

CLARK DEMANDS QUICK ACTION ON JOINT AIR FORCE

Jealousy Between Army and Navy Under Present System Charged.

By CHARLES T. LUCEY

Times Special Writer
WASHINGTON, Aug. 9.—Senator Bennett Champ Clark (D. Mo.) announced today that he would press for early action on his bill to create a new Department of National Defense in which military aviation would have equal rank with the Army and Navy.

"There is no question on earth about the desirability of a joint air force," Senator Clark said.

"Today there is a lack of unity not only in command, but in design and procurement. There is no tactical connection at all between the Army and Navy air branches. As a matter of fact there's a lot of jealousy between them."

Hearings Urged

The Missourian, an overseas World War Veteran, said that he realized War and Navy Department officials would oppose the idea as they did in the late Gen. Billy Mitchell's day, but that he would urge Senator Morris Sheppard (D. Tex.) chairman of the Military Affairs Committee, to schedule hearings on his bill.

The measure proposes that the Department of National Defense be headed by a secretary receiving the usual \$15,000 Cabinet salary. There would be undersecretaries for the Army, Navy and air corps at \$12,000 each, and three assistant secretaries at \$12,000. The War and Navy departments would be abolished.

The President would be empowered to name officers of the flying services to commands in the new air force, and to consolidate, eliminate or redistribute functions of the existing air units.

Remember Mitchell

"With the growing predominance of the air arm it should not be kicked around by subordinate officers," Senator Clark said.

He commented that the fate of General Mitchell—who was court-martialed for his vehement advocacy of a united air force—has deterred officers who hold similar views from speaking out against the position of their superiors.

"If the Army, the Navy and the air force were equal and responsible to a common boss," he contended, "it would open the opportunity for the fullest technical development of aviation and for its fullest strategic use—not as an auxiliary but as a primary arm of offense and defense. In my opinion that's the only way it ever will be done."

Officers Caution

He said he had heard reports of sharp disagreements between Army and Navy air services in war training maneuvers.

"It is to be remembered," he added, "that General Mitchell was court-martialed by the Army on the demand of high-ranking naval officers. He had said battleships could be sunk by bombs—and not only said it but proved it."

The Senator commented that while officers in the service are careful in what they say about a united air force because of official opposition, many who leave the service—like Maj. Al Williams—do urge this change.

The War and Navy Departments have advised Senator Sheppard that they oppose Senator Clark's bill and the united air force.

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