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This Week In Congress Radio Address: Rising Coffee Prices, 1954 February 5
Speaker: Senator J. Allen Frear
Transcribed by: David Cardillo

[00:00]

Announcer: The week in Congress, recorded on February 1st, 1954, and played on WDOV on February 5th, 1954.

Mr. Kelly: From Washington, DC, transcribed, United States Senator J. Allen Frear reports again to the people of Delaware on current congressional affairs. Ladies and gentlemen, Senator Frear.

Senator Frear: Thank you. Millions of American families who regularly discuss the day's events over their morning coffee are finding that this almost indispensable beverage is provoking a considerable amount of comment on its own, for the price of coffee has been going up, and the nation's homemakers, who must keep the family budgets, are concerned and somewhat indignant about this trend of events. In fact, this situation has now reached the halls of congress, and late last week, the chairman of the Senate Committee on Banking and Currency appointed a five-man subcommittee, of which I am one, to investigate the reason why coffee prices have increased so sharply. Since formal hearings under this inquiry will not begin for about a week, as yet, there is not too much that can be said now as to how much success the subcommittee will have in bringing about a more reasonable purchase price for the consumer. Personally, I doubt that we will be able to guarantee the return of a five cent cup of coffee, which used to be almost the universal price. Nowadays, it seems, the cost has not only doubled, but tripled, and even gone much higher in some localities. Various reasons have been suggested for causing the advance in coffee prices, and it can be expected that our subcommittee will look into these explanations in the course of our investigation. Crop damage in at least one coffee-growing location is said to be a factor for the price rise. However, I understand that outmoded techniques of producing coffee are blamed in authoritative circles for the scarcity and consequent much higher prices. The consumption of coffee is reportedly increasing, and therefore unless the methods of production are modernized to keep abreast of the demand, it will be understandable that a scarcity could result. In all probability, however, our subcommittee will carefully examine the whole picture to determine the possible existence of any unfair pricing tactics or monopoly. We are, to be sure, most anxious to continue and improve our trade relations with coffee-producing countries like Brazil. Therefore, I am most hopeful that the forthcoming inquiry will receive the mutual cooperation of all so that the interest of those who

produce, but, and use coffee will be protected. One thing is fairly certain: if coffee prices remain excessively high, and housewives decline to buy, then most assuredly, sooner or later, a surplus will be created, and prices will almost certainly have to be adjusted in accordance with the laws of supply and demand. While the coffee inquiry has brought about a great deal of comment, extensive discussions continue on the so-called Bricker Amendment, which I discussed with you last week. The issue is still a pending one and, as of the moment, it is not possible to say what the final outcome will be. Quite a large number of Delawareans have been writing to me this week and presenting their views on the merits of this resolution. All of this correspondence is being carefully read and will be answered in the near future. Looking over our schedule for this week, I notice several events of considerable local interest for which invitations have been extended. Among them are a Delaware Safety Council dinner meeting, the National Association of Real Estate Boards annual congressional dinner, which is scheduled here in Washington, a prayer breakfast honoring the President, which is being given by the International Christian Leadership, Incorporated, and the Delmarva Press luncheon, which will be held on Saturday in Wilmington. This meeting brings together the newspaper publishers and editors of the Delmarva Peninsula. It is always a most pleasant and enjoyable meeting, and one to which I am looking forward to with much pleasure.

Mr. Kelly:

Thank you, Senator Frear. From the nation's capital, you have heard United States Senator J. Allen Frear in his regular, weekly report to the people of Delaware on current congressional affairs. [05:02] Senator Frear will be heard again next week at this same time.

[End 05:13]