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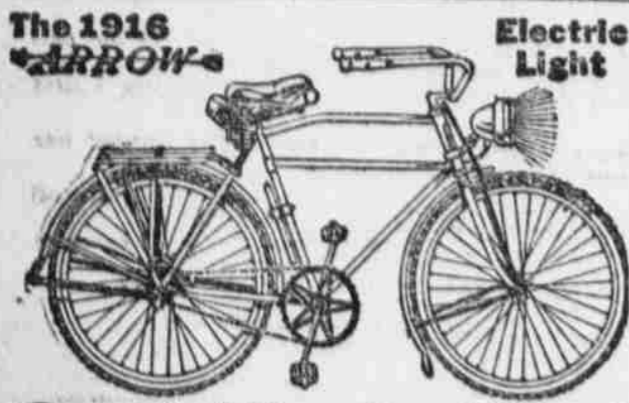
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President's Letter to Senator Stone

An Associated Press dispatch, dated Washington, February 24, says: President Wilson at the end of two days of agitation in congress for action warning Americans off armed merchantmen wrote a letter tonight to Senator Stone, chairman of the senate foreign relations committee, stating that he could not consent to the abridgment of the rights of American citizens in any respect.

Text of the Letter

The letter follows:

"Feb. 24, 1916.—My dear Senator: I very warmly appreciate your kind and frank letter of today, and feel that it calls for an equally frank reply.

"You are right in assuming that I shall do everything in my power to keep the United States out of war. I think the country will feel no uneasiness about my course in that respect. Through many anxious months I have striven for that object, amidst difficulties more manifold than can have been apparent on the surface, and so far I have succeeded. I do not doubt that I shall continue to succeed. The course which the central European powers have announced their intention of following in the future with regard to undersea warfare seems for the moment to threaten insuperable obstacles, but its apparent meaning is so manifestly inconsistent with explicit assurances recently given us by those powers with regard to their treatment of merchant vessels on the high seas that I must believe that explanations will presently ensue which will put a different aspect upon it. We have had no reason to question their good faith or their fidelity to their promises in the past, and I, for one, feel confident that we shall have none in the future.

Nation's Duty Clear

"But in any event our duty is clear. No nation or group of nations has the right while the war is in progress to alter or disregard the principles which all nations have agreed upon in mitigation of the horrors and sufferings of war; and if the clear rights of American citizens should ever unhappily be abridged or denied by any such action, we should, it seems to me, have in honor no choice as to what our course shall be.

"For my own part, I can not consent to any abridgment of the rights of American citizens in any respect. The honor and self respect of the nation are involved. We covet peace and shall preserve it at any cost but the loss of honor. To forbid our people to exercise their rights for fear we might be called upon to vindicate them would be a deep humiliation indeed. It would be an implicit, all but explicit, acquiescence in the violation of the rights of mankind everywhere and whatever nation or allegiance. It would be a deliberate abdication of our hitherto proud position as spokesmen, even amid the turmoil of war, for the law and the right. It would make everything this government has attempted and everything that it has achieved during this terrible struggle of nations meaningless and futile.

Not Time to Back Down

"It is important to reflect that if, in this instance, we allowed expediency to take the place of principle, the door would inevitably be opened to still further concessions. Once accept a single abatement of right and many other humiliations would certainly follow, and the whole fine fabric of international law might crumble under our hands piece by piece. What we are contending for in this matter is of the very essence of things that have made America a

sovereign nation. She can not yield them without conceding her own impotency as a nation and making virtual surrender of her importance among the nations of the world.

"I am speaking, my dear senator, in deep solemnity, without heat, a clear consciousness of the high responsibilities of my office and as your sincere and devoted friend. If we should unhappily differ, we shall differ as friends, but where issues so momentous as these are involved, we must, just because we are friends, speak out our minds without reservation. Faithfully yours,

"WOODROW WILSON."

Text of Stone's Letter

Senator Stone's letter to the President follows:

"Dear Mr. President: Since Senator Kern, Mr. Flood and I talked with you on Monday evening, I am more troubled than I have been for many a day. I have not felt authorized to repeat our conversation, but I have attempted, in response to numerous inquiries from my colleagues, to state to them, within the conference, that they should observe my general understanding of your attitude. I have stated my understanding of your attitude to be substantially as follows:

"That while you would deeply regret the rejection by Great Britain of Mr. Lansing's proposal for the disarmament of merchant vessels of the allies, with the understanding that Germany and her allies would not fire upon a merchant ship if she hauled to when summoned, not attempting to escape, and that the German warships would only exercise the admitted right of visitation and capture and would not destroy the ship except when reasonably assured of the safety of passengers and crew, you were of the opinion that if Great Britain and her allies rejected the proposal and insisted upon arming her merchant ships, she would be within her rights under international law. Also that you feel disposed to allow armed vessels to clear from our ports; also that you are not favorably disposed to the idea of this government taking any definite steps toward preventing American citizens from embarking upon armed merchant vessels, furthermore, that you would consider it your duty if a German warship should fire upon an armed merchant vessel of the enemy upon which American citizens were passengers to hold Germany to strict accountability.

"Numerous members of the senate and the house have called to discuss this subject with me. I have felt that the members of the two houses who are to deal with this grave question were entitled to know the situation we were confronting as I understand it to be. I think I should say to you that the members of both houses should feel deeply concerned and disturbed by what they read and hear. I have heard of some talk to the effect that some are saying that after all it may be possible that the progress of preparedness, so called, has some relation to just such a situation as we are now called upon to meet. I have counseled all who have talked with me to keep cool; that this whole business is still the subject of diplomacy and that you are striving to the utmost to bring about some peaceable adjustment, and that in the meantime congress should be careful not to 'ball up' a diplomatic situation by any kind of hasty and ill considered action.

Situation of Deep Concern

"However, the situation in congress is such as to excite a sense of deep concern in the minds of

thoughtful men, and I have felt that it is due to you to say this much.

"I think you understand my personal attitude with respect to this subject. As much and as deeply as I would have to radically disagree with you, I find it difficult for my sense of duty and responsibility to consent to plunge this nation into the vortex of this world war because of the unreasonable obstinacy of any of the powers upon the one hand, or, on the other hand, of foolhardiness, amounting to a sort of moral treason against the republic, of our people recklessly risking their lives on armed belligerent ships. I can not escape the conviction that such would be so monstrous as to be indefensible.

"I want to be with you and stand by you, and I mean to do so up to the last limit; and I want to talk with you and Secretary Lansing with the utmost frankness — to confer with you and have your judgment and counsel—and I want to be kept advised as to the course of events, as it seems to me, as I am entitled to be. In the meantime I am striving to prevent anything being done by any senator or member calculated to embarrass your diplomatic negotiations. Up to the last you should be left free to act diplomatically as you think for the best to settle the questions involved, I need hardly say that my wish is to help, not to hinder you.

"With the highest regard and most sympathetic consideration, I have the honor, Mr. President, to be very sincerely yours.

"WILLIAM J. STONE."

Text of President Wilson's Letter to Representative Pou

A Washington dispatch under date of February 29, says: The text of President Wilson's letter to Representative Pou, urging early action on the question of Americans traveling on armed merchantmen, follows:

"My dear Mr. Pou:

"Inasmuch as I learn that Mr. Henry, the chairman of the committee on rules, is absent in Texas, I take the liberty of calling your attention, as ranking member of the committee, to a matter of grave concern to the country, which can, I believe, be handled, under the rules of the house, only by that committee.

"The report that there are divided counsels in congress in regard to the foreign policy of the government is being made industrious use of in foreign capitals. I believe that report to be false, but so long as it is anywhere credited it can not fail to do the greatest harm and expose the country to the most serious risks. I therefore feel justified in asking that your committee will permit me to urge an early vote upon the resolutions with regard to travel on armed merchantmen which have recently been so much talked about, in order that there may be afforded an immediate opportunity for full public discussion and action upon them, and that all doubts and conjectures may be swept away and our foreign relations once more cleared of damaging misunderstandings.

"The matter is of so grave importance and lies so clearly within the field of executive initiative that I venture to hope that your committee will not think that I am taking unwarranted liberty in making this suggestion as to the business of the house, and I very earnestly commend it to their immediate consideration. Cordially and sincerely yours,

"WOODROW WILSON."

"No," said the editor, "we can not use your poem."

"Why," asked the poet, "is it too long?"

"Yes," hissed the editor, "it's too long, and too wide, and too thick."—St. Louis Republic.