

*Cannon*

GOOD EVENING EVERYBODY:

The latest from North Africa states that the battle for Tunisia has entered the critical stage. American and British forces are battling with the Nazis all along the line across the narrow northern tip of Tunisia.

Today's late bulletin from Allied North African headquarters tells us that Hitler's forces are defending the area of the city of Tunis and the naval base of Bizerte with vigorous fighting. They are holding strongly, says the Allied bulletin. And they are throwing into the battle <sup>the</sup> best of their fighter planes and squadrons. These crack Nazi air units are trying to stop the Allied columns closing in for the kill. Meeting them, are General Doolittle's forces of air battle, and an intense conflict rages in the sky.

Today's Army communique from Washington states: "Air activity continues in the whole Tunisian area including bombing and especially fighter plane sorties against enemy low flying attacks on ground troops." The Army bulletin lists losses as six Axis planes shot down. We lost five, but three of our fighters are safe. Our bombers hit Bizerte, giving that Nazi-held naval base a tremendous blasting - helping our troops on the ground push into the tip of Tunisia against heavy enemy resistance.

I happen to be broadcasting from Philadelphia tonight. And I have just come from another important Army-Navy "E" ceremony, where Colonel Hausemann of the Philadelphia Ordnance district presented the coveted "E" to the workers at the great Disston plant where the light armor plate is being made for our men in North Africa -- for the tanks and planes they are using in this critical battle in Tunisia.

## ITALY

The question of Italy and what will happen if Tunis falls, is sharpened today by a still stronger rumor that Mussolini is indeed seriously ill. We are told now that he has been confined to bed, for two weeks, by what is described as a grave malady.

Well, for several years there have been reports that Mussolini was suffering from a chronic heart ailment. Maybe that is what has sent him ~~to~~ to bed now -- if the rumor is true. There is nothing official about it, but it raises the possibility that the Fascist Duce might be removed from active political leadership in Italy. All of which might have far reaching results in the opinion of London.

The news every day brings more and more tidings of cracking morale in the Fascist nation. Panic and nerves are affecting the Italian people increasingly. Fear is being spread throughout the country by the removal of inhabitants of the bombed sections of industrial north Italy to safer sections. There has

been increasing popular resentment in Italy against the war, and there is no telling what might happen if Mussolini were out of the picture.

The state of affairs in the peninsula-shaped like-a-boot is giving a lot of worry to Nazi Germany, which is much concerned about its Axis partner in the role of a weak sister. London believes that this explains some Nazi statements about the Vatican. The German radio has been saying that Pope Pius may protest against the air bombing of civilians. The Italian cities have been getting a heavy dose of bombs, and the Nazis talking about Vatican intervention, are trying to encourage the Italian people.

## RUSSIA

In Russia the Soviet forces continue to smash the Nazis backwards -- in spite of desperate German resistance and counter attacks. More Red Army successes are again reported on two fronts -- Moscow and Stalingrad.

A hundred and thirty-five miles west of Moscow, at the key city of Rzhev, a dominating point in the German defense system, a communication center and tremendously fortified -- there in the bitter campaign of last winter, the Soviet counter attack got to the outskirts of the city. And there the Red Army has been ever since. Now, in their great drive at the center of the line, Red Army forces are smashing their way into the key city of Rzhev, and hope to soon recapture the entire place -- probably the most heavily defended point on the Russian front.

The Germans are resisting with bitter determination; spurred on by a direct command from Hitler so we are told. The Soviet army newspaper,

Red Star quotes Hitler as telling his commanders:

"The loss of Rzhev would be equivalent to the loss of half of Berlin."

At Stalingrad the former Soviet defenders, now on the offensive have recaptured new positions from the Germans. In the Stalingrad area, the Nazis have had to retreat at various places. They have been forced, in the words of today's Moscow communique translated into English -- "to reel backward southwestward."

NAVY

This afternoon's Navy communique announces new successes for American submarines in the Pacific. They have sunk five Jap ships -- one a destroyer. And, they damaged two enemy vessels. The Navy bulletin lists our undersea victories as follows: one destroyer, one nine thousand ton tanker, one eight thousand ton cargo ship, one sixty-three hundred ton cargo ship, and one two-thousand ton freighter -- sunk; all sent to the bottom. One twelve thousand ton cargo ship damaged and believed to have been sunk, and one six thousand ton cargo ship damaged.

This list raises the score for our submarines to a hundred and forty-one Jap vessels either sunk or damaged since the beginning of the war.

ROOSEVELT

President Roosevelt announced today that the disagreement between the War Production Board and Army and Navy has been settled.

It has been common talk for some time that there had been a dispute about who should control various phases of war production. Should Donald Nelson's W.P.B. be the boss, or should the chiefs of the Army and Navy give the orders?

Today at the White House news conference President Roosevelt was asked about reports that he was preparing a directive to clarify the question -- the president himself to decide who was to be the boss. The President replied that there was no truth to these rumors, and that he was not issuing any decision on the subject. He said there has been some overlapping of authority between the W.P.B. and the military chiefs and referred to a statement he made a week ago. At that time he told a newsman that the Production Board -- Army-Navy difference



would be settled by having the leaders concerned  
go into a room and <sup>not</sup> come out until they had reached  
an agreement. And that is what has happened, said he.  
They went into a room, and came out with everything  
fixed up -- all harmonious. Which is much better  
than the older idea of two disputing gentlemen going  
into a room, and the one that comes out is the winner.

## BRITISH REFORM

Great Britain today was presented with a sweeping plan for post-war economic reform. It proposes a sort of social security program reaching from the cradle to the grave of every Britisher -- a kind of insurance to cover the economic contingencies of life for everybody.

The plan is an official government affair, prepared at the direction of the Churchill Cabinet -- and was submitted by Sir William Beveridge, who drafted it. His idea is to reorganize completely Britain's social insurance system, which has been exceedingly costly and widely criticized. His own state insurance plan has many features of the American New Deal. It would be financed by collections from everybody, employers and employees -- and would use up about eleven percent of the national British income.

In return it would provide benefits for the entire population. The London Dispatches use the

phrase -- "from Duke to dustman." The benefits would cover such things as unemployment, ill health, accidents, marriages, child births, family allowances for children and retirement pensions for aged persons.

Sir William Beveridge describes his program as revolutionary. He says: "Revolution -- yes, but the British revolution." That would give Britain freedom from want, which is one of the four freedoms President Roosevelt envisions for the entire world. Sir William Beveridge believes that his state insurance plan would attain that end for Britain -- "without going Bolshevist," he says. And he poses the whole issue in this phrase "How far we must go toward Moscow."

In the London Parliament a voice was raised today -- calling upon the United States to take the lead in world reconstruction after the war. Sir Arthur Greenwood, a former Labor minister in the Churchill Cabinet, summoned American post-war leadership to extend the spirit of the Atlantic

Charter to the entire world. And he added: "Freedom from want must be a cardinal aim/"

The Labor M.P. soared to heights of rhetoric -- in these words: "Woe betide this land," he cried, #should our magnificent young generation, on the threshold of a new life, face the future cynical embittered and frustrated because of our failure and our neglect of the responsibilities which this generation has undertaken during the war."

Rather better than a good deal of House of Commons oratory.

He meant more, we hope, than that Uncle Sam should pay the bills.

## FIRE

Boston is closing a lot of places of entertainment -- drastic action following the frightful fire disaster of Saturday night. Today the Boston Licensing Board, on the recommendation of Governor Saltonstall of Massachusetts, voted a measure phrased in these words: "To suspend forthwith all entertainment licenses." This affects six hundred and twenty-eight restaurants, including night clubs, two hundred and ninety-three taverns and thirty-five hotels.

Meanwhile, the fire disaster at the Cocoanut Grove, which has taken nearly five hundred lives to date, is under vigorous investigation -- and there may be a grand jury inquiry of charges of negligence and violation of safety laws.

## BASEBALL

Today the baseball business announced that it has received what it calls -- "a go signal". Go ahead play ball during the coming war-time baseball season. This in a letter written by Defense Transportation Director Eastman to Baseball Commissioner Landis and the President of the two major leagues.

The transportation director is all important in the matter of strike-outs and home-runs, just now, because professional league baseball, with teams travelling from one city to another, depends altogether on transportation -- and there is a war-time shortage of that. Would transportation be granted to the pitchers and hitters? Apparently yes .

Transportation Director Eastman, in his letter, merely asks the baseball clubs to cut down the amount of travel the players do. "Explore the possibilities for curtailing travel," says he. To this he adds the belief that baseball should be permitted to have travel facilities. He thinks that various kinds of people have less reason to use war time transportation than the ball players.

## WOMEN

For the women's page -- we have a couple of new flashes tonight. Rear Admiral Randall Jacobs, Chief of the Bureau of Personnel of the Navy, today promulgated a stern order to the sailorettes. Certain standards for winning the war. For example a Wave might be seen with her slip showing beneath her skirt. The sailorettes wear uniforms, but a skirt will be a skirt, and a slip will be a slip.

And then Waves have been seen with the seams of their stockings slant-wise and crooked. You know, how you see a girl walking and the seams of her stockings can be so cockeyed that you think she is knock-kneed or bow-legged, or both.

Hence the official edict issued by Admiral Jacobs today, to the Waves. It states: "Slips shall not show below the uniform skirt. Stocking seams shall be straight." And, the order adds another detail: "Hair shall not cover coat collar." The Sailorette Waves must avoid looking like Veronica Lake.

I always knew that an admiral was a great personage, but an admiral must be still greater -- when he can command the skirts, the slips, the stockings and the hair-do. As a married man, I can only marvel.

Maybe they ought to have an admiral at the Western Union telegraph -- judging from a disclosure made today. Last week in Washington the Telegraph Company advertised in Help Wanted, for girls to act as train pages at the Union Station. The ad called for -- brunettes, five feet four inches tall, weighing less than a hundred and twenty pounds. Obviously -- they did not want a cross between the giantess and the fat lady of the circus for a train page. But why the brunette?

There was a lot of curiosity about this -- especially among the blondes. Urgent inquiries were made, and today the telegraph people broke down and confessed. Gentlemen may prefer blondes, but they -- at Western Union -- prefer brunettes. Because, they



explain, brunettes are more stable.

Blondes and redheads, notes the telegraph company are more flighty. Reminding one of -- the "dizzy blonde." But they don't want 'em dizzy in dealing with trains at the railroad station. I knew a blonde once who made me so dizzy -- but then that's a long story.

And now Hugh let's hear about blondes or brunettes or something from you.