

9/30/39

THE CONGRESSIONAL FRONT.  
By Congressman Everett M. Dirksen  
16th Ill. District

WEEKS FOR THE SENATE, AN HOUR FOR THE HOUSE.

The country does not know it yet but the House of Representatives will probably have but ONE HOUR in which to debate the neutrality bill after it returns from the Senate. This situation results from the rules of procedure. On the 30th of June of this year, the House considered a neutrality bill and then passed it in modified form. As passed it contained the arms embargo provision and other items and then went to the Senate. By a vote of 12 to 11, the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations refused to consider the bill during the first session of that Congress and so the bill reposed in a Committee pigeon-hole in the Senate on August 5th when Congress adjourned. The Senate Committee on Foreign Relations has now taken the bill as passed by the House, stricken all the language and written a completely new bill, leaving only the enacting clause. When the Senate completes its debate, the bill in whatever form it is passed will then be referred to a committee composed of members of the Foreign Relations Committee of the Senate and the Foreign Affairs Committee of the House. This is known as a conference committee to adjust the differences between the two houses. Senate members will be designated by the Vice President and will probably be Senators Pittman of Nevada, Harrison of Miss., and Borah of Idaho. House members are designated by the Speakers and will probably be Representatives Bloom of New York, Johnson of Texas, and Fish of New York. Four of the six members are committed to a revision of the present law and would doubtless agree to a conference report. This report of the conference committee is then sent back to both the House and Senate for action. Under the House rules, only ONE HOUR'S debate is permissible on a conference report. It can be extended only by unanimous consent. A single objection to an extension of the time for debate will hold the discussion to an HOUR. It's a momentous matter to be disposed in an hour. Such are the rules.

A BIT ABOUT INTERNATIONAL LAW.

A number of folks are suggesting in the mail that we go back to international law and it might be informative if we raise the question of what is international law. Probably as good a definition as any is that international law consists of a collection of rules of conduct which the nations of the world have generally accepted as binding upon themselves in their relations with each other and by which the nations abide as a matter of general practice. These rules of conduct spring from three or four fundamental principles. The first is the equality of nations in the legal sense. Rights of small nations are just as sacred as the rights of big and powerful nations. A second principle is the sovereignty of nations. That is to say that international law recognizes the right of any and all nations to enter into treaties, alliances, and agreements because each nation is clothed with

sovereign power to do so. A third principle is the sovereign and exclusive control which each nation exercises over its domestic affairs. This gives to each country the right to prescribe the terms and conditions under which people of other nations might be admitted to carry on business, be admitted to citizenship and for many other purposes. It is an unhappy fact that disputes arise between nations. These disputes spring from many causes. But sooner or later, they must be settled and international law recognizes three methods of settlement. The first is the friendly method through mediation or arbitration. The second is by methods just short of war such as embargoes, blockades, or other acts of compulsion whereby one nation seeks to compel another nation to act without resort to force. The third method is war.

When nations resort to war, it is expected in theory at least that they will abide by certain rules of international law. These rules define (1) the rights of the belligerents (2) the limits within which armed force may be used and (3) the relations between third parties or neutrals and the belligerents.

International law unlike domestic law depends upon the willingness of nations to abide by its principles. A state law for instance makes it a felony to commit murder. The person who does commit murder is apprehended by the police, indicted, tried, and sentenced to prison by a court or sentenced to death. Thus we have a complete system of law enforcement machinery to give effect to domestic law. In the case of international law, there is no such enforcement machinery and it must derive its effect from international cooperation.

At the outbreak of the World War, the United States had no Neutrality statute. It relied upon international law to preserve its neutrality and to keep it out of war. From this point on, the pages of history make the best speech.

#### THE LION OF IDAHO.

The Senate forces which will resist the lifting of the arms embargo will be captained by a former Illinoisan, Senator William Edgar Borah of Idaho. The elder statesman is now 74. He was born at Fairfield in Wayne County, Illinois, which is now the scene of an oil boom. He left Illinois to attend the University of Kansas in 1889 and two years later removed to Boise, Idaho, where he began the active practice of law. He was elected to the United States Senate in 1907 and has been there ever since. His hair has thinned materially and his voice has lost some of that youthful resonance but he is still the Lion of Idaho.

#### THE NEVADA MINER.

Senator Key Pittman of Nevada who will champion the forces to revise the present neutrality act has had a colorful career. He was educated by means of private tutors in his native state of Mississippi and then went to Seattle to practice law. In 1897, he joined the Klondike Gold Rush, evidently believing that mining was more productive than the practice of law. For four years he remained in the mining game and then hung out his shingle in Alaska and waited for legal clients. In 1902, he migrated to Nevada where he continued his legal work. He was elected to the Senate in 1913 and has been there ever since. It seems a bit quixotic that Idaho and Nevada should furnish the leaders for the international debate which is now ensuing in the United States Senate.

-----