

June 13, 1943

Good Morning, Friends:

On Friday afternoon by a vote of 219 to 91, the House of Representatives agreed to the conference report on the anti-strike bill, and in the same afternoon, the Senate, by a vote of _____ agreed to the conference report, thus sending the first anti-strike bill to pass during this war to the President's desk.

This action was taken over the most violent opposition of organized labor leaders. The American Federation of Labor, for instance, published a threat to vote out of office every member who voted for the Bill. Each member who voted for the passage of the bill was put on a black list, which was published in the American Federation of Labor paper. A young member from Oklahoma who saw his name on the black list made a remark which was applauded all over the country and repeatedly quoted in the cloakrooms. He said: "Any member who doesn't vote 'em the way he sees 'em ought not to be in Congress anyway." I wish every member of Congress had the spunk and the determination of this young Oklahoma Congressman, and I have watched him for a long time and he comes as near voting on every question the way he sees it as any man I know. So, my hat is off to Congressman Monroney of Oklahoma who said: "Any member who doesn't vote 'em the way he sees 'em ought not to be in Congress anyway."

John L. Lewis did more to pass the bill than all the other leaders could do to dissuade Congress from enacting the measure. For many months, the country has been incensed and aroused at strikes in war industries. And there

has been a constant demand for strike legislation to put an end to it. On several occasions, the House has passed strike bills, only to have them pidgeonholed in the Senate. Finally, the Senate passed the Conally Bill, which was a mild and more or less meaningless measure. But when it came to the House for its consideration, the measure was rewritten and made much stronger. The Senate and House having passed different bills, it became necessary to appoint conferees representing the two bodies to try to agree in ironing out the differences. The conferees finally agreed, but it was still necessary for both houses to agree to the conference report before it became law. This they did in one afternoon. The bill now goes to the President's desk. Whether he will sign it or veto it, I do not know.

The whole question is a mean political problem for the President. John L. Lewis is his unfaltering foe. Lewis tried to lead the miners against the President in the election of 1940, but was unsuccessful in doing so. This led to Lewis' resignation as President of the C.I.O. If the miners are denied wage increases, it will likely mean that they will leave the President politically, which would mean the probable loss of Pennsylvania, West Virginia, and make more certain the loss of Illinois and Ohio and probably help to make a battleground in Kentucky. On the other hand, if John L. Lewis wins his concessions, the other union leaders will be standing in line and will, of course, ~~makexxix~~ get similar concessions. And, then, that would probably mean Congress would lift the

price ceilings on agricultural commodities out of simple fairness to the farmer. All of which would mean that the country would start^{up} the inflationary ladder faster, and the things people buy would become much higher. So, you see the President has a notty political problem. Now I do not mean to infer that this question is looked at primarily from the political angle. I think everyone puts war production first, and that is the reason Congress has passed the anti-strike bill. But politics has not yet been forgotten, either by Lewis or the President, or by either the Democrats or the Republicans.

If the anti-strike bill becomes law, the War Labor Board will then have authority to issue a subpoena and force John L. Lewis to appear and participate in its efforts to settle the controversy. Then, if John Lewis calls a other strike while the government is operating the coal mines, he could, under the provisions of this bill, be fined and imprisoned.

Secretary Ickes seems to have poured oil on the troubled waters by imposing a fine on the miners for each day they were out on strike. Regardless of the justness of this, it seems to me quite inadvisable.

A portion of the coal operators have agreed with John L. Lewis, but most of them have not. Any agreement reached, however, must be approved by the War Labor Board before it can become effective. So, the whole question is still unsettled.

Three years and one day after Mussolini led Italy into the war, his island of Pantelleria, which he had attempted to make a little Mediterranean Gibraltar, surrendered to the Allied forces. I believe this is the first time a fortress has been forced to surrender by bombardment from air and surface forces alone. This island is a stepping stone to Sicily and to the toe of the Italian boot.

In all of this talk and speculation about what moves will come next and where, it would be well to remember that one of the purposes is to confuse the enemy, to make him think we are going to do something which we are not and to blind him to the actual program which is to be carried out.

During the week, President Roosevelt again warned the Axis against use of poisonous gas. There have been multiplying indications that, in desperation, the enemy was planning to resort to this thoroughly unhuman warfare which all countries have pledged not to use. The President warned the Axis powers that if gas should be used against any of the Allies next year, the United States would treat it just as if poisonous gas had been unloosed on the United States.

President Morilliguo of Paragua is a visitor in the Capitol and addressed Congress last Thursday. After his speech, some Congressman in the cloakroom asked how big a lend-lease check he would get. Another spoke up and said: "I don't know, but under the circumstances, I feel that he are thoroughly justified in maintaining friendship and cooperation with the Latin-American Republics. They are our friends. They have essential

problems of their own which demand attention, and the least we can do is cooperate with them."

The Farm Security Administration, which was killed by the House, gained a new lease on life through a victory in the Senate which came only after a hard fight. This question now goes to a conference committee between the Senate and the House, and another vote will be had upon it in the House of Representatives. The Farm Security Administration has undoubtedly made a lot of mistakes. In some projects they have been wantonly extravagant and they have done a lot of silly things. But, on the other hand, the Farm Security Administration has done some very fine work, and it has been very helpful to many poor people in the rural areas of the nation. There is an overwhelming sentiment in Congress to eliminate the undesirable features of the Farm Security Administration, but there seems to be very good grounds to save the good part of its work.

On Thursday, the House passed and sent to the Senate a bill providing for the rehabilitation of soldiers who return from the war incapacitated. Casualties are already arriving, and this program of rehabilitation is started none too early.

Officials of the War Food Administration let it be known during the week that crop estimates have been lowered for this year. Weather up to June 1 was termed "the least favorable in the last three years." In Oklahoma, for instance, the season is now so late and flood damage has been

so heavy that some farmers are planning to abandon their crops and seek other employment. The floods and rains have prevented many acres from being planted in corn. One hopeful sign, though, was the statement in the report that the farmers in Illinois planted 54% of their corn in one week, working day and night.

The War Food Administration said that wheat production this year would be 29% less than it was last year. No estimate was given on corn, but it is generally thought that corn production will be considerably less this year than it was in the record-breaking year of 1942. Some people express the hope that livestock production would make up for lowered crop yields, but these people overlook the fact that crop yields are necessary to fatten hogs and corn-fed cattle. In fact, as I reported to you a month ago, there is a very grave danger that we will have more livestock than there will be feed. The Department of Agriculture estimates that 125 million pigs will be farrowed this year, whereas 105 million were farrowed last year. There is a large increase in cattle. So, with wheat production reduced 29% and corn production certainly / reduced by no less than 10 per cent, and much more, it appears that there may be a feed shortage. Indeed, a feed shortage is now being felt by several areas outside of the corn belt, because corn is not moving from the corn belt as usual because: (1) more of it is being fed to the increased number of hogs in the corn belt; and (2) the farmers are just not selling the corn to grain dealers under the ceiling price.

Mr. Chester Davis, War Food Administrator, is a competent man and, if given sufficient authority, I have high confidence in his performance. But if his hands are tied and if his efforts are defeated by the action of other agencies, our feed and food problem will become more acute.