

*Mr. [unclear]
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BRITISH EMBASSY,

WASHINGTON, D. C.,

January 9th, 1940

My Lord,

299/130/39

I have the honour with reference to my despatch No. 1255 of November 11th, to transmit to Your Lordship herewith, for purposes of record, a report on the debate in Congress on the Neutrality Bill in October last. I regret that owing to pressure of more urgent work it has not been possible to forward this report sooner.

2. The issues involved in the Neutrality Bill and in particular the burning question of the repeal of the arms embargo, had been widely discussed in the press, on the radio and at public meetings ever since the outbreak of war. So many Senators and Representatives had publicly expressed their views and so much canvassing of the opinions of individual Congressmen had taken place before Congress met, that the debate when it actually took place proved somewhat of an anticlimax. For the first few days of the Senate debate public interest remained at a high level and the opening speakers such as Senators Pittman and Connally for the Bill and Borah and Vandenberg against it, spoke to large and appreciative audiences. Gradually however as the debate dragged on for over 3 weeks and Senator after Senator delivered set speeches intended primarily for the record and for reproduction

in/

The Right Honourable

The Viscount Halifax, K.G.,

etc., etc., etc.

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in the local newspapers, public interest in the proceedings in Congress waned until towards the end of the debate the public galleries were almost empty and it was hard to keep a quorum on the floor of the House.

3. The newspapers of course reported the debates fully and from time to time incidents such as Colonel Lindbergh's ill-conceived speech caused a stir. The opponents of repeal are understood to have gone to great lengths to try to influence Congressmen by bombarding them with letters and petitions to oppose the bill and the shipping interests were also active in their efforts to secure a modification of the original proposals contained in Senator Pittman's first draft of the bill. Generally however, it was agreed after the first few days' debate that the result in the Senate was a fore-gone conclusion, and the later speeches did little to alter this opinion.

4. It was anticipated that the decision in the House would be close and right up to the last few days it was thought that the Administration might only secure a favourable vote by a very narrow majority. The eventual size of the majority came as a distinct surprise to most people.

5. There is little that need be said regarding the debate. After the first day or two most of the speeches were undistinguished and in many cases almost painfully repetitive and irrelevant. In general I think the debate showed three things. First a unanimous determination on all sides that the United States must be kept out of the war in Europe. Secondly a wide sympathy - sometimes actually expressed but more often implied - with the Allies and an anxiety to see the

defeat/

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defeat of Germany. Thirdly a readiness to impose considerable sacrifices on American interests, notably shipping, to minimise the risk of incidents between the United States and the belligerents.

6. I am sending a copy of this despatch and the enclosure to the High Commissioner for the United Kingdom at Ottawa.

I have the honour to be,

with the highest respect,

My Lord,

Your Lordship's most obedient,

humble servant,

(SGD.) LOTHIAN

The debate in the Senate began on October 2nd with a speech by Senator Pittman, the Chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee and the chief sponsor of the Bill. He was mainly concerned to explain the various points in his draft resolution. After declaring his determination to keep America out of the war he warmly defended the repeal of the arms embargo and emphasised the futility of placing restrictions on a limited number of implements of war, while allowing the export of the raw materials of which they were manufactured. He claimed that the United States had been involved in the last war because of Germany's disregard for the lives of American citizens and maintained that the surest guarantee against American involvement in the present struggle was to prohibit United States ships from carrying goods to belligerent ports. He realised that the Bill would impose severe handicaps on American shipping interests, but he thought this a small price to pay for reducing the risks of American involvement in war. He also went out of his way to justify the action of the Foreign Relations Committee in including the "90 days credit" provision in Section 7 (a) of the Bill.

Senator Pittman was followed by Senator Borah, who in a set speech bitterly attacked the Bill, which he declared was calculated to drag the United States into war. Apart from his general objections to seeing the United States supplying any belligerents with arms with which to prosecute a war, he was opposed to repealing the arms embargo at the present moment/

moment because such an action would undoubtedly favour the Allies and would be tantamount to intervention on their behalf by the United States. There was nothing in international law to prevent a nation from refusing to sell arms to other countries and he saw no reason why the true interests of the United States should be sacrificed for the benefit of the Allies. Though he professed his "abhorrence of the cruel and brutal creed" practised in Germany, yet he was unable to look on the war as anything more than "another chapter in the bloody volume of European power politics".

The debate on October 4th was opened by Senator Connally, who with Senator Pittman had been mainly responsible for the drafting of the Bill. The greater part of the Senator's speech consisted of an exposition of the arguments in favour of the repeal of the arms embargo. The Senator claimed that the embargo operated against Great Britain and France, that it was therefore more in accordance with true neutrality to repeal it than to maintain it and that there was no reason why, provided restrictions were placed on American shipping, the risks of America becoming involved in war should be in any way increased. Like Senator Pittman he made it clear on several occasions that he was determined that this country should not be dragged into war, and he ended his speech with an appeal for the immediate increase of the United States armed forces.

The only other speech on October 4th was made by Senator Vandenberg, one of the chief opponents of the Bill. He concentrated mainly on the burning

question/

question of the repeal of the arms embargo which he regarded as bound sooner or later to lead America into war. He declared that all parties were equally anxious that the United States should not become involved and that being so he thought it the height of folly to take any step which could possibly increase the risk of such involvement. He drew an alarming picture of the effect on American institutions of participation in another European war and declined to accept the contention that if the dictator states won this war, the United States would be their next victim. In his view it was vital that the United States should "in a spirit of firm determination preserve our isolation to the last honourable degree".

At the close of proceedings on October 4th Senator Tobey, a Republican from New Hampshire, announced that he intended to move that the Bill be divided into two parts, and that the first, containing the relatively non-controversial sections dealing with shipping, etc., should be dealt with at once, leaving the second, containing the arms embargo repeal, to be voted on later after a full-dress debate. This proposal was supported on the following day by Senator Nye, when Senators Overton and Schwollenbach also spoke. The former, a Democrat from Louisiana, opposed the Bill, again on the familiar grounds that to repeal the arms embargo would bring the United States into the war, while the latter took the opposite view and claimed that there was nothing unneutral in altering the Neutrality Legislation after war had begun. Both however were equally emphatic that in no circumstances must the United States become involved in the war.

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On October 6th the speakers were Senators Thomas of Utah and Downey of California. The first supported the Bill, arguing that it was not true to say that the repeal of the arms embargo would unduly favour the Allies or that there was anything in international law to prevent the modification of the neutrality law after the outbreak of hostilities. Mr. Downey who contrived to speak for some 2½ hours on October 6th and for almost as long when the debate was continued on October 9th, opposed the Bill mainly on the ground that the removal of the arms embargo would inevitably entail the intervention of the United States in the war on the side of the Allies, that this would be followed by the grant of credits to Great Britain and France - "the skillful realistic statesmen of Great Britain will manipulate the trusting, confiding and naive statesmen of America into increasing credit involvements" - and that the consequences for the economic structure of the United States would be disastrous. Much of his speech was devoted to a tirade against "British Imperialism" on familiar lines and to a declaration that the United States were safe against all comers and could safely afford to ignore European developments.

The remainder of the debate on October 9th was mainly occupied by a discussion arising out of a proposal by Senator Johnson of Colorado - an opponent of the Bill - that the debate be suspended for sufficiently long to enable the President to undertake peace soundings on Europe.

The first division on the Bill took place on

October/

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October 10th in connexion with Senator Tobey's motion to divide the Bill into two parts so as to permit of the postponement of a decision on the embargo issue. This motion was opposed by the Administration spokesmen and was defeated by 65 votes to 26. The remainder of the sitting was occupied by Senator Danaher, a Republican, who claimed that too much discretion was left to the President by the Bill; by Senator Wagner of New York, who while protesting that he shared "that determination to keep out of other people's wars" argued strongly in favour of the repeal of the arms embargo; by Senator Bailey, the Chairman of the Committee on Commerce, who pledged his support of the bill while calling attention to the serious effects which it would have on American shipping and suggesting that some amendments to lessen these effects might be introduced; and by Senator Lodge who remembering no doubt the stand made by his grandfather against the ratification of the Treaty of Versailles, opposed the repeal of the embargo mainly on the grounds that to do so at this stage would be tantamount to an unneutral act.

On October 11th, the debate was opened by Senator Clark of Missouri, one of the leaders of the opposition to the Bill. The Senator declared at the outset that he was one of those who were convinced that "the repeal of the mandatory arms embargo is the first step towards war", and he developed this theme for the best part of 3 hours. He argued that the proper course was to include both the embargo and the "cash and carry" provisions in the same bill, and declined to admit that however much he might dislike

Hitlerism/

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Hitlerism the war was any different from "every other war that has been fought in Europe in the past 200 years". It was "a fight over power politics and boundaries". Finally he made an attack on the President and certain other members of the Administration especially Mr. Louis Johnson, for deliberately exaggerating the potential dangers to the United States in the present situation and denied that it was in the national interest for the country to take sides in the conflict.

In contrast to this speech Senator Burke, a Democrat from Nebraska, had no hesitation in condemning the embargo because it favoured Germany and in urging its repeal because it would assist the Allies. He went so far as to say that "our own national defence, our continued security require that Great Britain retain its position of leadership" on the sea and roundly declared that it was in America's interest to do everything possible, short of supplying men and money, to help the Allies to bring the war to a speedy end.

The sitting was ended by a speech from Senator White, a Republican from Maine, who rather surprisingly announced that he would oppose the Bill since the restrictions that it would impose on American shipping would militate against Great Britain and France. He did not hesitate to say that he was influenced by "a fervent hope that Britain and France would prevail in their righteous cause" but he was careful to state that this feeling was "wholly subservient to my dominant yearning that America shall continue to enjoy peace".

The Chief speaker in the debate on October 12th was Senator La Follette of Wisconsin who strongly

opposed/

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opposed the repeal of the embargo on the grounds that such a step was not in the true interests of the United States themselves. Repeal would, he said, be "a significant step toward participation in the European war" and in his view the United States would be failing in their duty to civilisation if they allowed themselves to be dragged into such a conflict. "Our great opportunity for service to the cause of civilisation is to stay out of this war". The Senator was very critical of the post-war policies of Great Britain and France and hardly less so of the foreign policy of the United States Government which he clearly suspected of "taking sides". On the same afternoon two Democrat Senators - Bulow of South Dakota and Chavez of New Mexico - both declared their intention of voting against the Bill.

The debate on October 13th was chiefly remarkable for a short and practical speech by Senator Taft, the first prominent Republican to support the repeal of the arms embargo. Beginning by declaring that 95% of United States citizens were determined to stay out of war, he asserted that he could see no reason why the mere fact of repealing the embargo should increase the risk of American involvement. He argued that the embargo really favoured the large fully armed countries against those which were less adequately armed and reminded the Senate that in the last war only some 13% of America's exports to Great Britain and France had been "implements of war". He could see no reason why

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the neutrality of the United States should be in any way affected by the repeal of the embargo and he declined to believe that any European statesmen would interpret repeal as a sign of America's wish to intervene. He closed his speech, which contained certain concrete suggestions for easing the burdens on American shipping and for tightening up the restrictions on credits for belligerents, by solemnly warning the President against regarding the passage of the Bill as "a symbol of popular approval of interference in Europe".

Senator Taft was followed by Senator Nye, who for some four hours argued on familiar lines that to repeal the embargo was to take the first step towards involving the United States in war, that the proposal was unneutral in that it favoured the Allies unduly and that it was only by maintaining a strictly isolationist attitude that the United States could preserve their own institutions. Senator Nye endeavoured once more to prove that it had been the munition makers and the financiers who had been primarily responsible for America's entry into the war in 1917 and prophesied that events would repeat themselves if the embargo were repealed.

The debate on October 14th began quietly enough with a speech from Senator Frazier, of North Dakota, Republican, opposing the Bill, though some controversy was aroused when he alleged that "everyone will admit that we were dragged into the World War through false propoganda emanating from Great Britain and France". Considerably more argument was however caused by certain remarks of Senator Lundeen,

Independent/

Independent of Minnesota, who in the course of a speech against the bill brought up his two favourite topics of the war debts and the West Indian islands and said "I think that one way of bringing them (the British) to their senses on this question (the debts) would be to point out to the British and the French the West Indies, and serve notice upon them that unless they pay within a certain period we will send the armed forces of America there to seize them".

Senator Reynolds of North Carolina who is also prone to attack Great Britain whenever possible intervened to suggest that "If England wants to liquidate her obligations she might arrange with the Canadian Government to convey to us a strip of land from Seattle through Vancouver and British Columbia northward to the Alaskan line, say 50 or 100 miles wide. Then we could go ahead in earnest and with enthusiasm with the construction of the great Pan American highway". Senator Lundeen's remarks were at once strongly condemned by Senator Connally, the Administration spokesman, and by Senator Schwellenbach who said that Senator Lundeen's attitude towards the Caribbean seemed strangely reminiscent of the Soviet attitude towards the Baltic States.

Considerable controversy too was aroused during this day's debate over Colonel Lindbergh's broadcast address on the previous evening in the course of which he had inter alia repeated President Hoover's suggestion that a differentiation be made between offensive and defensive arms. Senator Clark of Missouri spoke warmly in Colonel Lindbergh's support but Senators Pittman and Connally both criticised his suggestions/

suggestions very severely. Senator Pittman indeed went so far as to say "The most unfortunate part of Colonel Lindbergh's speech is that it encourages the ideology of the totalitarian governments and is subject to the construction that he approves of their brutal conquest of democratic countries through war or threat of destruction through war".

Proceedings on October 16th began with an announcement by Senator Pittman that he had drafted an amendment providing for the deletion of the "90 days credit" provision from Section 7 of the bill - a provision which had been the object of criticism during the debate. Senator Clark of Idaho, Democrat, then made a speech against the bill which consisted largely of an attack against Great Britain and France who were criticised for having failed to do more to help the Poles. He was followed by Senators Shipstead and Capper, both of whom opposed the bill mainly from fear lest America become involved in war. Senator Gillette, a Democrat, made a somewhat indefinite speech stressing his determination to keep America out of war, expressing some doubts about the wisdom of repealing the embargo, but saying that if certain amendments were introduced into the bill he hoped after all to be able to vote for it.

The debate continued on October 17th with speeches by Senator Walsh, the Chairman of the Naval Affairs Committee, who was opposed to the repeal of the embargo which he regarded as "a positive unneutral act that bears all the germs of war breeding". Senator Danaher, the Republican representative from Connecticut, also spoke against the bill whereas his Democrat

colleague/

colleague from the same State, Senator Maloney, supported the bill as "a measure to maintain America's integrity and to keep us at peace".

Practically the whole of the sitting on October 18th was monopolised by Senator Holt, Democrat from West Virginia, most of whose speech consisted of a bitter attack on Great Britain which was accused of being actively engaged in conducting propoganda to bring America into the war, of having oppressed the Irish, committed atrocities in the Boer War, betrayed the Czechs, cheated both the Arabs and the Jews over Palestine, etc., etc.

On the following day Senator McCarran of Nevada, Democrat, was the first speaker and argued at length against the repeal of the embargo. His speech was chiefly remarkable in that it allowed Senator Austin, one of the Republican floor leaders, to intervene with the clear statement that in his view "it was necessary to promote the security of the United States that the Allies win and that the quicker they win, the more quickly will the security be gained" - a statement which naturally aroused protests from the isolationists.

At this stage in the debate Senator Pittman announced his intention of introducing certain amendments to allow American vessels to carry goods to belligerent ports in "safe" areas. (See my despatch No. 1181 of October 21st). The day's debate was then closed by a speech from Senator Barkley, the Democrat leader who made a long and reasoned defence of the Administration's proposals.

Senator Johnson of California, one of the most strenuous opponents of repeal, spoke on October 20th

His speech was in the main an impassioned appeal to Americans to keep out of European entanglements, interspersed with bitter criticism of Great Britain and doubts as to the honesty of the Allies' war aims. He closed his speech by shouting "Stand up, Americans, stand up, Americans, for your rights. Stand as you ought to stand in this struggle for maintaining that which will prevent the United States going into another war."

The next two speakers, Senators Ellender, Democrat, and Barbour, Republican, both favoured the repeal of the embargo though both were careful to emphasise their anxiety to see America kept out of war. Senator Ellender though he described Herr Hitler as "this mad dictator, this insatiable despoiler of men and nations" laid stress on the fact that "I shall not vote under any circumstances to send my son to fight the battles of those who inhabit the Old World". Senator Barbour supported the bill because he felt it served the best interests of the nation - which to his mind was the proper criterion by which the issue should be judged. In particular he emphasised the advantage from the point of view of the Administration's defence programme in enabling American firms to fulfil munition orders for the belligerent countries.

The next speech from Senator Brown of Michigan, a supporter of the bill, was in the main an attack on Colonel Lindbergh for his remarks about Canada in his broadcast on October 13th. After emphasising the good relations prevailing between Canada and the United States the Senator declared that he was speaking "for the purpose of denying that Colonel

Lindbergh/

Lindbergh speaks for America, denying that he speaks for any considerable section of the American people". Colonel Lindbergh's remarks were, he declared, "a gratuitous insult to a sister nation and based on a wholly erroneous concept of our continental American policy". The sitting closed with speeches from Senators Lucas and McClellan; both favoured repeal as the course most in the interest of the United States, but both emphasised their determination "never again to vote to send our boys into any European war".

On October 21st the two principal speeches were made by Senators Andrews of Florida, and Reynolds, North Carolina, both Democrats. The first, who was highly critical of Germany and Soviet Russia, supported the repeal of the embargo as "the safest way to peace". The second opposed the bill in a speech tinged as usual with a definite anti-British bias - he did not fail to use this opportunity to repeat his previous attacks on His Majesty's Government in connexion with the Guatemalan dispute and went further by alluding to the Argentine claims on the Falkland islands.

When the debate was resumed on October 23rd, and after Senator Wiley, a Republican from Wisconsin, had contrived to speak for a considerable period without apparently committing himself to any definite views, both Senators Clark of Missouri and Nye, amidst much interruption from Administration supporters, repeated their objections to the bill. Incidentally Senator Clark in the course of his speech criticised the fact that at the service on the preceding Sunday when the prayer book presented by The King to Hyde Park Church

had been dedicated, prayers had been said in the presence of the President for the success of His Majesty over his adversaries.

By this time the general debate on the bill had now lasted 3 weeks, and had shown little signs of coming to an early end. When the Senate reassembled on October 24th, however, rapid progress was made, and largely due to the energetic guidance of Vice President Garner and the pressure of the Administration leaders a large number of amendments were disposed of. The most important of these was Senator Pittman's amendment allowing American vessels to carry goods to certain "safe" belligerent ports (see my despatch No. 1181). To this Senator Connally added an amendment to the effect that the provisions of Section 2 (c) of the bill - the transfer of title provisions - should not apply in such cases. In supporting his proposal Senator Connally said "The amendment only applies to American ships. Personally I should not object to the provision relating to neutral ships so long as they are confined to those areas that are exempt, but on the other hand there is the consideration that we are supposed to have better control of our ships than of foreign ships and if we made the exemption apply to neutral ships, there is the bare possibility that somewhere we should get into trouble."

Senator Pittman's amendment, as altered by Senator Connally's amendment, was eventually adopted with additional amendments extending the "safe" area up to latitude 35° North - so as to include Bermuda - and (at the instigation of the Senators from Massachusetts up to longitude 66° West - so as to include certain Canadian/
Canadian/

Canadian ports on the Bay of Fundy. Another amendment also provided that the Atlantic south of latitude 30° North should be deemed to be within the "safe" area, while a second exempted goods other than war materials exported to Canada from the transfer of title provision. Other amendments adopted included one by Senators Pittman and Connally deleting the "90 days credit" provision from Section 7 and a second sponsored by the same Senators prohibiting the extension of credits by American nationals to private individuals or companies in belligerent countries for the purpose of buying war materials.

Amendments by Senator Taft laying down that as long as the war lasted all waters within 300 miles of the Continent of Europe were to be declared a "combat area" by Senator Danaher prohibiting the export of aircraft until at least 3000 had been produced for the United States forces and by Senator Clark of Missouri providing that the Senate and House be represented on the National Munition Control Board, were all defeated.

Much less rapid progress was made during the sitting on October 25th. Most of the debate was occupied with the discussion of an amendment by Senator Johnson of Colorado tending to limit the President's discretionary powers under the bill and of a proposal by Senator La Follette to place quota restrictions on all important exports to belligerent countries. Both these amendments were defeated without much difficulty. The remainder of the discussion was devoted to the consideration of an amendment by Senator Tobey who proposed that any foreign vessel making wrongful/

wrongful use of the American flag should be liable to seizure on entering a United States port.

Senator Tobey's proposal was further considered on October 26th when it was eventually adopted in a modified form, providing that foreign ships which had made incorrect use of the United States flag should be denied entry for three months into United States ports. Later in the day an amendment sponsored by Senators Vandenberg and Danaher to bar the shipment of poison gas from the United States was defeated as was one by Senator Downey of California proposing the specific imposition of an embargo on the export of arms at any time from the United States, except to other American nations engaged in defensive wars against non-American states. An amendment by Senator Taft to place a limit of 20 million dollars on the amount of the currency of any belligerent country which the Treasury might at any time hold in the stabilisation fund account was defeated after an assurance had been given that the Treasury had no intention of buying any belligerent currency with the proceeds of the stabilisation fund. Another proposal by Senator Taft in respect of the grant of credits was also defeated. The rest of the sitting was occupied by the discussion of an amendment by Senator Clark of Missouri, who proposed that armed merchantmen of a belligerent state should only be allowed to enter United States ports on the same conditions as the naval vessels of that state.

This amendment was further discussed on October 27th and was finally defeated by a considerable majority. An amendment from Senator Thomas restricting the movements of alien seamen was however agreed to, as

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was one by Senator George providing that in the "transfer of title" provisions the issuance of a bill of lading should in certain circumstances constitute such transfer. Certain other minor amendments were adopted by a major proposal of Senator Nye, the main effect of which would have been to reinsert the arms embargo in the bill, was defeated by 67 votes to 22. A proposal by Senator La Follette that - rather on the lines of the famous Ludlow resolution - a referendum should be held before the United States went to war except in the event of a hostile attack on the United States or the Western Hemisphere by a non-American nation, was also defeated by 73 votes to 17 after a prolonged debate, in which several Senators notably Senator Norris, explained their opposition to the idea of a referendum. An amendment by Senator Danaher requiring that articles sold to belligerents should be paid for in "lawful money of the United States" was also voted down.

Other amendments of lesser importance were also defeated and finally the critical amendment by Senator Clark of Missouri proposing to reinsert the arms embargo was rejected by 60 votes to 33. The bill itself was then passed by 63 votes to 30. Finally after some discussion the preamble to the bill was approved and the Senate debate which had lasted almost 4 weeks came to an end. The text of the bill as passed by the Senate was enclosed in my despatch No. 1221 of October 31st.

The bill now came before the House of Representatives. As the bill, as passed by the Senate, was technically an amendment to the Bloom bill adopted by the House in July, it was possible for the House to send it straight to Conference, where the text would be discussed between

representatives/

representatives of the Senate and the House, instead of treating it as fresh legislation and debating it at length on the floor of the House. The Rules Committee of the House recommended on October 30th that such a procedure be followed and the debate on this recommendation began in the House on the following day.

The first day's debate in the House consisted in the main of a series of short speeches from a large number of members explaining their reasons for supporting or opposing the bill. The speeches in general followed the lines already developed at such length in the Senate. Mr. Sol Bloom, the Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee, warmly supported the bill as did a number of other prominent Administration supporters. On the other side Representative Hamilton Fish, the leading Republican member of the Foreign Affairs Committee and an inveterate opponent of repeal, and certain other representatives spoke against the bill. The Administration gained an initial success when the House by 237 votes to 177 approved the procedure suggested by the Rules Committee but the debate was prolonged when Representative Shanley, a Democrat from Connecticut, moved that the House Conferees be instructed to restore the arms embargo provisions.

The debate on November 1st followed much the same course, and though a large number of representatives spoke, few of their speeches were in any way remarkable except perhaps for the unanimity with which they expressed their determination to "keep America out of wa Mr. Barton, a prominent Republican, declared he was against the bill as this was no time to take any steps

which/

which might involve the United States in "the most stupid, the most crazy, the most cockeyed war in human history". Mr. Doughton, the Chairman of the Ways and Means Committee, came out strongly in favour of the bill while Mr. McCormack, a Democrat from Massachusetts, enlivened the proceedings with a violent attack on M. Molotov who he alleged had by his speech on the preceding day tried to meddle in United States affairs. "A vote against repeal", the Representative declared "is a vote for Communist Russia and Nazi Germany".

A decision was reached in the House on November 2nd but before the voting took place a fresh series of speeches were made. Mr. Sweeney of Ohio made a violently anti-British speech, Mr. Vorys argued that at all events the export of lethal weapons should be prohibited and Mrs. Rogers of Massachusetts claimed to be speaking for the women of America when she spoke against repeal. The most interesting speech was however made by Representative Wadsworth, a Republican from New York. Mr. Wadsworth explained that he thought it a mistake to attempt to lay down any rigid laws regarding the attitude of the United States towards foreign wars and pointed out how badly the existing neutrality law had operated in regard to Abyssinia, Spain and China. The existing law, he had no doubt, "operates to the distinct advantage of the heavily armed aggressor and to the distinct disadvantage of the little man!" He was prepared to accept the bill but only because it was less bad than the present law. But more important than any legislation, he was convinced,

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was the necessity for Americans "to keep our heads steady and our feet on the ground" in the present crisis. He could not conceive any foreign government wishing to attack the United States but it was the duty of the Administration to "refrain from scolding other nations". Mr. Wadsworth's remarks were much applauded by both sides of the House and after a short speech by Speaker Bankhead in favour of the bill, the general discussion came to an end.

The House then divided on three motions. The first was to instruct the Conferees to insist on a provision forbidding the Federal Reserve Bank or any government agency to finance any purchases by belligerents. This was defeated by 228 votes to 196. The second was an instruction to insert a provision prohibiting the export of lethal weapons. This was beaten by 245 votes to 179. The last and critical vote was on an instruction to reinsert the whole arms embargo. This was defeated by 243 votes to 181. The debate then ended.

Immediately after the debate in the House was finished the conferees for the two Houses were appointed. They were Senators Pittman, George, Connally, Wagner, Borah and Johnson of California for the Senate and Representatives Bloom, Johnson, Kee, Fish and Eaton for the House.

The Conferees met on November 3rd and agreed on the final text of the bill. The report of the Conference was at once communicated to both Houses. In the Senate Senator Pittman gave a brief explanation of the alterations made in conference. Apart from certain verbal amendments the most important of these consisted

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in the inclusion of a new clause providing that neutral ships carrying goods to belligerent ports in the "safe" areas might enjoy the same exemption from the "transfer of title" provision as was accorded to American vessels. The Conference had also amended the bill so as to exempt from section 2 those American ships whose voyages had begun at least a week before the date of enactment of the bill.

After Mr. Pittman's remarks the Senate formally approved the Conference Report by 55 votes to 24. The majority consisted of 48 Democrats, 6 Republicans, and 1 Independent. 7 Democrats, 14 Republicans, 2 Farmer Labour and 1 Progressive voted against the bill. 4 Democrats were paired for the bill against 3 Democrats and 1 Republican. The remaining Senators did not vote. In contradistinction to the earlier debates in the Senate the whole proceedings were very brief - so much so that once the Conference had made its report, it was impossible to obtain a copy of this document before the Senate had voted on it. The whole discussion in the Senate lasted exactly 30 minutes.

The proceedings in the House took much the same course and were almost equally perfunctory, though here after Representative Bloom had introduced the Conference Report, Representative Hamilton Fish made a final speech of protest against the bill. The House then proceeded to approve the Conference Report by 243 votes to 172. The majority consisted of 231 Democrats, 10 Republicans, 1 American Labour and 1 Farmer Labour.

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The minority was made up of 29 Democrats, 141
Republicans, and 2 Progressives. 5 Democrats and 1
Republican were paired for the bill against 4
Republicans and 2 Democrats. The remaining Representatives
did not vote.

Both Houses adjourned the same afternoon and
as reported in my telegram No. 712 the President
signed the Neutrality Act at midday on the following
day, November 4th.

BRITISH EMBASSY,

WASHINGTON, D. C.,

January 9th, 1940