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Miss Mann's Views on World Affairs.

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Miss Mann's Views on World Affairs

From the World-Telegram Mail Bag

By Erika Mann.

On January 27, 1939, the World-Telegram published an interview with me—an interview which I granted at the request of a member of your staff. This article concerned itself with my views on world affairs.

Several days ago my attention was called to the Congressional Record of February 1, containing the remarks of Senator Reynolds concerning this interview. I can hardly express my amazement at the interpretation which the Senator placed on my statements.

Apparently the Senator misunderstood the whole intent of my remarks as printed in the interview. Instead of regarding them as the expression of one individual's opinion on vital topics of our time he read into my words a sinister desire to involve America in foreign wars. After one of his colleagues had described my father, Thomas Mann, and myself as Jews (which we are not, although the question of whether we are or not should be of little interest to a United States Senator), Mr. Reynolds declared in the Senate:—"Here is the daughter of an alien who comes to this country seeking asylum and protection, who has the audacity to say we must fight, who has the audacity to criticize the members of the Congress for the laws they have passed, who has the audacity to criticize the administration for the administration of the neutrality law."

My amazement at such an attitude was only accentuated by the discovery that Mr. Reynolds had attributed to me a shocking statement which I am sure no sane person would ever have uttered. The Senator declared that I had said:—"I have no hesitancy in calling for the blood of the sons of American mothers just so I can get even with that government which I despise." I do not know whether Mr. Reynolds intentionally invented this absurd quotation or whether he was merely trying to interpret my remarks and permitted this sentence to be printed in the Congressional Record as a direct quotation.

The fact remains that his whole speech was an attempt by means of interpolations to create an entirely false impression of my remarks. Thus he declared:—"And so the daughter of an alien in America is criticizing the members of this body and telling the people of the United States that we must go to war and murder Hitler and the whole outfit." Or, again, referring to myself and my father, Thomas Mann:—"Although they are not American citizens, they are demanding that the sons of American mothers be placed in uniform and under arms to strike down those in continental Europe whom they do not like."

May I call your attention, as well as that of your readers, to the interview itself? No such statements appeared there. It is an amazing thing for a member of the highest legislative body in the United States not merely to misquote an individual, but actually to invent a quotation which never existed.

Those who have read the interview will, I know, agree with me in the statement that the war-mongering stand described by Senator Reynolds is far from an accurate portrayal of my expressed views. I had expressed the opinion that "to be a pacifist in the old way, to declare that we wouldn't fight under any circumstances, is to help the Fascist and Nazi program." I felt then, as I feel now, that the many millions of people throughout the world who have faith in democracy cannot refuse to accept Fascism's challenge to their ideals. I have as little desire to see blood shed by any one in any war for any purpose as has any other person in this world. This does not mean, however, that those who love democracy must necessarily bow before the rule of force or hate.

That Mr. Reynolds might misunderstand my views is perhaps conceivable. That he might be strongly opposed to these views as he misunderstood them is also conceivable. But it is almost inconceivable to a person who knows and loves the American people and American democracy to see a Senator of the United States basing his opposition to these views on the fact that they were expounded by someone whom

he describes as an "alien" who is the daughter of another "alien" named Thomas Mann—who, incidentally, is well on the road to American citizenship.

After all, every American, with the sole exception of the Indian, is either an alien himself or the descendant of aliens. America has been built by aliens who came to these shores imbued with a new spirit, "aliens" who forgot their Old World ideas to unite in the creation of a new freedom, "aliens" who were no longer aliens because they had become Americans.

I have seen how democracy has been destroyed in a civilized nation by Adolf Hitler. I have seen how a fine people has been brought to heel by the Nazi dictator. Although I feel myself very much akin to the people of the United States, may I say as somewhat of an outsider that the most heartfelt message I can give to Americans is that their democracy is the most sacred treasure they own.

Perhaps the most typical symbol of American democracy is the United States Congress. It is the symbol to which a certain air of integrity and honesty must always be attached. When it becomes the forum for the publicizing of misinterpretations and deliberate misrepresentations, I feel—and I think most Americans will agree with me—that democracy itself is being attacked.

That is why there is rather a sense of tragedy than of outrage in my reaction to the remarks of Senator Reynolds.

New York.

Cost of N. Y. State Aid to Education.

By Marshall L. Miller, Secretary-Treasurer, Second Supervisory District Teachers' Assn., Nassau County.

I have been very much surprised and disappointed with your recent attitude concerning State aid for schools.

I believe your editorial on Monday, March 6, is quite unfair. Your comparisons of New York with Pennsylvania and several other States with regard to the per pupil cost tells only a small part of the story. While it is true that New York spends more per pupil than other States, it is also true that New York has much greater ability to pay. I quote from pages 52 and 53 of Education for American Life, Report of the Regents' Inquiry:—"The schools of New York State cost more per child than do those of any comparable State in the nation. Even so, owing to the wealth of the State, a smaller percentage of the

income of the people of the State is devoted to education in New York than in most other States."

The Regents' Inquiry shows that Pennsylvania spends approximately one-half of its total tax yield for education, and that New York spends less than one-third of its total tax yield for education.

Your editorials have shown little knowledge of the purpose of the State aid for schools. In the first place, education is recognized by law as being a State function. At the present time State aid amounts to anywhere from 10 per cent of some school budgets to as high as 90 per cent of other school budgets. The State aid formula is designed to give the most help to the poorest districts. Consequently your proposal would hurt the poorer districts most. This is in many cases in the rural areas where the economic conditions are exceptionally bad.

For example, the average teacher's salary in the rural areas in New York State is only \$1,335 per year. This figure is also quoted from the Regents' Inquiry. Do you think these teachers are overpaid?

Even in urban and metropolitan areas where teachers receive higher salaries than in the rural sections they are not overpaid when you consider the long years of preparation and continual training that are required. In the fields of Medicine, Law, Engineering, Dentistry, Architecture, where training is somewhere near comparable to that of the teaching profession, the income is far above that of the teachers. If the best teachers are to be attracted to and remain in the profession salaries must be high enough to offer an incentive. I might add that the Regents' Inquiry recommends higher, not lower, salaries for teachers. Franklin Square, New York.

Holds Ludlow War Resolution Inadvisable.

By William Guerin.

The so-called Ludlow resolution is another of those things that creates doubt as to the usefulness of our national Legislature.

The power and duty to declare war has been in the hands of Congress for 150 years and has worked well for the country. In all those years we have had wise men as Presidents and many in the Legislature, but none ever tried to pass the buck as flagrantly as do the sponsors and backers of the Ludlow resolution.

Our people don't want to make, and are incapable as a whole of making, timely and proper decisions on war any more than on other vital matters of legislation. Vineyard Haven, Mass.