

General Smedley Butler testimony to McCormack-Dickstein Committee (excerpts)

He (MacGuire) said "The time has come now to get the soldiers together."

"Yes," I said, "I think so, too." He said. "I went abroad to study the part that the veteran plays in the various set-ups of the governments that they have abroad. I went to Italy for 2 or 3 months and studied the position that the veterans of Italy occupy in the Fascist set-up of government, and I discovered that they are the background of Mussolini. They keep them on the pay rolls in various ways and keep them contented and happy; and they are his real backbone, the force on which he may depend, in case of trouble, to sustain him. But that set-up would not suit us at all. The soldiers of America would not like that. I then went to Germany to see what Hitler was doing, and his whole strength lies in organizations of soldiers, too. But that would not do. I looked into the Russian business. I found that the use of the Soldiers over there would never appeal to our men. Then I went to France, and I found just exactly the organization we are going to have. It is an organization of supersoldiers." He gave me the French name for it, but I do not recall what it is. I never could have pronounced it, anyhow. But I do know that it is a superorganization of members of all the other soldiers' organizations of France composed of noncommissioned officers and officers. He told me that they, had about 500,000, and that each one was a leader of 10 others, so that it gave them 5,000,000 votes. And he said, "Now, that is our idea here in America—to get up an organization of that kind."

I said, "What do you want to do with it when you get it up?"

"Well," he said, "we want to support the President."

I said, "The President does not need the support of that kind of an organization. Since when did you become a supporter of the President? The last time I talked to you you were against him."

He said. "Well, he is going to go along with us now."

"Is he?"

"Well, what are you going to do with these men, suppose you get these 500,000 men in America? What are you going to do with them?"

"Well," he said, "they will be the support of the President."

I said, "The President has got the whole American people. Why does he want them?"

He said. "Don't you understand the set-up has got to be changed a bit? Now, we have got him—we have got the President. He has got to have more money. There is not any more money to give him. Eighty percent of the money now is in Government bonds, and he

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cannot keep this racket up much longer. He has got to do something about it. He has either got to get more money out of us or how got to change the method of financing the Government, and we are going to see to it that he does not change that method. He will not change it.

I said, "The idea of this great group of soldiers, then, is to sort of frighten him, is it?"

"No, no, no; not to frighten him. This is to sustain him when others assault him."

I said, "Well, I do not know about that. How would the President explain it? "

He said: "He will not necessarily have to explain it, because we are going to help him out. Now, did it ever occur to you that the President is overworked? We might have an Assistant President somebody to take the blame; and if things do not work out, he can drop him."

He went on to say that it did not take any constitutional chance to authorize another Cabinet official, somebody to take over the details of the office—take them off the President's shoulders. He mentioned that the position would be a secretary of general affairs— a sort of a super secretary.

The CHAIRMAN. A secretary of general affairs?

General BUTLER. That is the term used by him—or a secretary of general welfare—I cannot recall which. I came out of the interview with that name in my head. I got that idea from talking to both of them, you see. They had both talked about the same kind of relief that ought to be given the President, and he said: "You know the American people will swallow that. We have got the newspaper. We will start a campaign that the President's health is failing. Everybody can tell that by looking at him, and the dumb American people will fall for it in a second."

And I could see it. They had that sympathy racket, that they were going to have somebody take the patronage off of his shoulders and take all the worries and details off of his shoulders, and then he will be like the President of France. I said, "So that is where you got this idea ? "

He said; " I have been traveling around—looking around. Now about this superorganization—would you be interested in heading it?"

I said, " I am interested in it, but I do not know about heading it I am very greatly interested in it, because you know, Jerry, my interest is, my one hobby is, maintaining a democracy. If you gut these 500,000 soldiers advocating anything smelling of Fascism, I am going to get 500,000 more and lick the hell out of you, and we will have a real war right at home. You know that."

"Oh, no. We do not want that. We want to ease up on the President."

He is going to ease up on him.

"Yes; and then you will put somebody in there you can run; U that the idea? The President will go around and christen babies and dedicate bridges, and kiss children. Mr. Roosevelt will never agree to that himself."

"Oh, yes; he will. He will agree to that."

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I said, "I do not believe he will." I said, "Don't you know that this will cost money, what you are talking about?"

He says, "Yes; we have got \$3,000,000 to start with, on the line, and we can get \$300,000,000, if we need it."

"Who is going to put all this money up?"

"Well," he said, "you heard Clark' tell you he was willing to put op \$15 000,000 to save the other \$15,000,000."

"How are you going to care for all these men?"

He said, "Well, the Government will not give them pensions, or anything of that kind, but we will give it to them. We will give privates \$10 a month and destitute captains \$35. We will get them all right."

"It will cost you a lot of money to do that."

He said, "We will only have to do that for a year, and then everything will be all right again."

Now, I cannot recall which one of these fellows told me about the rule of succession, about the Secretary of State becoming President when the Vice President is eliminated. There was something said in one of the conversations that I had **either with MacGuire or with Flagg, whom I met in Indianapolis**, that the President's health was bad, and he might resign, and that Garner did not want it anyhow, and then this supersecretary would take the place of the Secretary of State and in the order of succession would become President. **He made some remark about the President being very thin-skinned and did not like criticism, and it would be very much easier to pin it on somebody else.'** **He could say that he was afoot suck routine matters and let the other fellow take care of it and then get rid of him if necessary.** That was the idea. He said that they had this money to spend on it, and he wanted to know again if I would head it, and I said, "No; I was interested in it, but I would not head it."

Source:

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