

"Man-on-the-Street", Bloomington, Indiana, December 10, 1941

AFS 6360B

Paul Martin: This is Wednesday, December 10th, 1941. Last Sunday, December 7th, the United States of America was attacked by armed forces of the Japanese Empire. The Radio Department of Indiana University, in cooperation with the Library of Congress of the United States has arranged to record some of the opinions of four people concerning the war at this point. They believe that these four people represent a well-balanced cross-section of the citizenry at our disposal.

First, Mr. Merritt A. Calvert, a merchant. Mr. Calvert, could you tell us just as nearly as possible, what your immediate mental reaction was when hearing of the bombing of Pearl Harbor?

Merritt A. Calvert: Well, Mr. Martin it seemed here in the Middle West, that we couldn't quite realize the . . . the greatness of this project that the Japs had started. We all felt that there was maybe propaganda, newspaper talk. After all, when we heard of the bombing, the reaction we can hardly express. Everyone in this locality and around the university with as many young people as we have, was first depressed and then disgusted and now it seems that we are ready to do anything that is necessary to stop this Japanese invasion.

Paul Martin: And the shock and the horror of the first hearing of the bombing has now settled into a resolve to actually win the war no matter what we have to do. Is that ??? to express your opinion —

Merritt A. Calvert: That's right.

Paul Martin: Well, to Calvert what had been your attitude concerning the foreign policy of the United States toward Japan and toward the rest of the world before this bombing?

Merritt A. Calvert: I'm quite sure that I was just an isolationist, I —

Paul Martin: You were an isolationist?

Merritt A. Calvert: I seemed, that I should feel that we keep out of it as much as possible. But after an attack on American property, right away I am of a different opinion.

Paul Martin: And, do you think that the present Axis powers, and I mean by that Germany and Italy, and Japan, do you feel that they must be crushed absolutely before there can be any kind of a just peace achieved in this world.

Merritt A. Calvert: Well, I am not sure they will have to be crushed absolutely. I think that finances, natural resources will enter into this thing after a length of time, it may be quite a length of time.

Paul Martin: But you think that we will have to win a war against them?

Merritt A. Calvert: I think we will.

Paul Martin: Mm, hmm [*affirmative*]. Well, do you think that the United States is capable of winning that war?

Merritt A. Calvert: Yes. I think that the United States, with Allied help, can win it in not an unusual length of time.

Paul Martin: Well, of course, this immediate declaration of war was against Japan. We were attacked by Japan. But we all know that Germany did have a hand in it. Do you feel at the present time that the United States is just as much as war with Germany as she is with Japan?

Merritt A. Calvert: Yes, Germany and Italy. It's my opinion that it would be a good idea to declare war on all Axis powers and start into this thing from scratch and really make them know that we are interested in doing away with their system.

Paul Martin: Well that answers the question which I was interested in knowing, that is whether or not you wanted to see a declaration of war against Germany. And I see that you do. Would you oppose sending an expeditionary force to the Orient if necessary?

Merritt A. Calvert: No, and I think it will be necessary.

Paul Martin: Would you oppose —

Merritt A. Calvert: I think we'll have to send officers and brains to help some of those armies that have vast manpower, but possibly not as intelligent a leadership as we could give them.

Paul Martin: Well, would you oppose sending an expeditionary force to the continent of Europe to fight Germany if necessary?

Merritt A. Calvert: I don't feel that will be necessary, but I don't oppose it, no.

Paul Martin: You don't oppose it if it were necessary. Well, Mr. Calvert then just what . . . have you approved the president's foreign policy during this war? Do you think that the president is perhaps is just as good a man to have in office at this time as anyone else could be?

Merritt A. Calvert: Well, it seems to me with his background and experience he is possibly the best man we could have right now as head of our nation.

Paul Martin: Mm hmm [*affirmative*]. Well, of course we all want to win the war, that's the immediate objective. But, of course, we know that's only a prelude to what must come afterwards. And what do you think, what part do you think the United States should play and can play in a post-war world? Do you think the United States —

Merritt A. Calvert: I certainly don't agree with the way we did in the last world war. And I'm of the opinion that this time when it finally comes to a place of deciding what country shall lose what, that the United States should be the leader. And our policies, our democratic policies, our theories of life over here should be insisted upon in spots where it's possible at all to put it in force.

Paul Martin: I see. Well, thank you very much Mr. Calvert. Next, is Mr. Donald E. Bowin, a lawyer. Mr. Bowin, you've heard some of the questions which I have asked Mr. Calvert. And first of all, we would like to know just what your reaction was, immediate reaction, upon hearing of the bombing of Pearl Harbor last Sunday.

Donald E. Bowin: My immediate reaction was that the attack had been framed by representatives of government wishing to draw us into the war. After I learned the true facts I did have considerable resentment for the more or less treacherous attack of the Japanese which was not only yellow, but a hit and run attack. And I now have the feeling that immediate action should be taken on the part of this government to see that the Japanese are tracked down and immediate action taken and not too much delay as has existed in the case of England's attitude in the European war.

Paul Martin: Well, yes, I think that the attack was decidedly yellow, no doubt about that. Mr. Bowin, just what was your opinion toward our foreign policy before the war began?

Donald E. Bowin: I felt that the foreign policy of the United States had been more or less a vacillating one. That we had attempted to negotiate and delay at the same time that our governmental leaders were making verbal attacks on the foreign governments. I feel that either that . . . I feel that a policy of appeasement is not the proper policy. I think that this present war in the Orient might have been avoided if the policy of appeasement had been avoided at the time that Japan seized Manchukuo.

And also, I would reference to the Munich meeting that should have been avoided. I think that the attitude as expressed by Wendell Wilkie, as an American leader, represents the true position for this country to take. I think that Wilkie was more positive in his foreign policy than President Roosevelt and I think that this nation with that type of foreign policy would not have suffered the surprise attack at Pearl Harbor.

Paul Martin: Well do you think that Mr. Wilkie's position, not being president, perhaps gave him an opportunity to be more positive than the president's position?

Donald E. Bowin: I think that the Wendell Wilkie's sincerity would have existed to the same extent if he had been president of the United States in this crisis.

Paul Martin: And the country would have been just as sincere. Well, Mr. Bowin do you feel at the present time that the United States, since she now is in the war, must carry on to the conclusion, the bitter end, and defeat the entire Axis powers before we can have any kind of a peace?

Donald E. Bowin: I think that will be absolutely necessary. However, I do not feel there's any necessity for a formal declaration of war against Germany and Italy at the present time.

Paul Martin: Well just why would you tell us that you believe that.

Donald E. Bowin: We are faced with the matter of doing battle with the Axis powers and I believe that we should stick with the American traditional policy of fighting when we are attacked and fighting for American principles.

Paul Martin: Well of course, we have been attacked on the sea by Germany and the traditional American policy has been one of declaring war when a war actually exists.

Donald E. Bowin: I do not believe that a state of war now exists between this country and Germany. I think that it will exist very soon at the present time. [*sound fades*] Last a long time.

Paul Martin: A long time.

Donald E. Bowin: I feel that because of the expanse of the Pacific and the difficulty in following up, tracking down the Japanese, that it will take a considerable period of time to complete it.

Paul Martin: I see. Well, now we come to this last important question, which I think is probably the most important question, and that is just what the United States is going to do after we do win this war. And I think you do believe that we are going to win the war.

Donald E. Bowin: In fact, without a doubt.

Paul Martin: And of course, we wouldn't be able to do anything if we didn't win it, so I would like to know just what you think, what part you think the United States should play in this post-war world.

Donald E. Bowin: I do not agree with Mr. Calvert in that he feels that we should take the lead in the post-war and the negotiations following this war. The reason that I feel that we should not, I think that we were in some way responsible for the Treaty of Versailles. And at the conclusion of this war that this country should prevent by any action it might take a recurrence of a Treaty of Versailles as we had following the last war.

Paul Martin: You feel that a just peace, a just treaty, should be brought into effect after the war. But then what do you feel should happen after that, Mr. Bowin? I mean, some of these powers, which we are assuming are going to be defeated are going to be in a rather bad state.

Donald E. Bowin: I think the United States should take the lead in economic rehabilitation. ???

Paul Martin: In the rehabilitation. What about the political organization of this world after the war is over? Do you feel that any new organization, world-wide organization is going to be necessary?

Donald E. Bowin: I do not feel that it will be and I am very much opposed to any attempt to resurrect a League of Nations. And I believe that the true sentiment of the American people today is one of isolationism to any of the political agreements and scheming of the governments of Europe and Asia and of the other nations of the world who have brought on this world conflict.

Paul Martin: Thank you very much Mr. Bowin. And now, Mr. Burt Laws, an electrical technician. Mr. Laws, would you tell you us now as nearly as you can just what your reaction was upon immediately hearing of the bombing of Pearl Harbor last Sunday.

Burt Laws: My immediate reaction was that the radio reports were somewhat confused. I thought the bombing could have taken place in the Philippine Islands, but I was very much surprised to know that the Japanese were so versatile as to scatter their forces over the entire Pacific Ocean and reach the Hawaiian Islands.

My first thought was, where were the battleships of the American Navy that we'd been taught for so many years that were covering, scouring the Pacific Ocean and various other oceans for our immediate protection? Where were they? And according to reports, most of them were in Pearl Harbor. And my first thought was, why were they there? Why weren't they patrolling the Pacific as we'd all been taught that they more or less did most of the time.

Paul Martin: Yes, it's true that we were caught by surprise. Now, in regard to that, do you think that the policy which the United States government followed in that respect, that is of maintaining peaceful negotiations with Japan up to the very last moment. Do you believe that that policy was a good one or that we knowing that war probably was inevitable should have tried to get in the first blow?

Burt Laws: It has been a policy that the United States has always followed in the past I think, and diplomatic relations have always been ones that had been carried out first. And we were in that process at the time we were attacked and that more or less I guess is the reason for some of our ships being holed up in the Pearl Harbor and for us not knowing that the Japanese were scattered over the parts of the Pacific Ocean.

Paul Martin: And you feel that the — well, the loss which accrued to the United States for our lateness in getting into this actual fighting war was more than made up by the feeling which the American people have because they knew that they did exhaust every effort in order to achieve peace —

Burt Laws: I think that's true. I think that is quite true.

Paul Martin: I see. What do you think about that Mr. Calvert?

Merritt A. Calvert: I think that we were right in waiting until we had done everything that was possible in a diplomatic way. There is a possibility that we waited a few hours too long. I think that in Washington, possibly somebody knew that there was no chance for settlement of our differences. And word could surely have been sent to our outposts at least, to have them on the alert for any action that we might expect from Japan knowing their history in the past as being rather sneaky with their activities in war. We could have been on the lookout for it.

Paul Martin: Mr. Bowin what do you think about that?

Donald E. Bowin: I feel that the . . . our governmental leaders were sincere in the hope that some peace in the Pacific might be preserved. However, in view of the developments of the last few days,



it would seem that at least the military authorities of our country had knowledge of the actual conditions, or should have had knowledge, of the actual conditions prior to the time of the attack on Pearl Harbor. And the attack would not have been as disastrous as it would have been if our forces had been as alert as they should have been at that time.