

1941
(ND)

Sections 2 + 3 of Neutrality Act

FDR Speech File

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My dear Mr. Speaker and Mr. McCormick:

I had had no thought of expressing to the House my views of the effect, in foreign countries and especially in Germany, of favorable or unfavorable action on the Senate Amendments.

But in view of your letter, I am replying as simply and clearly as I know how.

In my Message of October 9th, I definitely recommended arming of ships and removing the prohibition against sending American flagships into belligerent ports. Both I regarded as of extreme importance -- the first I called of immediate importance. ^{at that time.} This did not lessen the importance of the second. Another month has gone by, and the second I regard today as ^{at least} of equal importance with the first.

In regard to the repeal of Sections 2 and 3 of the Neutrality Act, I need only call your attention to three elements. The first concerns the continued sinking of American flagships in many parts of the ocean. The second relates to great operational advantages in making continuous voyages to any belligerent port in any part of the world; thus in all

probability increasing the total percentage of goods -- food stuffs and munitions -- actually delivered to those nations fighting Hitlerism. The third is the decision by the Congress and the Executive that this nation, for its own present and future defense, must strengthen the supply line to all of those who are today keeping Hitlerism far from the Americas.

With all of this in mind, the world is ^{obviously} ~~of course~~ watching the course of this legislation.

In the British Empire, in China, and in Russia -- all of whom are fighting a defensive war against invasion -- the effect of failure of the Congress to repeal Sections 2, 3 ^{and} ~~of~~ of the Neutrality Act would be definitely discouraging. I am confident that it would not destroy their defense or morale, though it would weaken their position from the point of view of food and munitions.

Failure to repeal these sections would, of course, ^{cause} ~~weaken~~ ^{weakening} our position in the Axis nations. Failure would bolster aggressive ^{and in the other will know} steps and intentions in Germany, ~~in Italy and Japan~~ ^{aggressor nations} under the leadership of Hitler.

Judging by all recent experience, we could, all of us, look forward to enthusiastic applause in those three nations based on the claim that the United States is ~~not~~ disunited as they have so often prophesied, ~~and that the United States by this act is withdrawing from its previous position.~~

Our own position in the struggle against aggression would be definitely weakened not only in Europe and in Asia but also among our sister Republics in the Americas. *Foreign nations, friends and enemies would misinterpret our own mind and purpose.*

I have discussed this letter with the Secretary of State and he wholeheartedly concurs.

May I take this opportunity of mentioning that in my judgment failure of the House to take favorable action on the Senate Amendments would also weaken our domestic situation? Such failure would weaken our great effort to produce all we possibly can and as rapidly as we can. Strikes and stoppages of work would become less serious *in the mind of the people.*

I am holding a conference tomorrow in the hope that certain essential coal mines can remain in continuous operation. ~~That~~ *THAT* this ~~will~~ prove successful.

TT
B. T. T. If it is not successful, it is obvious that this coal must be mined in order to keep the essential steel mills at work. The Government of the United States has the backing of the overwhelming majority of the people of the United States, including the workers, *TT The Government* ~~and~~ proposes to see this thing through.
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Very sincerely yours,