

Radio Program, WSM
June 27, 1943

Good Morning, Friends:

We have seen a week of dramatic action in Washington. Of first importance, Congress overrode the President's veto and wrote into law the Smith-Conally Anti-strike bill. (Except on votes declaring war, I have not seen Congress as tense and excited in my five years in Washington. When the veto message was read to the Senate, Senator Connally made a very brief speech in which he said that Congress, that the nation, that the men in the army and navy were sorely disappointed at the President's veto. He then said that the President had a right, under the Constitution, to veto a bill, but that the Senate had a right to pass it over his veto, and that he hoped the Senate would exercise its high Constitutional privilege. The vote was quickly taken in the Senate and it passed 56 to 25, a few votes more than ^{the} ~~are~~ necessary ~~for the~~ two-thirds majority.

Word of the Senate's action electrified the House, which was then considering a bill to extend the life of the Commodity Credit Corporation, *in itself an important bill* ~~itself an important bill~~ in which the question of subsidy was involved. But the House all but forgot the bill it was considering. I was in the Speaker's Chair presiding over the House at the time the messenger from the Senate entered the House Chamber with a message in his hand from the Senate, containing the President's veto message and a notice from the Senate that it had passed the bill over the President's veto. *This meant that it was then up to the House.* ~~by the necessary two-thirds majority.~~ When this Senate messenger entered, *I had to* ~~it required~~ *by* fierce ~~pounding of~~ the gavel to maintain sufficient order and decorum to complete the consideration of the important

Commodity Credit Corporation Bill. But, as I said before, members just weren't interested in it. ^{any more.} ^{The question of over riding the veto was all absorbing.} They were exasperated that at a time when the sovereignty of government is challenged, at a time when strikes are threatening the very success of the war program, at a time when the life of the nation is at stake, and men by the thousands are dying on the battle front, the President should veto ^{an anti-} strike bill. Members readily conceded that the bill may not have been to the President's liking. As a matter of fact, it was ^{strikingly} ~~not~~ to the liking of ^{few} ~~many~~ members themselves. Legislation is necessarily a matter of compromise. Some members wanted the bill stronger. Some wanted it weaker. But here in a time of stress, Congress had passed a reasonably strict bill in an effort to insure uninterrupted war production and to bring an end to disastrous strikes. Against the acknowledged wishes of the people and against the overwhelming sentiment of Congress, the President had vetoed the measure after being importuned and pressured by the labor leaders who have been his political associates and supporters over a long period of years.

At first, there was a move on the part of some leaders to postpone the vote until next Tuesday in order that absent members could be notified and return. This was particularly designed to give members from New York City, Philadelphia, Pittsburg, Cleveland, etc. a chance to return. But supporters of the bill could easily see that they would have a better chance of getting a two-thirds majority then than to wait, because absent members were largely from the big city labor districts. So, supporters ^{of the bill} pressed for

an immediate vote on the President's veto message. Quite a few members of Congress from the nearby large cities are not in frequent attendance in Congress. Many of them come only when important votes are to be considered and the leadership ^{usually} manages to give them ample notice. For instance, few important votes are ever scheduled for Monday or Saturday. The city members, say from New York, ^{for instance usually} go home on Thursday night or Friday night and generally do not return until Tuesday, if ^{on last Friday many of them were home and} then. They were caught flatfooted. Nearly all of them had voted against the anti-strike bill and would have voted against overriding the President's veto. But we fellows who have been trying to pass a bill for two years now, and having to fight with them all the time, had no intention of allowing the matter to be postponed. It was not, of course, that any of us had any personal ill-feeling or dislike for them. It was their duty to be in Congress any way, and we ^{did not intend to let} ~~just had no intention of~~ ^{as a vote be put off} ~~allowing the vote to be postponed~~ until they could get back and defeat it. Anyway, the House passed the bill over the President's veto by a smacking vote of 244 to 180.

This is the first time in the history of the nation that a president's veto in wartime has been overridden. It is (undoubtedly) a body blow to the President's political prestige. This is unfortunate, of course. The President is the leader of the nation, and the nation is in a deadly war. It is exceedingly regrettable that such a dangerous split should develop between the President and the Congress. It may do much harm to the war program. It could have been avoided and should have been avoided. It would be much

better for the President and the Congress to cooperate. But cooperation is not a one-way street. ^{here}) These strikes must stop. Dilly-dallying, pussy-footing and pacifying must end. I talked to a soldier this week who has just returned from Attu. He said that the spirit of the ^{soldiers there} ~~boys~~ was fine. They fought, they froze and they died, but they won. They drove the Japs from the bleak Island and the Stars and Stripes now float over its volcanic peaks. But he said that news of strikes at home did more damage to the soldiers' morale than anything that happened. He told of talking to a soldier who had been shot through the stomach and knew he had no chance to live. He told how the soldier said: "I don't want to die. I want to live, but I'm not afraid to die and I'm willing to give my life for the great cause." It was things like that ^{is} that Members of the House and Senate had in their minds when they took the drastic step of overriding the President's veto in time of war.

I know you who listen will understand the keen responsibility a member of Congress must feel in such an hour of stress. The President is the Commander-in-Chief of the Army and Navy. Under the Constitution, ^{and Commander in Chief} he is the only leader we have, and there is no way ^{of forcing a change} ~~of having another~~. So, upon his leadership the Nation must rely. ~~It is because of these~~ ^{Under the system of government that we have} It is because of these circumstances that throughout our National history no Congress until now has been willing to override a Presidential veto in time of war. And this Congress did so, I am convinced, with much regret. But an overwhelming majority felt that the President had acted unwisely in vetoing the bill. They felt that he

This kind of vote would mean that the people would be getting a change in the way the government is run. But our system is different.

had yielded once again, as he has done so many times that it has become a habit, to the pressure and wishes of the labor leaders. The overriding of his veto was not only a historic act but an occasion for ^{National} sadness, not that it should not have been done, but because the President had made it necessary for Congress to do it. I hope that it will not do irreparable damage to the President's leadership of the country and to his prestige in world affairs. The bill is now law. It requires no further signing - no further waiting. The question of enforcement now arises. This, Congress can not do. Congress can only enact laws. Under the Constitution, the enforcement is reserved to the Executive branch. ^{Enforcement should not wait.} Drastic action needs to be taken, and taken now. ^{pose} Approximately 250,000 miners are still on strike. No less than fourteen blast furnaces have already closed down for want of coal. And the shortage of coal will show up next winter when freezing temperatures push the thermometers low. For the third time, John L. Lewis called his miners out on strike and then on last Tuesday, I believe it was, ^{declared} ~~set~~ another truce ^{with the} ~~until October 31.~~ ^{Nation's vital need for coal. He set out 31} ^{or another work stoppage deadline} Only about half of his miners have yet returned.

^{Another thing,}

There have been important developments in Congress on the food front. For one thing, the government seized the corn stored in 96 mid-western grain elevators. It was necessary for the government to do this in order to supply corn to not only war industries in which corn is used for making war-necessary alcohol and ingredients for explosives, but to supply feed for Eastern dairy and poultry farmers. There are probably one billion bushels of corn

now in the corn belt, counting that held by the farmers as well as that in the elevators. *while finer stock feed grows shorter.* People are withholding fat cattle from the markets and, although some are rushing hogs to market for want of feed, others are holding hogs and feeding them a little longer. The whole situation is in a chaotic condition and likely will remain so until something definite is done about subsidies and prices. Just before considering the veto message, the House passed a bill prohibiting payment of subsidies to roll back food prices and a strong move was under way in the Senate to do likewise.

Philip Murrey and other labor leaders accuse the corn and livestock farmers of being out on strike because they ~~were~~ *are* withholding corn and livestock from the markets. Mayor LaGuardia of New York City came to Washington and made a speech urging that subsidies be approved. LaGuardia said when people throughout the country start feeling the effects of the withholding tax, they will start writing into Washington begging for lower prices, and the only way to get them is by subsidies. Philip Murrey said that "unless prices of food were rolled back and brought under control by July 15, labor would demand general wage increases.

These home-front difficulties bode no good for the war. And the tragedy of the war was punctuated by the announcement of the Navy that a United States submarine had sunk off the Atlantic *coast* with a number of officers and men unable to escape and that it sank in water so deep ~~that~~ it is impossible to salvage the submarine and hope has been abandoned for the recovery of the bodies of the missing men.

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