

Friends in the radio audience

In this script for his radio broadcast, Senator Arthur Capper argues that the U.S. must avoid becoming involved in the conflict developing in Europe and the Far East. Capper also maintains that the Roosevelt Administration's growing desire to support U.S. allies involved in the conflict, as well as the Navy's request for expanded overseas basing, are signs that the nation is headed toward involvement in a conflict that it should avoid.

Creator: Capper, Arthur, 1865-1951

Date: June 19, 1939

Callnumber: Coll. 12, Box 26, Folder: World War II

KSHS Identifier: DaRT ID: 216681

Item Identifier: 216681

www.kansasmemory.org/item/216681



Friends in the radio audience

*Not Council for
Prevention of War* *June 19, 1939*

Friends in the radio audience:

A year ago on this radio broadcast sponsored by the National Council for Prevention of War, I advocated a peace program for the United States which I believed would keep this country out of war and strengthen our democratic government. I urged that we keep our soldiers out of foreign lands, that the neutrality law be strictly carried out, that we give up any idea of policing the world for other nations, and that we give the people of this country the right to vote before they are sent into a foreign war.

I urge that program as strongly today as I did a year ago. Those who want to change the traditional American policy of minding our own business and keeping out of the quarrels of other nations are trying to persuade the American people that present world conditions make a change in our policy necessary. I do not agree with them. I lament as earnestly as any one conditions that prevail today in many parts of the world, but I believe that for this country to set itself up as a world policeman to maintain law and order and establish justice according to our own ideas of what justice is would do just one thing. It would ruin this country. It would not help the world.

The world will never get out of its present difficulties until one fact is recognized and acted upon. This fact is that no good can be accomplished by war or by falling back on the old habit of meeting force with force. We have got to get a new idea and a new plan. From this point of view, the present demand for large armament increases in this country is very discouraging.

Friends in the radio audience

-2-

COPY

Apparently the present Administration has no new constructive ideas to offer in regard to world affairs. It can think of nothing to do but to repeat the old policies of force and threats of force which have led to the present situation. As I see it, there is little chance that any government which is devoting its energies and efforts and the resources of its people to taking part in the world armament race will ever prove itself able to work out new constructive plans for world peace and for world justice.

The American people have made it perfectly clear that there are two things they want. These two things are, first, completely adequate defense against any possible attack, and second, protection against becoming mixed up in any foreign war. On these two desires of the people, if indeed this is a government by the people, our foreign policy program should be based. But what are the facts?

The neutrality law, passed by Congress to prevent our getting into another foreign war by the same road that led us into the World War, was opposed by the present Democratic Administration which has gone so far as to refuse to carry out this law of Congress in the Far Eastern war. It seems the present effort is to amend the law so that the President may have the power to take sides in foreign conflicts by making loans and credits and furnishing supplies to one side and not to the other. The war referendum amendment, which a majority of the members of the House voted to bring up for discussion at the last session, was vigorously opposed by Administration forces and discussion blocked through political pressure.

Friends in the radio audience

-3-

Y90C

But I urge you to consider most carefully of all the facts in regard to the President's recent demand for an increase in our armed forces -- an increase which will mean hundreds of millions of dollars in taxes at a moment when great groups of our citizens are in desperate need of help. It is true that as the result of public criticism the increases originally proposed in our army and navy and air forces were considerably modified in the President's recent message to Congress, but the earlier proposals which included, among other things, from ten to twelve thousand planes, and the use of CCC boys for armament production and government control of certain of our basic industries, show us in what direction we are heading.

Perhaps most alarming and distressing of all is the effort that has been made through propaganda by government officials to win support for increased armaments by trying to persuade the people of this country that they are in danger of attack from overseas. Now, what are the facts about this? British experience at Gallipoli during the World War proved conclusively that troops cannot be successfully landed in an enemy country. Even granted that our navy were defeated, nothing like a force sufficient to meet our armed forces could be landed under the fire of our harbor fortifications or on any stretch of our shore unequipped with landing facilities. To send planes across the ocean to attack us would mean their certain loss, for they could not return home. Nor is there any military advantage to be gained from an air attack that can not be followed immediately by the invasion of troops.

-4-
COPY

But there is another point. If the armaments that are being proposed are for defense, why has there been no careful study made as was promised in the Democratic Platform of 1932 of exactly what our defense needs are and what type of armaments would best meet them? Plans for our army today are based on the National defense Act which was written in World War days and is designed to provide an expeditionary force of millions of men to be landed in a foreign country equipped to fight. A few months ago General Hagood, now retired, told a Congressional committee that so far as the army is concerned, it "could give the country a much better system of national defense at much less cost, that is, if it were to give its entire attention to the problem of repelling invasion and not be diverted by schemes to invade Europe or Asia."

As to the navy, proposals for naval bases as far away as Guam point toward only one thing -- action in the western Pacific, far from our own shores.

My contention is that if the demand of the American people for protection against becoming mixed up in foreign wars is carried out by legislation and that legislation supported instead of sabotaged by the Administration, the attention of our government and the resources of our people could be given to an intelligent program of actual defense, and the amounts now going into armaments not needed for defense could be devoted to the welfare of our citizens.

Friends in the radio audience

-5-

Y903

We would all like to see democracy spread throughout the world, but our chief concern is to preserve and strengthen our democracy at home. If we are to do this we must keep out of any foreign war, for the minute there is a declaration of foreign war, a military dictatorship will be set up in this country which will control industry, labor, agriculture, the press, and wipe out every hard won liberty of the people. We must take the profit out of war, place an absolute embargo on the shipment of munitions and war supplies to all countries engaged in war. We must also take every step to carry out the purpose of the Constitution to keep the war power out of the hands of one man, the President, and to bring it under the control of the people themselves by passage of the war referendum amendment; and third, we must be constantly alert to see that no more of our national wealth than is needed for actual defense is turned to the creation of weapons of destruction, instead of being employed in undertakings which will increase our national wealth and the well-being of our people.

Y90C

Questions and Answers.

Mrs. Boeckel: Thank you very much, Senator Capper, for a talk that must make every voter realize his responsibility to follow foreign policy closely. You have watched these questions for many years, won't you say a little more about the tremendous and steady increase in armament appropriations during recent years and the dangers involved? I know that the charge has been made by European observers that this country has a definite responsibility for the present world race in armaments.

Senator Capper: I believe, Mrs. Boeckel, that there is some justification in that charge. It is my feeling that this country's contribution should have been to lessen the hysterical wave of fear and hatred that is flooding the world today, and to turn attention to measures of peace rather than of war. Instead, with less excuse than many others, this government has pushed ahead just as fast as the people would let it, and apparently with the sky as the limit, to enlarge our army and navy, and to win the support of the people, has stimulated rather than calmed the emotions of hatred and fear. In the second place, we are making the economic situation, bad enough as it is, worse; for as the President himself has said, "Armament employment is false employment. It builds no consumers' goods for lasting prosperity."

Questions and Answers - two

Y90C

Mrs. Boeckel: Your last point is a very interesting and important one, Senator Capper. Won't you enlarge upon it? Both business and labor organizations are opposing armament building as a means of relieving economic conditions, are they not? I remember particularly one statement by Mr. Edward McGrady when he was Assistant Secretary of Labor, in which he said the people would not stand forever for the building of instruments of death when what they needed were the necessities of life.

Senator Capper: Business and labor are quite right in their opposition, for the experience of England has proved that concentration on armament production interferes with normal business by making it harder for the average business man to obtain either materials or loans. The cost of living is thereby increased. The production of armaments brings no return. Sooner or later their production must cease and the unemployment situation is far worse than ever, for a handicapped normal business is in no position to take care of the men dismissed.