

Washington Digest

'Revised' Farm Program Begins to Take Shape

Greater Curtailment of Surplus Crops Seen; Administration's Stand Against Convoys Has Significant Angle.



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WASHINGTON.—A new and revolutionary farm program for America is in the works. If it is carried out according to the wishes of the administration, it will mean the first step in an effort to change the whole pattern of farming in this country as we have accepted it for the last century.

When this column is in print the new bill may be made public. At this writing even its outline has not been announced. But a careful review of discussions in highly influential government circles justifies three predictions:

(1) That the new bill will revolutionize New Deal farm policy and will have for its goal a—
(2) Vastly greater curtailment of production of surplus products, and—
(3) Complete change in type of some of the crops now raised by farmers.

What is behind the change in policy is this: the last die-hard who believed that any American farm program should take for granted a return to "normal" world trade, have thrown up the sponge. There is at long last a majority agreement in the department of agriculture that American farming must follow a new pattern—one that calls for no subsidy for lost export markets of the past, no attempt to nurse along surpluses on the assumption that the same foreign markets on which we once counted would be again available.

Original Purpose.

Roughly, the original purpose of the agricultural adjustment legislation was to secure reduction of certain crops and with the payments provide a livelihood for thousands of farmers who had lost their markets. Later conservation was emphasized; but the theory behind the subsidies was also to permit the farmer who formerly depended on the foreign market to keep his plant going, to keep him "tooled"—to keep, for example, a wheat farmer a wheat farmer against the day when the foreign market was restored.

By 1933 when the Triple A was started foreign markets had pretty well melted but the pattern of American farming itself was the same, generally speaking, as it had been for a hundred years. The Triple A policy was planned to preserve that pattern and fill the empty corners in the mould by artificial means. When I say the pattern was preserved, I mean that all the Triple A wanted to do was to cut down production to the point where demand and supply approximately balanced. "The policy of the congress as stated in the Agricultural Adjustment act was to restore to American farm products, as rapidly as practicable, the same purchasing power in terms of things farmers buy that those products had in the five-year period (1909-1914) immediately preceding the World war."

So if you were told to plow under your cotton this year, this did not mean go out of the business of raising cotton for good. You were supposed to get payments so you could stay alive until it paid to raise more cotton again.

Now a New Pattern.

But now a new pattern has been drawn. It is based on the belief that the major foreign markets are gone for good—or at least for so long that they cannot be reckoned on any longer. Some farmers will just have to face the fact that they must make permanent shifts in their crops.

Here is the key phrase of the new policy in a sentence taken from the annual report of the department of agriculture recently published: "Growing unneeded crops is sheer waste of labor, of capital, of soil, even if temporarily the products can go into storage under government loans."

This change in agricultural adjustment policy was not heralded in advance. But little by little hints have been dropped as to what is coming. Secretary Wickard sounded a muted warning that the definite trend in foreign trade was downward in his recent speech at Purdue university. His Supplementary Cotton plan followed as a step in the direction of reducing the cotton surpluses, shifting acreage to food

crops. In the annual report of the department of agriculture for the year, hints, as to the "adjustments" which are to be faced by the producers of foodstuffs, tobacco and the other things which formerly made up our farm export trade.

Still a Possibility.

Of course, the administration does not say, "there will never again be any foreign market whatever for farm products." But the new policy refuses to take for granted that such outlets will ever return to what we have always insisted on calling "normal."

This viewpoint represents a struggle between those who fought to the end with hope as their chief support. The last light went out when the Hull reciprocal trade program collapsed in the face of war. Now agreement has been reached that the old plan must be scrapped and that America must build a new market for the farmer based on the theory that in war or peace the trend is strongly away from a possible profitable export trade.

It might be said here, however, that the producers of meats and fruits and vegetables are going to benefit by the immediate situation—at least temporarily when the contents of the newly filled pay envelopes of the defense industries will be exchanged for these products in home consumption.

But a wide disparity of prices is due between these products and cotton, wheat, corn and tobacco. The latter staples are among those which the administration believes must be curtailed under the new plan.

Are We 'In' or 'Out' Of the Current War?

There is a popular response around Washington which you frequently hear in answer to the question, "do you think we'll get into the war?" It is another question: "Aren't we already in?"

That remark was started somewhat facetiously but now you will hear it stated seriously, if unofficially, in the affirmative by some officials. And if you judge by the old standards when a country was either a belligerent or a neutral we are "in." Because we are not neutral and Secretary Hull himself has said so—he said that the law of self-preservation and not neutrality now governs the nation.

We have taken many steps which could be offered to prove that Mr. Hull is legally correct. But all the old rules are off. Undeclared war is the popular stunt these days. It is the way the totalitarians do it and we are being forced to take over a lot of these measures in order to fight fire with fire. The job will be to scrap them all when the trouble is over.

But in the real sense we are not at war. No Americans under the American flag are shooting anybody under any other flag. And that is something. And a high official of the United States government has made it clear that that was what the President had in mind when he said that he had never considered using American warships to convoy supplies through the war zone to Great Britain. It has been predicted frequently that convoys would be our next step. Well, this official explained that the reason the administration was against the use of convoys was because "when a convoy gets into the war zone there is likely to be shooting and shooting comes awfully close to war."

Statement's Significance.

It seemed to me significant that this statement was made on the same day that former Ambassador Joseph Kennedy, testifying before the foreign affairs committee on the lease-lend bill, said almost the same thing in other words. It almost looked as if the two spokesmen had gotten together beforehand.

That was the same day, as some of you may remember, that I had said earlier on the Farm and Home hour that I could find no indication in Washington that any steps were being taken to get us into the war. My observation was a coincidence. Perhaps the conjunction of the other remarks was, too.

To the men who were in France in the last war, we will still be at peace as long as we are not shooting anybody.

Washington Merry-Go-Round

Washington, D. C.

WILLKIE AROUSES G.O.P. CHIEFS

While Wendell Willkie made front page news in London favoring the lend-lease armament bill, a group of potent midwestern Republican leaders met to discuss what to do about him.

That most of the G.O.P. chiefs are hot under the collar because their erstwhile standard-bearer is behind the Roosevelt measure is putting it mildly. They are so sore they could bite nails. He put the Republican party on the spot on this highly charged issue—the last thing the boys wanted to happen.

THE NEW BRAIN TRUSTER

Tom Corcoran is famous for many things, one of them being his lack of punctuality. Always rushed with innumerable jobs, he got hours behind with his engagements, and his favorite time for catching up with correspondence was Sunday afternoon and night.

Corcoran's first-born daughter arrived several days after the doctors had predicted, and the dynamic braintruster took the delay very hard. But not his beautiful wife, Peggy.

She was calm and certain everything would be all right. Afterwards a friend asked her why she had been so confident. "Oh," smiled Peggy, "who ever heard of a Corcoran being on time for an appointment?"

LORD HALIFAX POSES

From the point of view of the press, Lord Halifax has got off to a good start.

After his talk with Hull, Halifax invited the press into the diplomatic reception room, where with his one good arm (his left hand is missing) he lit a cigarette and answered questions with a deep voice and a wan smile.

Oddity at this conference was the presence of the German newsman, Kurt Sell, correspondent for the official Nazi news agency, D.N.B. Sell busily took notes while Halifax was saying, "When the history of this war comes to be written, it will say that Hitler lost the war in June of 1940."

PERKINS VS. EVANS

Agriculture department liberals, led by Milo Perkins, aggressive chief of the surplus marketing administration, have been gunning for Evans' scalp ever since the European war shut off cotton and wheat export markets, thus aggravating the economic plight of small farmers who make their entire livelihood from these crops.

Perkins wants to meet the loss of foreign markets by less emphasis on "cash income"—the guide-rule of big, commercial farmers—and greater emphasis on the food stamp plan for disposal of surpluses at home. His group contends that small growers should be made more self-sustaining by less crop control, and by more diversified farming for domestic consumption.

Evans looks coldly upon any departure from the "cash income" principle as rank heresy, and views the food stamp program as a deterrent on farm prices, rather than a benefit to needy in the cities and a way to dispose of surpluses on the farm.

That Perkins' program stands high in the favor of Wickard was shown when the latter publicly advocated the policy, as soon as he was sure he would remain as secretary of agriculture.

NEW AAA WAR

The Agricultural Adjustment administration, has long rocked by backstage rowing. This year's is the fourth since the AAA was created in 1933.

AAA administrator Rudolph M. Evans plus certain aides have been accused of being in opposition to Secretary Claude Wickard's announced policy of increasing federal aid to small, under-privileged farmers and tenants.

Evans has never enthused over such a program. He has consistently preached that the way to achieve higher commodity prices was through government loans and AAA benefit payments—a system that has netted handsome dividends to large commercial farm operators but has reduced few mortgages for the little fellow.

Before Evans, there were the explosive George Peek, first AAA boss, who departed in 1934; Chester Davis, who rowed with Wallace; and Howard R. Tolley, Evans' immediate predecessor, who was shifted to the bureau of agricultural economics. All were "liquidated" following bitter policy rows over this same issue.

MERRY-GO-ROUND

Among the habilliments Jack Garner packed up when he left Washington was a suit of evening clothes. "What use will you have for those fancy duds in Texas?" a friend asked. "Oh," replied Garner, "we still have weddings and funerals there."

The Capital Times, Madison, Wis., official daily of the LaFollette Progressive party, and once a staunch supporter of Senator Wheeler, is now blasting his position on the lend-lease bill.

GENERAL HUGH S. JOHNSON Says:

Washington, D. C.

DRAFT EFFICIENCY

A quick glance at the selective service administration's record to date indicates it is going forward efficiently and well with general popular approval. When you stop to consider that what we are dealing with here is outright conscription supposed to be in direct conflict with our Anglo-American traditions of democracy and personal freedom, this condition speaks volumes for the excellence with which the job has been handled. This is a cause of understandable satisfaction to this writer, because the whole system follows without many important changes the plans and policies worked out by trial and error during the World war.

The biggest single causes of dissatisfaction are army medical rejections after draft boards' acceptance and the lack of uniformity among the thousands of local boards in taking or deferring married men. In this respect the law leaves Mr. Dykstra with less discretion than we had. The fact of actual dependency of wives and children rather than the fact of marriage is made the deciding circumstance. The question of dependency is one of the relative degree to which a family is dependent on its head. The law puts that up to the local boards and not to the director.

Where the wife and husband both have jobs, is she "dependent"? Where the wife and husband have ample income apart from his work, is that dependency? Where the husband is a no-good bum who never took the trouble to support his family, should he escape service on the ground that he is married?

If the answer to such questions is left entirely to the local boards, there is bound to be a very wide difference in result. This created the toughest problem in the World war draft also. It makes more noise than the facts warrant. Then there were 4.8 million married registrants. About 4,400,000, or 90 per cent, were deferred. Many of those not deferred had no claim filed for them either by themselves or their wives. In hundreds of cases, a wife would drag some worthless loafer in and demand that he be taken. In some of these cases the demand was recanted on the ground that the threat of service had made a perfect husband.

The net result of that experience was a gradual and continuous relaxation of the rule in favor of not breaking up families wherever it could be possibly and justly avoided.

'LOOSE-END' BILL

Two apparent absurdities attend the arguments for the Morgenthau "loose-end" bill, now being so hotly debated.

One is the insistence of certain sincere congressional advocates that the bill does not surrender to the executive the constitutional safeguards against dictatorship—the famous congressional "power of the purse."

In our own and English experience, it is the strongest weapon of democracy. Our Constitution gives congress alone the power to declare war and to "raise and support armies." To this latter highly important grant the Constitution attaches a condition, "but no appropriation of money to that use shall be for a longer term than two years."

Under the "loose-end" bill, the President is given authority to transfer to another nation any "defense article" he desires. The words "defense article" are defined to mean any conceivable military or naval resource which the United States owns or may hereafter acquire. When this is attacked as a surrender by congress to the executive of its power of the purse in war, the answer is made that the bill appropriates no money and hence, that congress, through its power to appropriate, still controls action under the bill.

Right off the bat, it is apparent that as to the many billions of dollars worth of military and naval equipment that this country now has, the answer simply is not true. The bill gives the President authority to transfer it with no further appropriation whatever.

Neither is it necessarily true as to gifts of new equipment. It is true, under the bill, that before he could, for example, order a new battleship built, expressly announced as a gift to China, he would have to go to congress for authority. But there is a loophole that is as broad as a barn door. In this crisis, congress has refused no appropriation to build armament for the United States and it is as sure as sunrise that it will refuse none in the future. But, if this bill is passed, not a nickel can be spent on armament by this government, which would not automatically fall under the proposed grant of presidential power, to transfer that armament to another country as soon as it is finished or even before. He doesn't have to go back to congress for appropriations before he can transfer American equipment and resources.

It is an even more complete surrender of the power of the purse in favor of other nations than would even be openly requested by a President in favor of the United States.

Mercy Ship Loads Up for France and Spain



The Red Cross ship, "Cold Harbor," chartered from the United States Lines, takes on supplies at Baltimore, Md., for Spain and unoccupied France. Her destination is Cadiz, Spain. This will be the first relief shipment to those countries, which have requested aid. The ship will pass through the blockade under arrangement with the British.

Greek 'Strong-Man'



This soundphoto shows Alexander Korizis, governor of the National Bank of Greece, named by King George II of Greece as successor to George Metaxas, Greek premier, who died suddenly. There will be no changes in cabinet or war policy.

Strike 'Army' Patrols Defense Plant



Pickets outside the plant of the International Harvester company, in Chicago, where a strike of C.I.O. workers affected some 6,000 workers of the tractor works, and tied up United States orders for defense materials. The demands made by the union were a minimum wage of 75 cents an hour and compensation for army selectees.

Gerard Testifies



James W. Gerard, U. S. ambassador to Germany during the World war, as he appeared before the foreign relations committee. He said Germany is out for world conquest.

Testify in 'Lease-Lend' Bill No. 1776



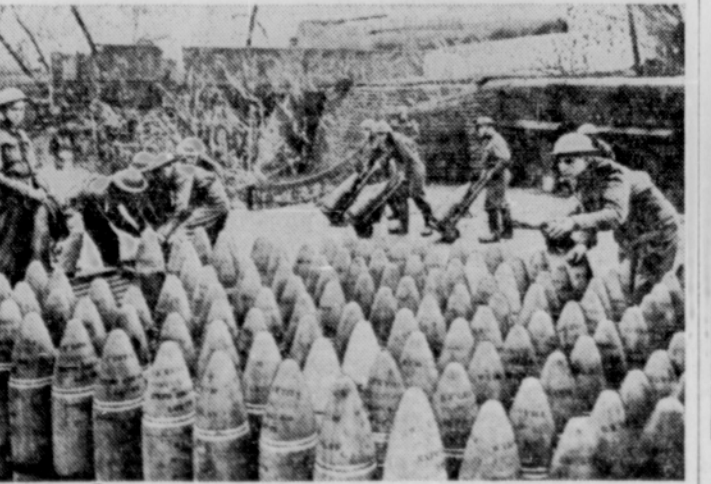
Earnestness, sincerity and patriotism are revealed in these candid camera "shots" of four national figures as they testified on the "lease-lend" bill. They are: upper left, J. P. Kennedy, retiring ambassador to Britain. Lower left: Hugh Johnson, columnist. Upper right, Norman Thomas, socialist leader, and William Knudsen, defense production chief.

Back to Texas



Former Vice President John Nance Garner packs his bags and leaves Washington for his home in Uvalde, Texas, a few hours after the inauguration of President Roosevelt and Vice President Wallace, winding up a 36-year political career in the nation's capital.

Rations for the Channel 'Watchdogs'



There is no let-down in Britain's preparations to meet invasion, if, and when, it comes. Every hour defense works about the coast of Britain are being more and more strengthened. This photo, taken somewhere in England, shows gun crews checking and storing a new supply of ammunition for the 9.2 "watchdog" in the background.

Wins D. S. A.



Robert A. Boyer, winner of the 1940 Distinguished Service Award, presented by the U. S. Junior Chamber of Commerce. Boyer, as head of Ford Research department, has developed a process to make plastic automobile bodies.

BRIEFS . . . By Baukhage

Sports item from the office of education:

Harold Newhauser, left-handed Detroit Tigers pitcher, is enrolled in the defense training class at Wilbur Wright vocational high school, Detroit. Newhauser was an outstanding rookie, pitched part of a game in the World Series between the Tigers and the Reds last fall.

Although the machinery of defense is slipping into gear at last, there is no denying that at present we are behind schedule with aid to Britain.

The White House press conferences are the most democratic gatherings of their kind held anywhere. One undemocratic thing about them—nobody smokes but the President.