

History Holds Key to Cheap Homes

Put in New Claim for Merits Of Rammed Earth Buildings

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WASHINGTON.—Is there a solution of the low-cost housing problem as simple as the dirt under our feet? Have we been overlooking a bet, which Pliny said the Romans were overlooking, in the first century A. D. and to which most people have shut their eyes ever since?



Baukhage

Anthony F. Merrill says so and so does a convincing job of proving the contention in his book "The Rammed Earth House," which I have just read. It seems incredible!

It didn't seem incredible to Pliny who heatedly proclaimed that the Romans had, in Africa and Spain, "walls of earth."

They are "moulded rather than built," Pliny explains, "by enclosing earth within a frame of boards,

ing or my cooperation," says the secretary, "they may be assured of them both."

Rammed-earth, according to Merrill, is a term describing "both the material and the process of wall building by which earth is tamped into the shape of a wall or building block. In essence, a compressed block or section of earth will, when tamped, assume the shape of the form into which it is pressed and, when the moisture dries out, harden into a permanent shape suitable for use as a building material."

The reasons set forth by Merrill as to why, if this method of building is so good it has not been widely adopted, are logical: One—there's no money in it, except the money saved by the builder. Two—contrary to the impression among sellers of building materials, Merrill insists it would help rather than hurt their business. The man who builds a rammed-earth house can't afford any other kind. And he has to buy everything—floor, roofing, plumbing—everything in fact except the walls, which are free except for the cost of the forms and the tamping.

Merrill's thesis is that anyone willing to acquire the rudimentary



NEW CITIZENS . . . Veterans of Pacific campaigns, 150 alien nationals of the U. S. navy were sworn in as American citizens on Guam. The group was composed of American Samoans, Chamorros and Filipinos. Judge P. J. Phillip of the immigration and naturalization service presided.

NEWS REVIEW

GOP To Continue Probes; Boundary Dispute Looms

CONGRESS:

Busy Bodies

GOP congressional investigators prepared to dig deep into war expenditures and un-American activities with the full support of the first Republican majority in 16 years.

Senate Republicans beat down an effort of the Democrats to transfer duties of the war investigating committee to the inactive committee on expenditures in the executive department by a 47 to 45 vote.

The watch-dog over efficiency of the war effort under President Truman while he was still senator from Missouri, the war investigating committee widened its scope under Senator Mead (Dem., N. Y.) to probe irregularities in munitions contracts. In the wake of disclosures of the close relations existing between congressmen and army officers with war contractors, the GOP voiced its determination to dig deeper into wartime dealings.

Not always in favor during the liberal New Deal administration, the house un-American activities committee promises to enjoy smoother sledding under the Republicans. Now headed by Representative Thomas (Rep., N. J.) the committee laid plans for an early probe of Communism in government departments, labor unions, Hollywood, and colleges and schools.

GERMANY:

Polish Claims

Should the U. S. oppose Polish claims to the 40,000 square miles of former eastern German territory taken over by the Poles under the Potsdam agreement, this country faces a stiff fight with the Russian bloc. With the U. S. bringing the full force of its prestige into play, however, it may secure modification of the Polish claim or cudge out other concessions from the Reds.

Poland served notice of its determination to permanently affix the new territory at the deputy foreign ministers' meeting in London, called to lay the groundwork for the Big Four conference in Moscow in March to formulate a German treaty. Since given control of the territory at Potsdam, the Poles said they have moved 1,383,000 Germans out and 3,500,000 Poles in.

Nub of the disagreement lies in the Poles' contention that they were led to understand that they were full sway over the territory at Potsdam. The U. S., on the other hand, holds that they were merely given temporary administrative control with the question of Germany's final postwar borders to be settled at a peace conference.

PORTAL:

Tax Relief

The burden of portal to portal back pay will largely be shouldered by Uncle Sam when, and if, union members are awarded their substantial claims against industry as a result of Secretary of the Treasury Snyder's announcement that such outlays are deductible against taxes levied in the years affected.

Because portal payments to workers will be liable to taxation, however, the U. S. stands to recover some of the refunds in personal income taxes. In many instances, the portal claims run into hundreds of dollars per worker, leaving them open to a heavy bite under the high wartime rates.

Under Snyder's ruling that industry could claim credits on taxes paid in the years for which portal demands were granted, companies would be able to take advantage of high rates and excess profits levies of the war years. At the same time, they would be entitled to a 6 per cent interest on the money collected from them to cover their tax liabilities.

FOOD:

Enemy's Need

Declaring that the U. S. could not afford to permit the American flag to fly over a gigantic Buchenwald, former President Herbert Hoover undertook another survey of food needs in the U. S. and British occupation zones in Germany.

In addition to providing for essential German relief, Hoover's junket was aimed at making the reich as self-supporting in food needs as possible. Improvement in the food situation would lead to a reduction in present U. S. relief costs of 300 million dollars annually. The former president had the assistance of two food experts on his tour, being accompanied by Dr. Dennis Fitzgerald, chairman of the international emergency food council, and former Ambassador Hugh Gibson, who aided him in World War I relief work.

COMMODITIES:

U. S. Eyes Trade

In an effort to prevent serious breaks in commodities, Secretary of Agriculture Anderson announced that the department's commodity exchange authority would be freed of other duties to permit full time policing of the markets.

Anderson disclosed the move in the face of growing speculation. Remembering the big break in cotton last October and the alleged manipulation of butter prices in New York, department authorities acted to check future slumps affecting prices. Studies are being completed on the factors in the cotton break, with Anderson ready to ask for additional regulatory authority if warranted by the investigation.



THE GEORGIA MESS

WASHINGTON.—It was carefully hushed up at the time, but the political mess in Georgia might have been avoided if the justice department had gone ahead with a secret probe it conducted of the Talmadge election.

Last fall, the justice department had FBI men making a thorough check of Talmadge intimidation and racial discrimination at the polls. This, under recent supreme court rulings, now is the direct concern of the federal government and can be prosecuted as a criminal offense.

The FBI investigation showed that Talmadge had sent instructions to the Georgia primary polls aimed at preventing Negroes from voting. Although the evidence was conclusive, the justice department finally got cold feet. The case was dropped.

One obstacle the justice department ran up against was the fact that Eugene Talmadge was sick and they couldn't get to him for interrogation. Also son Herman Talmadge outbluffed the justice boys and refused to answer questions unless a stenographer was present.

Final factor, however, was the fear that federal government intervention in Georgia would boomerang, hurting the very same liberal forces the justice department wanted to help.

MARSHALL'S WAR LEAK

One of the most significant things to watch regarding the state department under General Marshall will be whether he continues Jimmie Byrnes' policy of open diplomacy.

No secretary of state since Charles Evans Hughes has been as frank with the press as Byrnes. Hughes handled all press conferences himself, was a master at giving important background information, was generally frank and forthright. Byrnes, while not handling many conferences himself, went further than Hughes in making sure that a competent state department official gave newsmen a general picture of what was happening inside diplomatic negotiations.

Byrnes also didn't object to most news leaks; felt the American people had the right to know about foreign policy.

However, some of those allegedly close to General Marshall say he may tighten up on the Byrnes policy and crack down on news leaks. This, of course, may be unfair to the new secretary of state; for, based on his own past record, Marshall has been quite a "leaker" himself. In fact, one cable seized from the files of the German foreign office now reveals that General Marshall was woefully indiscreet in the early stages of the European war and inadvertently let out important secrets to the enemy.

AIDS TAX EVADERS

Some of the nation's biggest black-marketeers and on-the-make war contractors are getting away with income tax evasion, thanks to a snarled-up situation inside the justice department.

Around 300 criminal income tax cases are awaiting prosecution, with little chance of rapid action. Behind them is another 1,200 income tax fraud cases in the treasury, soon ready for transmittal to the bottlenecked justice department. Meanwhile, the black-marketeers and certain war contractors have been getting away with murder.

CHURCH AND LABOR

It hasn't been announced officially, but prominent church leaders are beginning an important behind-the-scenes study in connection with the government's efforts to maintain industrial peace. There have been several private meetings recently at which both Protestant and Catholic clergymen sat down and traded ideas with industrial and labor spokesmen on the question of labor relations.

While the churchmen deny that they are endeavoring to make religion a "bargaining factor" in the settlement of labor disputes, they feel that the church should play a definite part in improving work and pay standards. They also believe it is the duty of the church to inject a "greater sense of moral responsibility and understanding" in bargaining between employers and employees.

CAPITAL CHAFF

Washington's poorest guesser is the Pentagon official who transferred General Marshall from a plush suite of offices at the Pentagon to a small, two-desk room just four days before the general was named secretary of state. . . . Henry Wallace has jacked the New Republic's circulation up from 40,000 to 100,000 weekly in one month. . . . Harold Smith, former director of the budget, may replace Jack Hutson as assistant secretary general of the United Nations.



Coughing Colds

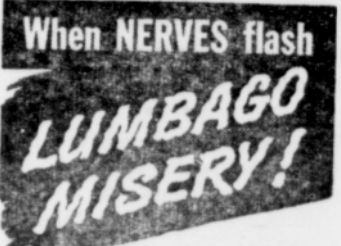
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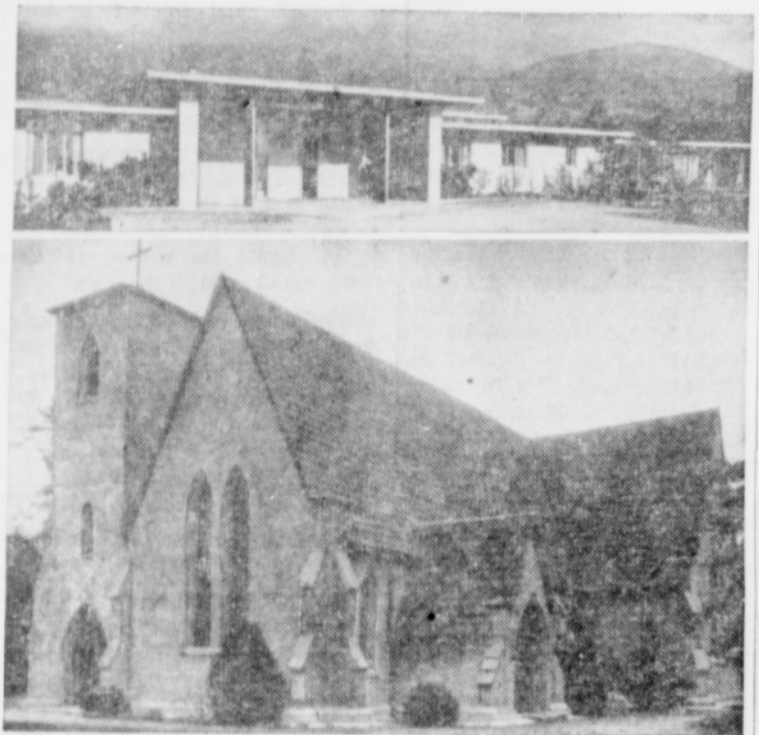
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The old and new in rammed earth houses. Top panel shows modern structure at Claremont, Calif. Bottom shows church at Sumter, S. C., which has stood through more than a century.

constructed on either side. These walls will last for centuries, are proof against rain, wind and fire, and are superior in solidity to any cement. Even at this day (more than a century after Hannibal) Spain still holds watch-towers that were erected by Hannibal."

The idea of houses of earth is not incredible to Clinton P. Anderson, secretary of agriculture, who has written the preface to the book.

"If Tony Merrill and his rammed-earth builders want either my blessing

knowledge of building, can build a rammed-earth house himself with three bedrooms, spacious living, dining and cooking facilities and all plumbing and heating equipment for less than \$5,000. He can build as good or better a dwelling than most of the so-called defense homes, so widely used during the war, for \$3,000. And there are already modest cottages in a number of places which cost little more than a thousand dollars for two members of a family to build.

Solons Have Laugh on Selves

When Bob Hope or Henry Morgan or even Senator Claghorn pokes fun at congressmen, that's supposed to be humorous. It's always open season on politicians in this country where people riddle their public officials with gags instead of guns.

But it is not generally realized that legislators like to laugh, too—even when the laugh's on them. And at least one of them enjoys congressional jokes so much he's written a 330-page book about them.

Compiling the congressional Joe Miller may seem a far cry from steering policies of the senate judiciary committee, but Senator Wiley has been working on the humorous project since 1939 when he first was elected to the United States senate. Last year he got around to sending a letter to all his colleagues in the house and senate, asking them their favorite jokes. He was deluged with stories—good, bad and corny; and most of them jokes on or about congress and congressmen. All of which inspired the title of his book, "The Laugh's With Congress."

Under the title "The Women—God Bless 'em," he relates how in the closing and very literally hot sessions of the 79th congress, the then Sergeant-at-Arms Wall Doney ruled twice within three weeks that, although women in slacks could be permitted in senate galleries, women in shorts would be inimical to the dignity of the senate and were to be barred from the gallery.

All of which moved Sen. Richard Russell of Georgia to remark: "In hot weather, I am sometimes envious that I cannot wear shorts myself. Mr. Doney is supposed to be an authority on what creates confusion in the senate, but personally, I have no objection to shorts." (If

this had been printed in the record there would have been "laughter" after that one.)

Another story claimed as the favorite of former Sen. Guy Gillette of Iowa and Arkansas' young son, William Fulbright is a true one. As Senator Gillette tells it, his colored maid had noticed that the senator, then a representative, had his picture in the paper. Underneath was a caption to the effect that he might be nominated for the upper chamber. "Is a senatuh higher than a representative?" the maid wanted to know. "Yes," Gillette told her, "they are so considered because a senator represents an entire state and a representative represents a district of a state." The maid's next question was: "Well, is there anything lower than a congressman?" Gillette is said to have been forced to imply that there was indeed nothing lower than a congressman!



STILL MISERABLE . . . Misery and poverty still are rampant in China. This poorly-clothed, hungry and tired little boy sleeps in the doorway of a Shanghai hotel while his mother begs for coins from American servicemen.

INCOME INCREASES

Farm Cash Receipts Hit Peak

WASHINGTON.—Farmers' cash income from livestock and crop marketings in 1946 soared to the record-breaking total of more than 24 billion dollars, according to a preliminary survey announced by the agriculture department.

The latest bureau of agricultural economics estimate places cash receipts at \$24,100,000,000, the highest in history and a 16 per cent gain over 1945. Earlier predictions had forecast only 23 billion dollars, but high prices for meat animals, cotton, feed grains and feed crops

following the end of price control boosted the earlier prediction by more than a billion dollars.

Receipts from livestock and livestock products were estimated at about \$13,400,000,000, an increase of 14 per cent over 1945. Income from crops was placed at about \$10,700,000,000, an increase of 18 per cent.

Marked increases in returns from cotton, food grains and feed crops were largely responsible for the gain in the total crop receipts.

If the final accounting of cash

farm income matches the preliminary estimate, cash receipts in 1946 will be 16 per cent over the previous year. The 1945 figure, a record up until last year, was \$20,700,000,000. During the prewar years of 1935-39, cash receipts averaged \$7,900,000,000.

Preliminary estimates released by the department indicate that cash receipts for December, 1946, were about \$2,500,000,000, which is 20 per cent below the November total but 30 per cent above December, 1945.