

Radio Address

U. S. Representative Melvin J. Maas

WTCN, 7:30 P.M., Friday, October 27, 1944.

The fixing of responsibility for the tragic and fatal catastrophe at Pearl Harbor involves the future of our nation. It is not basically a question of politics. The only politics involved is in denying the American public the truth about Pearl Harbor. Why, after nearly three years, is the public still kept in the dark? Why aren't the facts told to the people? Why haven't Admiral Kimmel and General Short been court martialed if they were in fact responsible for what happened on December 7th? Ordinary criminals are treated better than these two high military officers have been. At least criminals get their day in court. Admiral Kimmel and General Short have repeatedly demanded that they be court martialed in order that they may have an opportunity to tell their side of the story. Yet for nearly three years this administration, after branding Kimmel and Short as guilty of the Pearl Harbor tragedy, has refused to bring them to trial but has kept them both gagged.

It cannot be on the plea that the trials would reveal details of military secrets, because the Japs knew all the details at the time. They took motion pictures following their successful attack on Pearl Harbor. The pictures showed the full damage done. These same motion pictures were shown as news reels a few months later in neutral countries all over the world.

The full extent of the tragic damage suffered at Pearl Harbor was well known throughout the world. It was only the American people who were kept in ignorance. High administration officials even the following year were still telling the American people, for instance, that only three battleships were sunk on December 7th. As a matter of fact, every battleship at Pearl Harbor - eight in number - were sunk. The Jap movies showed this. Later five were raised but far too late to stop the Jap conquest of the Southwest Pacific, which was so important to their continued war effort.

I have constantly demanded, along with many other Congressmen, that the truth about Pearl Harbor be told to the American people. A few days after the stunning tragedy I offered a motion in the Naval Affairs Committee for a full investigation by that committee. The request was denied, on the grounds that the President was going to investigate it. Subsequently, the President appointed a commission, headed by Justice Roberts. Naturally, I refrained from making any public statement while this investigation was going on. However, when the Roberts Commission report was released to the public by the White House, I renewed my demand to have the committee make its own investigation. I had been on duty at Pearl Harbor as a Marine Corps officer just a few months before December 7th. I had served under Admiral Kimmel. I knew the actual situation. I knew that the so-called Roberts Report did not give the true picture. There were wide discrepancies and gaps in the report. From my own knowledge, I knew that the published report did not conform to the facts as brought out in the investigation itself. I knew, as every officer familiar with the truth knew, that the report was nothing but a white wash of those really responsible. The technique was the old familiar one of smearing someone else in order to protect

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Manning.*

the guilty. Had this not been so, Kimmel and Short would have been court martialed long ago. The truth is, they haven't court martialed Kimmel and Short because every investigation - and there have been four of them - has disclosed that there is no foundation for a court martial. Had they been brought to trial, a military court would have had to acquit them. The testimony at such a trial would, however, have disclosed who was really guilty for what happened.

The administration has never dared to bring Kimmel and Short to trial. They never will. And the reason is not to protect military secrets, but to prevent political embarrassment to this administration. Secretary of the Navy, Frank Knox, stated months before he died, that military secrecy was no longer involved in a court martial of Admiral Kimmel. Frank Knox knew the whole story. So do I.

There is only one element of real military security involved. I know that secret, and have not, and of course will not, reveal it while there is any possibility of its knowledge being useful to our enemies. But I say to you, with a pretty complete knowledge of all of the facts, that the whole story of Pearl Harbor, so far as it relates to fixing responsibility for the tragedy, can be told to the public without disclosing any military secrets.

Let us examine the situation and see just what secrets are involved.

What was the reason, for instance, of having all of our battleships tied up conspicuously at the docks in Pearl Harbor? Who ordered that? That surely is not a military secret. Why was our Pacific fleet split, against all Naval advice, and half of it sent to the Atlantic, at the very time of a crisis in the Pacific? That is not a military secret. Why was Admiral Kimmel denied the patrol planes for which he so urgently pleaded? The necessary planes had been purchased for Pearl Harbor, but were never permitted to reach there. Who ordered the Army and Navy at Pearl Harbor to be on only the mildest alert, instead of the top alert? Who told Kimmel and Short to be prepared only against sabotage? Who told them not to go on the highest alert so as not to antagonize the Japs and upset the conversations going on in Washington with special Jap envoy Kurusu? You remember Kurusu - he is the Jap with whom Secretary of State Hull was talking about peace at the very time Pearl Harbor was being attacked. That is not a military secret now.

Certainly, responsibility can be fixed now for this failure to inform Admiral Kimmel and General Short that the President had served a final ultimatum upon the Japanese - an ultimatum that could only mean war. The ultimatum expired the day before Pearl Harbor. Kimmel and Short were kept in complete ignorance of this ultimatum. This is no longer a military secret.

Who is responsible for not notifying Admiral Kimmel and General Short in time that an attack was on the way? The highest military, naval and civilian officials of the government learned of the

pending attack on Pearl Harbor six hours in advance. Why weren't Kimmel and Short warned? Who is responsible for this? One hour's warning could have prevented the Jap success on December 7th, and could have saved the lives of over 3,000 American soldiers, sailors and marines.

That is not a military secret now. No, these are not military secrets at all. They are political secrets. The facts and truth now would not hurt the war effort, but would destroy the political prestige of the present administration and shatter whatever confidence remains in the present administration.

I knew the answers to these questions, and knowing them, knew that the Roberts Report was misleading the public.

I demanded an investigation of that report. It was denied by a straight party vote in the Naval Affairs Committee. Every Democrat voted against it. I did not tell the story then, as I had intended to, because just then the Secretaries of War and Navy announced that Kimmel and Short were to be court martialed. I could not, with propriety, make a public statement about a matter to be the subject of an official trial. So I informed naval officials that I was ready to testify at the court martial. I felt that a court martial would bring out all the facts, and that the public would get the truth. So I withheld further action waiting for the court martial. But it never came.

Finally, this Spring, Congress, incensed at the failure of the administration to fix responsibility for December 7th, passed a law ordering the Army and Navy to institute immediate investigations, and to report forthwith.

I felt sure now, that at last the people would get the truth.

When, however, the investigations were completed several weeks ago, but that fact carefully concealed from the public, and when no reports were forthcoming as directed by the Congress, I felt it was my duty to speak and tell the facts.

I didn't select the time for making these public exposures. The present administration did, by refusing to promptly make public the reports of the investigations. These reports, nearly three years after the event, are still being withheld from the American people on the grounds that they are being studied. Three years is more than long enough to study them.

To further mystify us, they are labeled "secret" and "top secret." In this case I'll let you in on just what that means. "Secret" means "embarrassing," and "top secret" means "very embarrassing."

I withheld any public disclosures of knowledge I had about the facts in the Pearl Harbor situation so long as there was pending official investigations or court martial proceedings, but when it became apparent that there would be no court martial, and when the

investigations had been completed and then suppressed, I felt that it was my public duty to speak. I had stood ready to testify in a court martial. I offered, and, in fact, requested permission to testify before the Naval Court of Inquiry. That is the investigation that was ordered by Congress and just recently completed. Strangely enough, my offer to testify and give first-hand information as an officer serving at Pearl Harbor was never acted upon. I have never been called.

I have made serious charges against the administration in connection with the responsibility for our failure at Pearl Harbor. I did not do this lightly. I have served in Congress sixteen years. I have been an officer in the Marine Corps Reserve for even more years. For many years I have been the senior minority member of the House Naval Affairs Committee. I fully realize my responsibility.

If I am wrong in my charges, why are they not denied or answered? Such charges as I have made cannot be lightly dismissed nor merely laughed off. To fail to answer my charges can only be an admission of their truth. A last-minute political denial a few hours before the election will not be accepted by the American people. All of the proof as to the accuracy or inaccuracy of my charges are in the hands of the administration. Why are they not made public?

If my charges are not true, they should have been answered immediately after I made them. What are they waiting for? Time to concoct some more false reports? If they have any proof to disprove my charges, let the administration make it public now.

I dare them to open their records to public examination. The proof of every statement and charge I have made is in their possession. I warn them that either the administration will make public the facts about Pearl Harbor, or a committee of Congress will bring out all the facts, if it has to drag them out of the White House.

In the absence of any convincing denial of these charges, they must stand as made. Let us summarize these charges. They are: that with full knowledge of the dangerous situation of our Navy at Pearl Harbor in the Summer and Fall of 1941, the President of the United States, as Commander-in-Chief, took no steps to remedy the situation. Even worse, the highest professional naval advice was disregarded. The Commander-in-Chief chose to over-ride the professional military and naval experts, and ordered the splitting of our Pacific fleet, in the face of a most serious crisis in the Pacific. The Commander-in-Chief, against the strongest advice of the nation's military leaders, issued provocative ultimatums to Japan. This was done in the face of his knowledge of our inability to make good our ultimatums due to our dangerously reduced naval strength in the Pacific.

I charge that Mr. Roosevelt was carrying out his personal and secret pledge to Prime Minister Churchill that he would take the United States into the European war through the back door of the Pacific. I charge that he led us into a war with Japan in order to get into the European war. I repeat my charge that the President knew six hours in

advance that Pearl Harbor was to be attacked by the Japs, and knew, in fact, the very hour of the attack, and yet withheld that information from the military authorities at Pearl Harbor until the attack was under way.

The Commander-in-Chief did not follow the majority professional military advice, but, in fact, over-rode it in deciding which war we would fight first. Many military leaders have expressed to me privately their opinion that as a result we will be at war much longer, and our losses will be much greater as a result of the Commander-in-Chief's decision.

The time has come to change Commanders-in-Chief.