

O N T H E R E C O R D

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WITHOUT A GOVERNMENT

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In the last article which appeared in this column I pointed out that democracy, like any other form of government, depends upon its capacity to govern. Since I wrote those words, Mr. Wallace (and Senator Pepper) have made their speeches, as if to demonstrate, in the most dramatic way, that the United States today is a country without a government--a nation in a state of political as well as economic anarchy.

It is less with the content of Mr. Wallace's speech than with the occasion and manner of it that we should be concerned. We are in the midst of a very grave and tense international crisis; in the midst of a peace conference which is not succeeding. The Secretary of State, Mr. Byrnes, is not in Washington, but in Paris. He is accompanied there by a representative of each of the two leading American political parties.

At such a moment, a member of Mr. Byrnes' Party and Secretary of Commerce in the same Cabinet, together with a leading democratic Senator, take the occasion of a Political Action Committee rally called, ostensibly, to fight the Republican Party and especially Mr. Dewey, to attack, not Mr. Dewey primarily, but their own colleague, Mr. Byrnes, in a speech on foreign policy which was never submitted to or discussed with Mr. Byrnes' State Department.

Then in Washington President Truman first said he had read and approved the speech and later that he only meant he approved Mr. Wallace's right to speak. Not the content of his address.

Such behavior is not government. It is neither good nor bad government, but chaos.

Mr. Wallace is not a private individual but a member of the Cabinet. If he disagrees with the President's and Secretary of State's policy he can either argue to himself that foreign affairs are not his official job, or resign and then present his contradictory opinions to the Country. But under no orderly government procedure can he exploit his Cabinet position to attack publicly the Cabinet's and the President's policy.

Furthermore, under no orderly procedures of government
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would the President have allowed a Cabinet member to make any public speech on foreign affairs without the consent of the State Department. Two hours before the speech was uttered the Acting Secretary of State, Mr. Clayton, informed the President that it would greatly embarrass Mr. Byrnes. Still Mr. Wallace was not stopped. As a result certain things have irrevocably happened, no matter what Mr. Truman meanwhile may have said.

The world has been given dramatic notice that there is a split in the Government over foreign policy, and that the President thinks so little of his State Department and its diplomats in Paris and the world's capitals that he does not even consult them before allowing other Cabinet members to initiate policies in so critical a moment as this one--in short that there are troubled American waters in which our enemies can fish.

The damage cannot be repaired by Mr. Truman's saying now that he is strongly behind Byrnes. Every government in the world is asking whether the President really knows what either Mr. Byrnes or Mr. Wallace are up to. For either Mr. Truman did not take the trouble to read Mr. Wallace's speech carefully, or did not grasp its significance nor foresee its certain repercussions in Paris, Moscow, and London or he has not been following Mr. Byrnes' utterances. If he allows speeches by his Cabinet members to be made in such a critical moment without carefully studying them with his official department advisers, he is irresponsible. If he does not recognize what he is reading, God help us.

The foreign policy advocated by Mr. Wallace was not President Roosevelt's. It was not Mr. Byrnes'. It was extraordinarily close to what was advocated by the isolationists prior to the war--in essence, to let Britain and Europe go as powers and come to terms with the "wave of the future," the dominant continental power--confining ourselves to the Americas. Mr. Roosevelt believed this was madness from a geographical, economic, and security viewpoint, and in those days Mr. Wallace agreed with him.

Thus, the impression has been created, at home and abroad, of a complete lack of unity and direction not only in the United States but in the Government itself. In fact that we have no government, worthy of the name.