

13 December 1945

Dear Ones,

Well, back on Santo - the trip down was fine - good weather all the way. We got here in time for lunch and in time for me to take a quick look at my desk - piled to the ceiling with stuff and things and more stuff. The first blow is that Sprague still is not back - he has had transportation difficulties all the way apparently. Bob Howes met me at the plane and I hate to say it, but I really enjoyed coming back to this island from the Canal. It is just the idea that I know my way around here - three days away from here was not enough to adjust me to a different routine. I had a long talk with Trosper. We are getting the Ammo clean up scheduled - and the depots cleaned up. He told me that he is pleased with the way Ordnance is being handled and that he was happy that I had got the break of the short trip - so all is well on that score. Among the papers was my appointment as trial judge advocate in another courtmartial - so this time I am the prosecutor. A case of a man caught asleep on guard in the daytime, with only five witnesses to his being asleep and to his awakening!!! Better news was that the reviewing authority cut Flinn's sentence to one year and suspended the dishonorable discharge - I don't know how much weight my defense had in the review but it is rather satisfying to the defense to see the man get off so lightly. Anyway the net result of the pile of radios and airmailgrams to be answered and acted upon was that I worked like a beaver all afternoon and my hoped for nap went the way most of plans do - tomorrow I simply must take a haircut - I am beginning to look like the original shaggy dog. Sprague is scheduled to arrive tomorrow. Among the mail for me was the backlog of letters I had missed, notes from Judy and Aunt Anne, and a package from Willie (no letters from her or Dot or Lois or any of the others for many weeks - how much longer am I going to be overseas????) Anyway I have a lot of letters to write and no opportunity in the near future to catch up. I hope that you received my one envelope review of my trip. (The margin of the typewriter is all fouled up.) Well, it is after the movie now - I've just had a talk with Bob and lined things up for tomorrow. Things are in good shape if I get the ammo lined up tomorrow - Thorpe left things well organized and one trip through the dump should do the trick - I hope. So I'll dash this letter off and then hit the sack...

On the plane I read over most of the clippings which had arrived prior to today on the subject of the GM-UAW dispute. First of all it seems to me that there are several points which are obvious. The Union wanted a real showdown - if not a strike, then a major offer of conciliation from the corporation; realizing this I think the company took exactly the wrong tack - they refused negotiation long enough to support the union thesis of non-cooperation. The last minute offer was a stall and no more - the Union was justified in calling the strike since if the negotiation offer were sincere and promising it would have come much sooner. Second there is one major red herring being brought into this entire discussion - every non labor faction is saying that the only solution to the strike is revised labor legislation: if this were offered in a constructive sense all would be well. But it is not - it is obvious from the statements of Romney, and from the failure of basic agreement during the recent labor-management conference that there is a concerted move to break national trade-unionism because of its growth as a force in our economy and ~~out~~ politics. No one is more sincere^{than I} in favoring legislation to make unions financially responsible and to make labor leaders as responsible to the members of the union as are the directors of any functioning group in our economy. But this cannot take the extreme form of hamstringing the unions. To my mind the crux of this issue is part and parcel with America's entire economic program - it is all well and good for the Reader's Digest to print articles about Swiss economic capitalism. America is unique - it is the only non-socialistic major producing power. We are still seeking the rectification and adjustment of the ideals of individual enterprise with individual security; it is a complex problem that has manifestly become a major social and governmental problem. There is no reason to confuse the interests ~~xxx~~ of the American public with the interests of General Motors. There is no reason to assume that since GM is private enterprise it is automatically coincident with the best policies for the American commonwealth. It should be noted that the Union is basing its arguments first on the announced policy of the government and secondly on the thesis that within that policy GM is capable of granting that pay raise without raising prices proportionately. As yet the corporation has not answered the Union

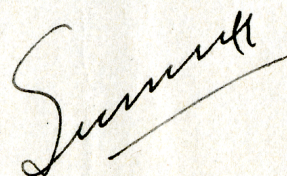
statement; it has only defended the sanctity of its books. GM is making the false assumption that the Union demand is the equivalent of requesting co-management; that is not the case and it has never been argued by any responsible union leader - certainly no union man in this strike. I cannot help but feel that these issues constantly are confused by the mechanics of negotiation; this case cannot be argued in a vacuum and the American economy cannot be discussed as if these strikes did not exist. And by the same token I feel that the unions are forcing an issue that must be faced - if their program fails, however, the functioning of our economy may be seriously endangered. We are in the middle of crisis - every day we hear discussion of ceilings on homes and home building materials - and every day we see a basic schism within our forces of politics and government: the question is simply the definition of the public interest. My ideas have not changed considerably - in these current disputes I favor the unions for several reasons, the most important of which is that their program ties into a relatively concise conception of public interest. Secondly, there has never been a surprising alert recognition of public interest on the part of Ford, the Duponts or what have you - it is easy to point to Ford's anti-Semitism, to his acceptance of Nazi recognition, to the ties between Delaware interests and the German cartels most flagrant in the allied case of the Standard Oil of New Jersey. In national politics these same elements have been predominantly Republican and not inconspicuous in their support of men like Wherry, Langer, Bushfield, Taft. I have yet to see any reason why GM simply because it is the greatest private structure in the country is symbolic of the effective and truly beneficial functioning of private enterprise in a saturated economy. America is facing a big order and Harry Truman is facing a conservative and hostile Congress. Our greatest danger is confusion - dangers lie in crying out for private enterprise and not understanding what we mean, in calling for liberty at the cost of grossly neglected aspects of minimum equality, of confusing the right of the individual to exploit to represent the best interests of those being exploited, of assuming that any single private group - union or management - is bigger than the best interest of the people as represented by their democratically chosen government. It is not communism or socialism to define the public welfare

It is late and I am tired and my last paragraph may not be too well organized or too clear. But I feel very strongly that this is a most critical period for America's economy. If we can rise to the need now, if we can become aware of what social responsibility means in this day and age, we will have the battle half won - if we can just show the constructive spirit. I am a little discouraged - we show few signs of being anything but a predominantly passive democracy in our functioning. Our wealth and greatness can carry us only so far - each individual citizen in this day has a fearful responsibility to define for himself and for his country some interpretation of the overall workings and standards of our way of life. What we note abroad has a parallel at home: it is no coincidence. It is more than the union, it is more than Jimmy Byrnes, it is something in the thinking, the spirit of America that even the atomic bomb and the threat of industrial disorganization haven't stirred....we have not fully grasped the double significance and importance of freedom in the modern age: it is much more than something to be enjoyed, it is a responsibility and if it is ignored we cannot expect to enjoy it much longer. It requires constant vigilance, constant analysis, and constant definition...

Though of this - it is after ten thirty: I have a long due out list of mail but right now I am off to the sack...

All my love,

Regards to Doris.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Sumner", written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish underneath.