressman Tinkham~~: "Why, since the presidential election, have we never heard *the* President use the phrase 'Short of War'?"

Secretary Hull: "You'd better ask the President about that. He has a way of taking care of himself."

~~Mr.~~
~~Congressman Tinkham:~~ "Doesn't this bill carry the implication that our manpower will eventually be sent abroad?"

Secretary Hull: "I haven't heard that discussed."

~~Mr.~~
~~Congressman Tinkham:~~ "Is that all you want to say on that subject?"

Secretary Hull: "The bill described what aid may be given to Britain. It carries no implications beyond that. We have kept away from the manpower phase."

~~Mr.~~
~~Congressman Tinkham:~~ "Mr. Hull, have we completely abandoned our neutrality status?"

Secretary Hull: "If we see that neutrality has failed everywhere else, it is time to adopt the law of self defense. The law of self

defense has begun to assert itself." *We are still clinging to the form and letters of neutrality, but we are not going to let that chloroform us into a sense of false security on national defense.*
~~Mr.~~
~~Congressman Tinkham:~~ "There is a great question whether it is defense or offense."

Secretary Hull: "I'm talking about defense."

~~Congressman Tinkham:~~ "Do you consider that the bill runs counter to the reciprocity agreements?"

~~Secretary Hull:~~ "That's an abstraction I don't think we have to worry about at this time."

~~Mr.~~
~~Congressman Tinkham:~~ "I ~~again~~ ask why we can't name the countries we should assist."

Secretary Hull: "If you can look into the future and name the countries to be attacked in the future by the three world-conquering nations that might be done."

Mr.
~~Congressman~~ Tinkham: "Mr. Secretary, doesn't it seem to you that we are becoming a totalitarian country to fight other totalitarian states?"

Secretary Hull: "That is a metaphysical question. I don't know whether an answer would be satisfactory to you and I know it wouldn't be helpful to other members of the committee. I'm not sure that my opinions would be helpful to some Congressmen unless I stated the opposite of what I think."

Mr.
~~Congressman~~ Tinkham: "Could not the President commit an act of war under this bill?"

Secretary Hull: "Oh, the President or even a naval officer in command of a ship could commit an act of war any day."

Mr.
~~Congressman~~ Tinkham: "But that would be a breach of the law. This act would legalize an act of war."

Secretary Hull: "No more so than at present."

Mr.
~~Congressman~~ Tinkham: "You persist in making evasive answers."

Secretary Hull: "That's a compliment from you."

Mr.
~~Congressman~~ Tinkham: "Mr. Secretary, won't the bill make the United States a non-belligerent ally of Britain in all but name?"

Secretary Hull: "The whole question is one of self-defense. I don't care to go into that phase any further."

Mr.
~~Congressman~~ Tinkham: "Does it not devolve upon the President greater powers than any other President in history?"

Secretary Hull: "Oh, as far back as the Civil War you could find persons talking like you!"

TM
Congressman Tinkham: "Perhaps they were right."

Secretary Hull: "Perhaps they were wrong."

TM
Congressman Tinkham: "Could not the President give away the United States Navy under this bill?"

Secretary Hull: "I am surprised that even you would want to waste time with such a question. It is a violent assumption."

TM
Congressman Tinkham: "I find that most of the violent assumptions these days are liable to be correct ones."

Secretary Hull: "It is out of reason to think that any official would give away a dreadnaught."

TM
Congressman Tinkham: "Then you would have no objection to a clause forbidding the transfer of naval vessels?"

Secretary Hull: "I will leave it to the practical judgment of the Army and Navy. Such a clause might forbid the transfer of very small vessels."

TM
Congressman Tinkham: "Mr. Secretary, we haven't been attacked," *have we?* ~~that's what Holland~~
~~/and Belgium said~~

Secretary Hull: "That's what Holland and Belgium said. ~~I admire your~~
~~complacency, Mr. Tinkham.~~"

Congressman Chipperfield: ~~"Mr. Secretary, has either of the belligerent nations~~
~~violated American neutrality?"~~

~~Secretary Hull: "There have been violations of international law and nearly~~
~~every other law I can think of. As to our relations with the~~
~~German Government, I can do no more than refer you to~~