THE MUTTERINGS OF WAR ARE GROWING YET LOUDER

IS GOVERNMENT KEEPING BACK INFORMATION?

STATESMEN ARE GETTING VERY CURIOUS

Believe That the President Wants Time to Prepare for Battle.

There is a General Strengthening of Coast Fortifications and the South Atlantic Fleet Is Hurrying Northward.

OFFICERS OF THE MAINE EXPECTED THEIR SHIP WOULD BE DESTROYED

One of Them Said to Have Written That the Worst Would Happen If the Vessel Remained in the Harbor of Havana After the 15th of February, the Fatal Day.


Are the administration officials sincere and honest in the expression of the belief that the Maine's destruction resulted from accident, or do they merely assume this conservative attitude to gain time in which to put the army and navy upon a war footing?

This is a question which members of Congress are asking. It is said last night that Senators and Representatives in Congress who are members of the Naval and Military Affairs Committee have been in private consultation with the President, and that they are-secretive nature creates a belief that these conferences were important. It is known to be an absolute fact that the President requested the Washington Post and Star to assume a conservative attitude, so as not to excite jingoism in Congress to radical action which might precipitate a crisis.

But whether the President and his advisers are really of the opinion that an accident caused the Maine's destruction, or whether the officials wish to temporize in order to put the army and navy on a war footing, is a question excised by the unusual activity in army and navy circles.

It is a significant fact that Senator Perkins and Representative Hilburn, of California, both of whom are members of the Naval Committee, have been unusually cautious and discreet in their expression of opinion. But, however careful they may have been, it is known by their friends that they regard the situation as very serious, and both men are at this time deeply engaged in the study of naval matters.

I asked Congressman Hilburn to-night if in his opinion the United States was prepared for war. "Perhaps not," said he. "But we will be prepared in short order should the findings of the naval court at Havana show the Maine's destruction to have been caused by design."

It is very evident that Mr. Hilburn thinks the Maine was blown up by a submarine mine. In a casual conversation to-night he said: "The fact may not be generally known at large, but we have our own officers planted with torpedoes and submarine mines. New York harbor is thus fortified, and so is San Francisco harbor. A diagram is in the possession of the officers. The entire harbor is divided off into squares and subdivisions, and each one is numbered as accurately as the chairs in an opera-house. Lookouts posted on the bluff have an accurate knowledge of these harbor subdivisions that they can, by a signal, flash to the gunners. The exact location of a boat and gun is recorded, and the gunners have range-finders so adjusted that they can fire a shot and strike any one of these squares. As for the torpedoes and submarine mines in San Francisco harbor, I do not know where they are located. Neither does any civilian. These secrets are, for obvious reasons, jealously guarded by the War Department."

Havana, Feb. 21.—The board of at 10 o'clock this morning, was called by Rear-Admiral C. J. Hull, by the officers of the Maine, and requested that they instruct their ship not to proceed to Havana.

An Order for Rapid-Fire Guns.

NEW YORK, Feb. 21.—An order from the Secretary of the Navy charges the United States Naval Forces to equip themselves with rapid-fire guns in case of war, and to this end the Secretary has instructed the commander of the fleet to buy such guns as may be required.

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