When I read this morning the Daily Digest of the Congressional Record, I noted that in its proceedings yesterday the House Committee on Rules considered but took no action on granting rules for seven different bills. Among these seven was H. R. 331, to provide for the admission of Alaska into the Union as a State.

The Daily Digest was incorrect.

The Rules Committee did act yesterday on H. R. 331. That is why I am broadcasting to you now. I consider it my duty to give you a complete and factual report on the most important bill before Congress today. I appreciate the courtesy of the Alaska Broadcasting Company in making its facilities available to me for this purpose.

What I have to say will bring relief to that minority of Alaskans opposing statehood. The cheers will come in greatest volume, however, from those who, although living outside of Alaska, have not let that fact hinder them in their unremitting fight against home rule.

What I have to say will be disturbing and disappointing to the vast majority of Alaskans favoring statehood. Counting myself among that group, I must confess to having spent some troubled hours since yesterday.

Time after time the statehood bill has been before the Rules Committee without action being taken.

Yesterday it was taken after bitter debate. The vote against reporting out the bill was decisive. The proceedings were in executive session so one cannot learn with surety what happened at the committee meeting. It appears certain, however, the vote was not close.
What does this mean?

It means, beyond all doubt, that no action will be taken at this session of Congress regarding statehood, either for Alaska or for Hawaii.

It means there must be an unexpected change in the reasoning of the Rules Committee members if there is to be an affirmative vote on H. R. 331 at the next session of Congress.

It means, in all probability, that Alaska's road toward statehood will be no less winding and filled with barriers than were those of many earlier western territories.

There was a dramatic possibility earlier this year that the statehood bill would pass the House of Representatives fairly early in the session and then move over to the Senate, where it was well known a hard fight was ahead.

That possibility came about by reason of the fact that the platforms of both great political parties were committed to statehood; that President Truman had endorsed it time and again; that national defense considerations called for it; and because the way had been paved by action in the House on the Hawaii bill in the 80th Congress.

What happened then? What caused the adverse vote in the Rules Committee in respect to a bill endorsed by both parties, endorsed by the President and endorsed by the people of the United States as indicated by polls? Was it local opposition? Was it a belief that Alaska is not ready for statehood? Was it a belief that two Alaska Senators and one Representative would vote in behalf of civil rights and against the southern point of view?

I shall try to answer those questions.

Local opposition had nothing to do with the thumbs down gesture on the part of the Rules Committee. I can state that emphatically and categorically.

It came to me on good authority that one member of the committee and one only
advanced the argument that Alaska is not yet ready for statehood. He held that
the people of the states, large from the standpoint of population, ought not to
have their votes diluted in the United States Senate by having two Senators from
an area with a population of 100,000 persons. But this same Congressman indicated
that he thought Hawaii's population too small too, although it is greater than
that of several states. So it is probable that Alaska or Hawaii would have to
have 5 or perhaps 10 million people before he would be satisfied.

Perhaps some of the Dixiecrats on the Rules Committee did fear that Alaskans
would send men and women to Congress whose social views would differ from theirs.
But I do not think that was the controlling reason for the Dixiecrat action in the
Rules Committee, if rumor which says those members opposed statehood is correct.

I believe statehood failed in that committee for four reasons.

1. Partisan politics. There was a determination on the part of the Republi-
can members that Alaska should not be reported out before Hawaii. And Democratic
members were equally adamant that the Hawaii bill should not be reported out.

2. The Hawaii longshore strike which now has continued for almost three
months. This has done major harm to the statehood cause of both territories.

3. A lack of enthusiasm. Few are fired with a zeal for or against statehood.
It is not likely any member of Congress would be punished by the voters of his own
district if he opposed statehood. Only the Public Lands Committee, which heard
all the testimony, gave the time necessary to the subject to render an impartial
opinion on the facts. Twice now, in the last two years, the committee has voted
out the bill.

4. Statehood for Alaska and Hawaii was part of the administration program.
There are some members of the Rules Committee sitting on the Democratic side who
vote automatically and enthusiastically against each and every administration pro-
posal. My thought is that the adverse vote from them on Alaska statehood stemmed
principally from that base.

Why, you may ask, is the cause of statehood lost for this session of Congress in view of the action taken in January providing for the first time a mechanism to by-pass the Rules Committee?

I shall attempt to explain.

The Committee on Rules is the clearing house for major legislation. It determines whether the House shall have the privilege of voting on particular bills. In the past, as now, that committee has functioned to bottle up proposed legislation even more effectively than to release it for consideration. I have always thought — entirely independently of the statehood bill — that it was a most undemocratic institution. Why, after a legislative committee has conducted hearings and reported out a bill should not the House be privileged to vote on the bill without another committee, which could not possibly be so well informed because its hearings are always brief, intervening to deny the democratic process? I predict that before too many years the Rules Committee will happily be a part of history.

Following last year's election and following the organization of the Rules Committee in January it was discovered that the Rules Committee had several southern members altogether opposed to the programs for which the people had voted in November. So the House adopted a proposal whereby the Chairman of a legislative committee may, if the Rules Committee fails to act on a reported bill, within 21 days, bring it directly to the House for debate and vote.

That would apparently provide an easy way to evade the Rules Committee. But it is not so simple as that. The House is necessarily tightly controlled in a political sense and always to a considerable extent by the party leadership on each side. Otherwise chaos would result in a body of over 400 members.

The new method of leaving the Rules Committee in the lurch has not yet been
tried. When and if it is, it will be in respect to major legislation in which there is national interest.

The truth is this means cannot be employed to pass H. R. 331. This is why:

Chairman Peterson of the House Public Lands Committee, good friend of statehood for both territories, long ago filed the resolutions which would have permitted the bills to be taken to the floor directly. He did not press for action. In the case of Hawaii, it is, I believe, correct to say his failure to act was dictated by the wishes of the proponents of statehood for that territory. They sensed the bill would have heavy going in view of the waterfront strike. They wanted to defer action until after the strike is settled. In the case of the Alaska bill, the consensus of those favoring it was its prospects would be better if a rule could be obtained. Advice to that effect came from the highest quarters. For a long while it seemed possible, even likely, that the rule would be granted. Only within about the last three weeks has the situation deteriorated to the point where the adverse vote recorded yesterday seemed almost inevitable.

When word spread yesterday that the Rules Committee had turned thumbs down on our statehood aspirations, Chairman Peterson and I immediately arranged a meeting with Speaker Sam Rayburn. We told him what had happened. We spoke of our desire to call up the resolution and have the House vote notwithstanding the Rules Committee. To this course of action we obtained the Speaker's consent. It was agreed, however, that it would be essential to have like clearance from the Republican leadership. If that leadership were not amenable to our proposal, it was obvious that to bring the bill to the floor would be to defeat it. Arrayed against it would be almost a solid Republican vote and the not inconsiderable number of Democrats the Dixiecrats could rally to their side.

So Chairman Peterson and Congressman Fred Crawford, Republican of Michigan -- than whom Alaska has no better friend in Congress -- and I waited upon the Republi-
can leadership and presented our plan.

The answer was a flat and emphatic "No." The Republican leadership would turn its strength against us. The leadership, without making any promises, would be glad to examine into the matter for the next session of Congress.

There was no doubt in the minds of any of us that that spelled the end of the Alaska statehood campaign for this summer. I am not willing now under any circumstances to take H. R. 331 to the floor of the House for what would be certain defeat.

Likewise, I have no intention of pressing now for Senate action. It would be impossible to get anywhere there. The Senate committee which would hear the bill is hopelessly behind in its calendar as it is. The drive is for adjournment. We cannot look for the upper house to act.

I have explained at some length and perhaps in somewhat tedious detail what has transpired. I thought you had the right, no matter how you feel about statehood, to receive a factual account.

I do not assess blame — it might be the foes of statehood would rather have me say credit than blame — on anyone in a partisan sense. Or to put it better, I think it would be proper to fix blame on both parties with equal impartiality. Both have been delinquent in their duty to the nation, I sincerely believe, in failing to act affirmatively with respect to statehood. Their failure has weakened this country from a national defense standpoint and from a moral standpoint in the eyes of the world, particularly the Pacific world.

I have been in Washington as your representative for four and a half years now. My conviction that statehood is imperative for us grows stronger with the passing of each month. So long as I remain your representative I shall never quit trying to extend the great and traditional American privilege of true home rule to Alaska. In comparison to it, all other things are lesser in importance.
Obviously, I should have been much, much happier to have been able to report to you that statehood was well on the way to achievement. I thought last January that would be the case. It may be, as with so many other proposals this Congress has rejected, that there is nothing another election or two will not cure.