

March 20, 1941

General Files

Mr. Dreibelbis, Assistant
General Counsel.

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CONFIDENTIAL

On Saturday, March 15th, Messrs. Thurston and Clayton called me to discuss a proposed reply to Congressman Beckworth's inquiry concerning the "Patman Plan" and to inquire if my acquaintanceship with him was such that I could talk frankly to him about giving the answer publicity. I told them that personally I would have no misgivings with respect to talking to him about the matter and after further discussion with the Chairman it was decided that I should do so.

Accordingly, on Monday I made an appointment and called upon Mr. Beckworth, taking the original of the letter with me. I explained to him that a good deal of work had been put upon the letter and that since the question was a recurring one that the Chairman was considering the idea of giving it publicity, but that he did not want to do so if Mr. Beckworth's relations with Mr. Patman were such that it would be embarrassing to him for his inquiry to be made the occasion for such publicity. It was evident that his inquiry had not been made with any such idea in mind and that he had not intended to make an issue with Mr. Patman on this subject, although he expressed himself as believing that there must be some flaw in his plan. He immediately mentioned his friendship with Mr. Patman and his reluctance, on first thought, to risk the probability of a controversy when they were from the same State and represented adjoining districts. We then went over the letter paragraph by paragraph and he indicated agreement with substantially everything that was said in the letter. At the conclusion he reverted to his relationship with Mr. Patman and said that while it did not mean that he was in agreement with him as to his views he would like to have over night to think it over and that he might want to mention it to Mr. Patman. I told him that I too personally was on friendly terms with Mr. Patman and had no desire to be secretive, but that on the other hand if he, Mr. Beckworth, should decide to put the reply in the Record we would not want to be the butt of any unfair statements or charges by Mr. Patman made possible by our desire to do the courteous thing with Mr. Beckworth by discussing the matter before taking action. He then repeated what he had said in the beginning, that is that he appreciated our discussing the proposed reply and its handling before any action was taken, that he

realized that the procedure could have been simply to send the letter and release it, that he was grateful that we had thought in advance of his possible relation with Mr. Patman and given him the opportunity of discussing the matter, and that we need have no fear about his full cooperation. I then left the letter with him with the mutual understanding that it was not a formal delivery but merely in his custody until the following day when he would call me.

Meanwhile, by the following day the Chairman had about concluded that he would prefer to address a letter directly to Mr. Patman, who had made a radio speech upon the subject of his plan on the preceding Saturday night. Accordingly, it was decided that in my talk with Mr. Beckworth I should encourage the idea of his returning the letter. I talked to him over the telephone about 1 P.M. on March 18th. We agreed that from his standpoint it might be better for him not to be a party to the matter. Later I met him in the Speaker's Office and we talked for a half hour or so. He again expressed his appreciation for our courtesy to him and went over his reasons influencing him against having a letter addressed to him released, basing them entirely on his friendly relationship with Mr. Patman, the fact that they were colleagues from adjoining districts, and the fact that Mr. Patman's sister was one of his constituents. Noticing that a phone number and Mr. Patman's name had been written on the corner of the envelope containing the letter I asked him if he had talked to Mr. Patman and he said that he had and that Mr. Patman had expressed the same idea, basing his conclusion on their being colleagues from adjoining districts. I told him that I would be greatly embarrassed if subsequently Mr. Patman should make some point of the fact that the proposed reply had been discussed by me with Mr. Beckworth. He said that he understood that and that he could assure me that nothing like that would happen. After some general conversation he again repeated this assurance and I returned the original of the letter to Mr. Clayton.

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