

and I didn't have a chance to finish up my questions concerning the offer by the unions to cooperate with the administration or the Government concerning movement of defense material and that material that affects public health.

As I tried to indicate, it seemed to me it was very cavalierish on somebody's part to take an offer of this magnitude and just pay no attention to it.

It seems to me that the Secretary of Defense didn't even give them the courtesy of a reply about this, in my judgment, very important matter, inasmuch as we the Congress are supposed to be interested in this matter because of the public interest.

I would ask you if nobody on the side of the administration, and I don't mean you people but I mean anybody, is going to do anything about this offer, don't you think we ought to take out the language, even if this bill were passed—and I have some doubts about that—if it were passed, on page 2, where it is giving the whereases as to why this bill should be passed, "Whereas, the national interest, including the national health and defense," and so forth, "be maintained"?

If it is important enough to be put into the bill, why isn't it important enough a subject that somebody respond, somebody with some authority respond, and set up a meeting, even though you and I agree that the meeting might be a difficult one in coming down to definitions of what affects public health, as a concrete example. I think the military effort is pretty clear.

Is anybody who is interested in trying to solve this problem going to do anything with the unions on this offer?

Secretary WIRTZ. I was concerned about your first questioning, Mr. Macdonald. I am now in a position to advise you that my information, which I have obtained since we talked before, is that the Department of Defense has sent a letter, either to the unions or to this committee—and I don't know which—which does set out in some detail, not in cavalier fashion, the considerations which are involved here, and calls attention to these matters: First, the inability to handle less than carload lot shipments; second, the impossibility of moving and sorting essential freight through railroad classification yards; and, third, the difficulty in moving assembled, complete trains from one location to another.

This does not go to your question of whether there ought to be consultation. I don't believe anybody is going to object—not only object, but I don't think anybody is going to pass up—any opportunity or any possibility of discussion. It sure shouldn't be precluded, in any judgment.

I would be glad to undertake it to see that it is arranged. I think it is true that there has been more detail here in the expression of a position than at least I realized when you asked before.

Could I inquire, Mr. Chairman, as to whether that letter is a matter of record at this point?

Mr. MACDONALD. The only letter that I have is a letter addressed to the chairman of the Railway Labor Executive Association, signed by the Director of Transportation and Warehousing Policy of the Department.

It just thanks them for their letter but says, "In view of the fact that the deadline for the scheduled national strike by the Railroad