

BRITISH EMBASSY,
WASHINGTON, D. C.,
March 1st, 1940

No. 213

My Lord,

I have the honour to report that on February 19th Representative Tinkham of Massachusetts released to the press an exchange of letters between himself and Mr. Hackworth, Legal Adviser to the State Department, regarding the Anglo-United States agreement on Canton and Enderbury Islands.

2. Mr. Tinkham is a rich and elderly eccentric who has represented for many years a partly Irish district of Boston and rarely misses an opportunity of "twisting the lion's tail". In this case he had conceived an idea that the agreement for the joint use of Canton and Enderbury Islands masked a secretly negotiated alliance between Great Britain and the United States since the United States would be jointly responsible for the defence of the islands should they be attacked. His suspicions were deepened by the fact that the exchange of notes of the 6th April, 1939 provided that the two governments might agree to use the islands not only for civil aviation but "for any other purpose", and he asked why the matter had been settled by secret negotiation rather than by arbitration, "the classic method of settling disputed territorial ownership". He apparently wrote to the State Department on July 10th last demanding to see the correspondence on the matter but was informed/

The Right Honourable

The Viscount Halifax, K.G.,

Etc., etc., etc.

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informed by Mr. Hackworth on July 25th that it "could not be made available for your inspection without the consent of the British Government". Mr. Hackworth added that it did not in any case amplify or modify in any way the information contained in the State Department's two press releases on the subject.

3. Mr. Tinkham waited until December 1st before replying that "the apparent desire to conceal the true facts in this matter would seem clearly to support a charge of secret diplomacy", and wound up with the conclusion that "there should be an independent and thorough examination of the transaction in question by the Congress". He then waited another two and a half months and finally published these two letters, prefaced by a long statement of his suspicions, heading it "Congressman George Holden Tinkham charges that in 1939 the United States made a secret alliance with Great Britain in the Pacific, that this alliance led to the denunciation of the treaty with Japan early this year, and now threatens United States involvement in war in the East". This attempt to create a scare and embarrass the Administration appears to have fallen very flat. Mr. Hull declined to discuss it at his press conference, saying that "the exchange of notes was frank and unreserved and that was all there was to it". I have seen no further reference to the matter and indeed Mr. Tinkham is not taken seriously by the responsible press.

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END

4. Actually, however, I understand that the State Department did in fact intend to let Mr.

Tinkham see the correspondence privately in order to keep him quiet but they forgot to tell him so and, as he always suspects them of being under British influence, this is his idea of revenge.

5. I am sending copies of this despatch to the Governor General of New Zealand and the High Commissioners for the United Kingdom in Australia and New Zealand.

I have the honour to be,
with the highest respect,
My Lord,
Your Lordship's most obedient,
humble servant,

(SGD) LOTHIAN