

APPENDIX TO THE CONGRESSIONAL RECORD

*Hon. Hatton W. Sumners, of Texas,
Will Not Seek Reelection*

EXTENSION OF REMARKS

HON. HATTON W. SUMNERS
of Texas
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, March 11, 1946

Mr. SUMNERS of Texas: Mr. Speaker, permission having been granted, I tender herewith to be printed in the RECORD a statement recently made by me with reference to my intention not to be a candidate for reelection.

I would like my colleagues to understand, as I have tried to make clear in this statement, that I have no purpose to retire from active service with reference to the grave problems which confront the country and with which the Congress has to deal. The contrary is true. I hope to be helpful, as a private citizen, in bringing about a better understanding and better cooperation between the people and their representatives in Congress, and to help to bring about a readjustment of governmental power and responsibility between the Federal Government and the States, in line with our constitutional arrangement, and a renewal of the strength of our democracy. Since a democracy is an association of private persons engaged in the common undertaking of governing themselves, by the nature of democratic government, the strength that renews it and sustains it must come up from the people. As a private citizen, sitting in council with other private citizens, what I have learned here might be of value to them, in effectuating that renewal. With the Federal Government limited to Federal business, as I would try to help our people to agree on, the Members of Congress, no longer exhausted and consumed by the details of matters of local concern, would have time to study national and international problems and to give that degree of research and meditation necessary to develop in Congress the high quality of statesmanship which is indispensable if we are to have safe guidance through the perils of these times.

This has not been an easy matter to decide. Thirty-three years develop habits and strong intimate friendships which weigh heavily in such decisions; but after the most careful examination of possibilities I have not been able to discover any way by which I could find the time to maintain myself in an elective office, discharge the duties of chairmanship of an important committee, attend to matters for a populous and aggressive district, plus general duties, and give to these other matters the time which they would require and which, at the moment, hold first place, perhaps, among the things which must be done if we are to have a chance to win through the maze of great difficulties in which we are now involved.

I am not quitting; I am merely shifting my efforts to the place where I feel I can be most useful, where the nerve center is, where the strength and hope of our democracy resides, the place from which our salvation must come if we are to escape the fate of other peoples no longer free.

This is the statement referred to:

It is with a feeling of deep obligation and of gratitude to my own people and to those of the country at large, and with regret, that I announce though not retiring from their service, I will not be a candidate for reelection. Thirty-four years is a long time to be the Representative in one job of a great people. I am grateful.

No words can express and no service can demonstrate the gratitude I feel. I am going to do the best I can, though, to demonstrate my appreciation. I am shifting my activity at the end of this session to a place of great need, where it seems to me my experience and training should fit me to be more useful than I can be as a Member of Congress. The private citizenship seem to be awakening to their danger and their duty and power. While my own people have taken care of the politics of our relationship, I have had opportunity to study our system of government, to watch its machinery at work. I have run our Constitution back through its history to its source, and then have followed it back through the centuries of its development, observing what policies of government tend to give it strength and those which weaken its vitality. I have learned as much about our system of government as a person of my capacity could learn, perfectly circumstanced to study it, stimulated by an intense interest, and held by a realization of opportunity and of duty as compelling, I believe, as ever caused any person to dedicate his life to anything.

I have watched what my own generation, under administration of both parties, has been doing to the greatest system of democratic government ever evolved through the processes of the ages. By ignoring principles and the lessons of history, and accepting the theories of men and political expedience for our guidance, we have made vassals of our States and dependents of our people. By concentration of governmental power and drafts upon the Federal Treasury, we have now a financially "busted," great piled-up mass of governmental confusion beyond human comprehension, impossible of democratic control, extravagant, wasteful, inefficient, and by its nature the instrumentality of favoritism, tyranny, oppression, and corruption, amid the destroyer of the self-reliance and self-respect and governmental capacity of the people, qualities without which no people can remain free. The people are coming to realize what has happened, Republicans and Democrats; people of all stations and political faiths. But they are yet too much depending upon the Congress.

The powers of the Congress are not what they used to be. Largely because of this concentration, even the policy-fixing and legislative power, the most basic of the essential powers of the Congress, have largely been shifted to the executive agencies and organized minorities. The time of the Congressman is now taken up largely as go-between for his constituents and these agencies, writing innumerable letters about their matters, with little time left for attending to even the most important legislative matters, and almost no time for the duties of statesmanship at a time when our circumstances require of us the highest type of statesmanship ever required, perhaps, of any people. There is practically no opportunity for the Member of Congress to be home and explain legislation and defend his position. Clearly this is the people's job.

The most important basic thing that we now need is to be rid

of mythological tales as to the origin of our Constitution and bring it within the comprehension of the average citizen. That can be done but not by that sort of book writer whose claim for genius rests upon his ability to unsimplify things.

Effective at the expiration of the present Congress, I tender my services to the States for whatever they may be worth, should they be willing to make an effort to regain their sovereignty and reestablish their power, strip the Federal Government down to Federal business so that it may be operated under laws enacted by the Congress instead of largely by directives emanating from an appointed, unsupervised personnel, and the unnecessary expense of the Federal and State Governments working at the same job be eliminated; and also tender my services to organizations and groups of private citizens who are willing to lay aside class consciousness, personal, and party considerations, and instead of pointing the finger of accusation at each other, admit each to the other a common responsibility for our condition, recognize a common danger and a common duty to bring to bear our united strength in a determined effort to save our democracy from destruction by ourselves.

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