

Rep. Van Zandt Attacks B-36 Probe 'Whitewash'

BY EDWARD JAMIESON.

WASHINGTON, Aug. 13.—Rep. James E. Van Zandt Saturday issued a statement attacking what he described as "whitewash" in the investigation of the B-36 heavy bomber, being conducted by the House armed services committee.

But the Pennsylvania Republican failed to accept the challenge angrily hurled at him late Friday by Secretary of Air Stuart Symington to waive immunity on the charges he has made against Symington and other top Air Force officials, in connection with the B-36 procurement program.

Symington, obviously extremely angry at Van Zandt, who had admittedly based his charges upon rumors, asked Van Zandt point-blank during the committee session to make the same charges over the radio, so that he could be sued for libel.

Resent Charge.

The air secretary declared that neither he nor any of his Air Force officers object if any member of Congress attacks their intelligence, but "I bitterly resent any charge or innuendo attacking the honesty or integrity of myself or any officer in the Air Force."

The bitter exchange between Van Zandt and Symington occurred after Symington and Gen. Hoyt S. Vandenberg, chief of staff of the USAF, had testified for nearly six hours in defense of the B-36. Both men told the committee that without the B-36 the United States would have no

planes with which to deliver the atomic bomb to any target in the world from an American base.

Since it is generally acknowledged that the present B-36 investigation was prompted by complaints from supporters of the Navy, which had had plans for building a giant aircraft carrier, designed to handle Navy bombers capable of carrying the A-bomb, committee members asked both Symington and Vandenberg whether they knew of any Navy planes which might be able to do this.

No Other Plane.

While both Symington and Vandenberg admitted that they did not know all of the details of proposed Navy planes, they emphatically declared that there is no other plane, either Navy or Air Force, which can do the job of the B-36.

Symington, during his testimony, disclosed that, like the top Air Force officers, he was doubtful about the success of the B-36 until the spring of 1948. He made his first move toward his eventual decision favoring the B-36 after a brief visit to Fort Worth on May 26 last year, at the insistence of Amon Carter.

He explained that he had planned to speak at a dinner in Dallas before the Air Reserve Association, and wired Carter that since he would be in Dallas, he would like to visit Fort Worth and talk to him about the B-36 conditions in the Consolidated-

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Vultee plant there, where the B-36 is manufactured.

Later, Symington said, he found he also was scheduled to attend a luncheon the same day in Dallas, and therefore, wired Carter that he could not come to Fort Worth.

"Mr. Carter then called me and said that he was extremely anxious that I come there, even if only for a short time. As a result, I worked a visit in between lunch and dinner."

In reply to a question, submitted to him by Committee Counsel Joseph B. Keenan, he said that he does not believe that Carter has any financial interest in the Consolidated company.

"He was very anxious about the future of the plant because of the threat of unemployment to many people of Fort Worth and the possible danger to the general economy of the city," Symington declared. "I think you all know how much interest Amon Carter has in Fort Worth."

A subcommittee will leave here either late Sunday or early Monday morning for California, where it will question Gen. H. H. (Hap) Arnold, who commanded the American Air Force throughout World War II. General Arnold, counsel reported, is physically unable to make the trip to Washington to testify.

While Chairman Melvin Price of Illinois, declined to discuss plans of the subcommittee, it is possible that it might stop in Fort Worth, either going or coming from California to make an on-the-spot survey of the Consolidated plant and the B-36s under construction there.

Meanwhile, hearings by the full committee will be suspended until Aug. 22. During the coming week, Keenan disclosed, investigators of the committee will continue their search for evidence to substantiate the "ugly rumors" which Van Zandt declared Friday were responsible for his speech on the floor of the House May 26. It was this speech that led to the present inquiry, and to which Symington so bitterly protested Friday.