

The Day

CIRCULATION OVER 15,100 AT 4C.

NEW LONDON, CONN.

May 3, 1940.

Mr. Amon C. Carter,
President and Publisher,
Fort Worth Star-Telegram,
Forth Worth, Tex.,

Dear Mr. Carter:

I have just read, with considerable interest and no little amusement, the "correspondence" and editorial matter concerning Secretary of the Interior Harold L. Ickes. My own experiences with the fiery Harold prompt me to write you this letter, in the belief that you may get a chuckle or two out of it.

Sometime last fall--in December, I believe---I ran across a quoted editorial in some exchange that we receive, from the Alaska Weekly. It dealt with a trip to Alaska made by Secretary Ickes sometime last summer or fall; it took him over the bumps in most efficient and matter of fact style, pointing out that he seemed utterly unconcerned with what native Alaskans told him of the country, particularly its fisheries, and generally contemptuous of the conservation programs, etc., worked out by many of these people. It quoted him as having said (perhaps in jest) that he would "like to be dictator" of Alaska for a short time; what wonderful things he would do to it if given this authority! There was more to it; it isn't of much consequence, though, at this late date.

Anyway, I wrote and used an editorial based upon this material, giving the source of it, quoting from it extensively, and observing, in one short paragraph at the end, that if this information could be taken as truthful and unbiased, it hardly suggested the proper attitude on the part of the secretary of commerce. I added, as I recall it, that the "know it all" attitude frequently displayed by new deal officials constituted one of the most indefensible features of its administrative methods.

Time went by and, several months later, I received a letter from Secretary Ickes in which he, "laid me out in lavender". It was abusive--almost scurrilous. He didn't expect to see some tin-horn editor in a small town in "biased New England" showing any intelligence, etc., but would like to have them get their facts straight before turning on their vile attacks, etc., etc. Then he read me a lecture on reputable newspapers and their place in this country, with several very broad inferences that those papers refusing or somehow failing to meet these qualifications ought, in his opinion, to be closed up. I ran his letter, with some appropriate comment following, and then sent him a personal reply, as well, in which I tried to find out what all the shooting was about.

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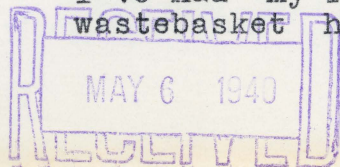
2 . Mr. Amon C. Carter.

In reply to that I received another blast. It surpassed the first one for abuse, I think, and was so violent that it began to be more amusing than irritating. More or less as a result of impish impulse, I decided to answer that letter, too. In the reply I deliberately tried to stir him up a little more; for instance, in his second letter he simply started out "Sir:" and this I pointed out to him, suggesting that he might even call me "Butch" if it would relieve his blood pressure any, but for heavens sake please remember that we New Englanders are sticklers for formality, and wouldn't he please make it "Dear Butch:". I thought, maybe, he would unbend a little, but he didn't.

In all I think there were five or six letters exchanged (I can find only three of them, due to my rather sloppy filing system and utter lack of much-needed blonde secretary). It wasn't until my last one to him, which was probably more impertinent than any of the others but still calculated to break down his peeve if anything could, that he gave up. I have his last letter, in which he admits that maybe I'm not such a bad guy after all. His outburst, I finally found out, was based upon the fact that the Alaska Weekly has been taking pot-shots at him for some time back; is supposed to be a "rabid Republican" magazine, as he puts it (something I wouldn't know, for I never saw a copy of it in my life); and, finally, that the editor of the Weekly manages to spoil Harold's day at least one day in seven by sending him marked, "sample" copies.

What floored me in all this was that a cabinet officer, who should have many demands upon his time, had the opportunity to sit down and pour out so much abuse on the unsuspecting head of a small town newspaper editor---to the tune of four, single spaced sheets in one instance. In fact I explained to the secretary that I never before, in 20-odd years in this business, had felt so honored while at the same time being kicked in the pants. I almost felt that I should turn the other cheek, or something, and give him so many free tries at making a field goal with my humble carcass. And I still don't quite know what it was all about---why the hyper-sensitive Harold went at me with such vigor. Can it be that he bawls out all editors thusly?

Of course this is purely personal--not intended for any news use, for I don't really feel I want to step on his carbuncle again. I've had my fun out of it; I hope, now, that you have a convenient wastebasket handy.



Very truly yours,
George E. Clapp
George E. Clapp, Managing Editor.