

Washington Digest

National Topics Interpreted
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Washington.—There are many occasions on record where several important issues have engaged the attention of congress and frequently one of these issues has aroused such bitterness and developed such a controversy that it overshadowed all others. That has been the case in recent weeks during which President Roosevelt's plan to add six justices of his own choosing to the Supreme court of the United States completely subordinated everything else.

But the crushing defeat received by the President through refusal of the vast majority of Democrats in congress to support his court reorganization scheme suddenly has directed attention to other major questions. Outstanding among these is Secretary Wallace's farm bill and the so-called wages and hours bill which is claimed to contain complete protection for the laboring classes. It is of the farm bill that I shall write now since it is much more imminent as far as congressional action is concerned than is the case with the wages and hours proposition.

The basis of Secretary Wallace's program is what he calls the "ever-normal granary." There are other provisions included in the bill but the idea of a maintained supply of farm products is the heart of the plan.

Now, it seems that if the words "ever-normal granary" mean anything, they must be accepted as meaning a continuity of supply at a level which government agents arbitrarily determine as the proper rate of accumulation or sale of such supplies.

The house of representatives has been muddling along with the question for several months. It has been under much pressure from Secretary Wallace and his associates and from some of the farm leaders whom the secretary has convinced of the value of his scheme. The farm leaders as a whole are far from unanimous on the proposition despite the fact that Secretary Wallace and the tremendous propaganda machine within the Department of Agriculture has been exceedingly active in an effort to "sell" the plan to the country as a whole and thereby bring additional pressure on congress.

I shall not attempt to give all of the details of the Wallace proposal here. It is too complicated for explanation in the limited space available. Indeed, I have found quite a number of members of the house of representatives who are unable to give a complete explanation of how the plan would work—and they admit it. It is a piece of legislation that must be complicated in order to accomplish things its proponents claim for it and my observation of government agencies leads me to the conclusion it is so complicated that the chances of its succeeding are almost nil.

In the first instance, as I have said, the ever-normal granary idea comprehends a constant level of supplies. At first blush, it would seem that storage of wheat or corn or cotton or other farm products in a big crop year to be sold in years when crops are small should work out to keep prices at a satisfactory level. That is the theory. On the other hand, in times past this same sort of scheme has worked out to depress prices instead of maintaining them and the farmers have been the losers.

Included in this legislation are provisions for benefit payments to farmers under certain conditions when the price level falls below parity. This injects into the problem again the influence of the general price level of all commodities in the United States whether from the farm or from the factory and it also forces upon the United States additional influence wielded by the level of prices in foreign countries where the law of supply and demand continues to operate without impossible amendment at government's dictation.

No doubt, the Wallace proposal would boost prices at present. This is true because we have had several short crop years and there is no surplus now. But with indications that the current wheat crop, for example, is going to be exceptionally large, it is entirely possible that the nation as a whole will have a surplus of wheat this fall. In addition, there will be wheat crops grown in other countries as usual. Some of our wheat must be sold in foreign markets and compete with wheat grown in Russia or in South America. It is easy to see, therefore, that the lack of a wheat surplus in this country is exceedingly temporary.

The ever-normal granary, if it works as the theorists claim, would store or keep off of the market that portion of the crop which is not needed for current consumption. That sounds fine. Great users of wheat must buy their supplies far ahead.

If they do not take this precaution, they stand a chance always of finding their bins empty and are faced with the necessity of closing their mills. It is this feature that causes long range buyers to resort to what is called hedging. That is, they sell on option nearly as much as they buy on contract. They are thus able to offset losses whether the price of wheat goes up or whether it goes down and the losses or the gains are distributed throughout the industry. It is the only way by which the industry can protect itself.

Mr. Wallace's scheme proposes doing away with that sort of thing, not directly but through the effect of the ever-normal granary. In other words, the net result of the ever-normal granary would be for the government to hold these stocks and feed them into the market as demand for supplies requires. This sounds feasible and it probably would be except for the fact that we have no means of controlling production in the other wheat producing countries, and I repeat that I am using wheat as illustrative of all farm products. In fact, the Wallace plan provides no control of production in this country and that question is vital. As far as I can see, nature is going to operate to give us rain or give us drouth in accordance with the judgment of the Higher Power. No human is going to be very influential in that regard.

To get back to the question of the price level, it should be said that while the Wallace plan provides what appears to be an insurance against fluctuation, it is more likely to have the opposite effect. Because of the influence of world prices, great storehouses of wheat in the country will hang over the market like an epidemic. No one can tell when it will strike and since markets are made up of individuals who are human, a portion of the markets is always going to be frightened by the uncertainty of when government wheat will be offered for sale. It is a perfectly human reaction because it involves the pocketbooks and humans naturally want to buy as cheaply as they can and sell as high as they can.

One of the things that happened in the administration of President Hoover that is sure to be remembered is the utter failure of his farm policy. That farm policy centered at one time in what was called the Federal Farm board. If you will go back a few years and recall the operations of the Federal Farm board, I think you will agree that the things it undertook to do were exactly comparable to, if not exactly the same as, the scheme set up by Secretary Wallace in his ever-normal granary idea. The only difference that I can see—and I watched the operations of the farm board from close at hand—is a change in the name. It must be admitted that the phrase ever-normal granary has a pretty sound. But when it comes to a question of an attractive expression, one that is soothing and one that should convince us all that every problem is solved, I submit those favorites which Mr. Wallace used to use when Professor Tugwell was with him in the Department of Agriculture. Who does not recall the "more abundant life," and who has forgotten the "doctrine of scarcity to assure plenty?"

As far as I know, neither the house nor the senate committee on agriculture has held hearings on this ever-normal granary phase of the Wallace legislation. Thus far, the discussion has been largely on questions involving benefits and subsidies and means of marketing. No attention has been given to the ever-normal granary threat, and I regard it as a menace.

If this discussion were devoted to only the consumer phase of our economic life, I think I should be selfish enough to urge enactment of the Wallace plan. I believe I can see where the ever-normal granary idea will make bread cheaper, where it will make cotton textile goods cheaper and when cotton is cheaper other textiles are cheaper, and where other food and necessities of life that have their origin on the farm will be reduced in price by such a legislative policy. But that is not my idea of a sound economic structure. It is just as necessary for the consumer to pay his fair share toward the maintenance of a living agriculture as it is for farmers to pay their fair share to a living commerce and industry of whatever kind it may be.

The senate Democrats have elected a new leader to succeed the late Senator Joe Robinson, of Arkansas. He is Senator Alban Barkley, of Kentucky. In a previous column I mentioned the split among the senate Democrats and suggested that it would be difficult to replace Senator Robinson because of the qualities he had in holding the various factions together in the senate. It was not a forecast; it was a statement of fact.

It sounds Great

for current consumption. That sounds fine. Great users of wheat must buy their supplies far ahead.

what Irvin S. Cobb thinks about:

Western Hoteliers.
SAN FRANCISCO, CALIF.— They have mighty fine hotels in this town. I've stayed at several of them and friends of mine have been put out of some of the others.

And once I enjoyed a fire scare here when the alarm, at 3:30 a. m., brought to the lobby a swarm of moving picture actors without any makeup on and not much else. This was in the era of the silent films, but you wouldn't have dreamed it to hear the remarks of an hysterical lady star when she discovered that her chow had been forgotten. The current husband also was temporarily missing but she was comparatively calm about that. She probably figured a husband could be picked up almost any time whereas darling little Ming Poo had a long pedigree and represented quite a financial investment and anyhow was a permanent fixture in her life.



Irvin S. Cobb

Through the strike here, the traveling public seemed to make out. Maybe visitors followed the old southern custom—stop with kinfolks. Think, though, how great would have been the suffering had the strike occurred during prohibition days when transient guests might have perished of thirst without bright uniformed lads to bring them first-aid packages in the handy hip-pocket sizes! Bellhops qualified as lifesavers those times.

Humans in the Raw.
AS I behold vast numbers of fellow beings strolling the beaches, yes, and the public thoroughfares too, while wearing as few clothes as possible—and it seems to be possible to wear very few indeed—I don't know whether to admire them for their courage or sympathize with them in their suffering or deplore their inability to realize that they'd be easier on the eye if they'd quit trying to emulate the raw oyster—which never has been pretty to look upon and, generally speaking, is an acquired taste anyhow.

For a gentleman who ordinarily bundles himself in heavy garments clear up to his Adam's apple, this warm weather strip-act entails a lot of preliminary torture. At first our gallant exhibitionist resembles a forked stalk of celery bleached out in the cellar. Soon he is one large red blot on the landscape, with fat water blisters spangling his brow until he looks as if he were wearing a chaplet of Malaga grapes. In the next stage he peels like the wallpaper on an Ohio valley parlor after flood time.

Destructive Hired Help.
SOMEBODY found a stained glass window in an English church dating back to 685 A. D., but still intact. And from the ruins of a Roman villa, they've dug out a marble figure of Apollo—the one the mineral water was named after—in a perfect state although 2,000 years old.

These discoveries are especially interesting to this family as tending to show that hired help isn't what it must have been in the ancient time.

Once had a maid of the real old Viking stock who, with the best intentions on earth, broke everything she laid finger on. Moreover, she could stand flatfooted in the middle of a large room and cause treasured articles of vertu, such as souvenirs of the St. Louis World's fair and the china urn I won for superior spelling back in 1904 at the Elks' carnival, to leap to the floor and be smashed to atoms. She didn't have to touch them or even go near them. I think she did it by animal magnetism or capillary attraction or something of that nature.

The first time we saw the Winged Victory, Mrs. Cobb and I decided it must have been an ancestor of Helsing who tried to dust it—with the disastrous results familiar to all lovers of classic statuary.

The Reaping Season.
CERTAIN crops may not have done so well, due to weather conditions, or, as some die-hard Republicans would probably contend, because of New Deal control. But, on the other hand, hasn't it been a splendid ripening season for sit-downs, walk-outs, shut-ups, lock-outs and picket lines?

It makes me think of the little story the late Myra Kelly used to tell of the time when she was a public school teacher on New York's East Side. She was questioning her class of primary-grade pupils, touching on the callings of their respective parents. She came to one tiny sad-eyed little girl, shabby and thin and shy.

"Rosie," she asked, "at what does your father work?"

"Mein poppa he don't never work, Teacher," said Rosie.

"Doesn't he do anything at all?"

"Oh, yessum."

"Well, what does he do?"

"He strikes."

IRVIN S. COBB.
—WNU Service.

FARM TOPICS

PLAN WINDBREAKS FOR NEXT SPRING

Scheme May Be Worked Out During Summer.

By J. E. Davis, Extension Forester, University of Illinois.—WNU Service.

Although it is too late in the year to make windbreak plantings of trees on farms, it is not too late to start making plans for plantings to be made next spring. Preparations which can be made during spare time this summer for a protection planting next spring include marking out the area, digging a diversion ditch to drain barnyard water around the windbreak planting, fencing the area to be planted and plowing the ground in the fall.

"Trees are best ordered early to assure getting the desired varieties before supplies run out," Davis states in his new circular, No. 27, "Windbreaks for Illinois Farmsteads," which has just been published by the Natural History Survey in co-operation with the agricultural college.

Detailed information on planning, planting and caring for a windbreak are contained in the circular along with a description of the kind of trees available, their advantages and disadvantages. Copies of the circular may be obtained by writing the agricultural college at Urbana.

"Illinois farmers are taking a renewed interest in windbreaks," Davis said. "Demonstration plantings showing the best practices for establishing and maintaining windbreaks have been made on farms in 12 Illinois counties this spring. More are being planned for next year."

"Most ornamental nurseries grow the types of trees satisfactory for windbreaks and some of the larger nurseries specialize in producing windbreak trees."

Information on sources and prices of windbreak planting stock may be obtained by writing Davis at the agricultural college.

Eggs Require Special Care During Warm Days

The warm days of summer are the danger days in the high-quality egg trade. Unless poultrymen maintain a watchful eye and exercise the greatest of care, many factors that easily escape attention, may result in the loss of customers, says a writer in the Rural New-Yorker.

Egg quality deteriorates rapidly at temperatures over 70 degrees. Hot days, high temperatures in the poultry house, broody birds remaining on the nests, are often the cause of a lack of freshness in the product. Eggs should be gathered three or four times daily in clean, well-cushioned containers. Leaky, cracked or soft-shelled eggs should be placed in separate containers when collecting to prevent soiling of the eggs and possible contamination from odors of oil, or other pungent material.

As soon as the eggs have been gathered, they should be placed in a cool, dry room, free from odors and where the temperature is not over 50 degrees.

Eggs should be graded to size, candied, packed in clean, attractive containers, and marketed at least twice a week. In shipping, they should be protected from the sun and wind.

Bitter Butter

Bitter butter may be due to bitter milk or to the salt used, says J. R. Dice, head of the North Dakota Agricultural College dairy department. Milk from cows in poor physical condition, or from cows that have reached an advanced stage in the milking period, may produce bitter butter, butter that has a poor texture, or the cream may refuse to churn out entirely. If sample tests of the individual cows fail to indicate the responsibility for the bitter flavor, examine the salt being used. Chemically impure salt, especially salt containing relatively large amounts of magnesium salts or calcium chloride, or both, may give the butter a bitter flavor.

Lambs Need Corn

It does not pay to cut down on corn and legume hay in favor of oats and non-leguminous roughage when fattening lambs. This feed-lot truism, well understood by experienced live stock men, was demonstrated again this past year in Four-H Club western lamb feeding projects at Spencer and Waterloo, Iowa. Reducing the corn ration and legume hay ration actually doubled the cost of producing a hundred pounds of gain in many of the lots.

Segregate Roosters

In order to protect the interior quality of eggs, roosters should be removed from the breeding pen as soon as the hatching season is over. If the male remains with the hens, the eggs will be held at a temperature ranging above 68 degrees Fahrenheit, the germ will develop. A fertile egg will deteriorate much more rapidly than an infertile egg. An infertile egg seldom rots, but a fertile egg will decompose rapidly.

THAMES TELLS ITS TALE



Weighing a Shipment of Elephant Tusks on a London Wharf.

From Every Corner of the Earth Come Ships That Ply This River

Prepared by National Geographic Society, Washington, D. C.—WNU Service.

THAMES traffic makes London the world's foremost river port. Since Roman galleys days—when Britons traded grain, slaves, and dogskin for European salt and horse collars—commerce has flowed between London and the continental countries along the Schelde, the Rhine and the Elbe. After Drake nerved England to smash the Spanish Armada, London ships gained in time the lion's share of ocean-borne trade.

Names immortal in discovery and conquest are linked with this water front. From here Frobenius went seeking the Northwest passage, and Hawkins to Puerto Rico and Vera Cruz; from here Lancaster made his voyages to the East, before the downfall of Portugal and the rise of the British East India company. Raleigh sailed from here to explore the Orinoco, to popularize tobacco and, tradition says, to start the Irish planting potatoes.

It was London's daring money which sent Sebastian Cabot to found the Russia company, opening trade with that land. London merchants and skippers promoted the Turkey, African, Virginia and Hudson's Bay companies.

London emigrants helped colonize in the Americas, in Australia, New Zealand, China, India, Africa and the rich islands of the sea.

English Spread From Here.
From this water front went the English language. In Drake's day only a few millions spoke it. Now it is a world tongue. Of all letters, telegrams, books and papers printed now, it is estimated that 70 per cent are in English. London alone uses enough newsprint every day to cover a ranch of 9,350 acres—or nearly 15 square miles of paper.

"The smell from that big paper mill at Bayswater is one of the marks I steer by on foggy nights," a Thames pilot will tell you.

Exploration of London's crowded docks reveals not only what amazing piles of food a great city can normally eat, but also what odd items, from live bats to rhino horns, are mixed in the life stream of world commerce.

Imponderable, in variety and magnitude, are these fruits of man's barter. Here, too, his work ranges from rat catching and opium sampling to dredging the Thames and handling annual cargo enough to fill a road with loaded trucks from the Yukon to Patagonia.

To say that every day some 500 craft, big and little, pass through the Thames mouth tells only half the story. More significant is what happens on the docks.

Commission Ends Confusion.
Even London people themselves don't dream what incredible activity is here. Few ever see it. Confusion in this crowded river, in days gone, grew so intense that waiting boats often lay unloaded for weeks; goods were piled in disorder on river banks, and pilfering was enormous. One river bandit stole almost a whole shipload of sugar! To combat this chaos the West India merchants built their own fortlike docks.

With more trade came more docks, and more toll-rate wars and other confusion. This ended in 1909 when the Port of London authority, a Royal commission, took full control under act of parliament.

It paid 23,000,000 pounds for privately owned London docks, spent millions more to make the lower Thames the world's longest deep-water channel and to enlarge and re-equip cargo-handling facilities.

It has dredged mud enough out of the Thames to build a Chinese Wall, and has constructed the world's most extensive dock system. One of its cranes, the "London Mammoth," lifts 150 tons!

Finally, with characteristic British financial genius, it sold its debentures on the stock exchange, and now its operations usually pay all costs and interest and leave a profit which is used for more improvements.

Giant Docks and Yard.

The PLA is not in trade. It is merely custodian of merchandise that may range from wild animals for the zoo to a shipload of molasses from which to distill fuel alcohol. It weighs goods, reports on their quality and condition; it opens bales and boxes for customs inspection, furnishes samples for buyers, and looks after repacking and loading for those who ship from London to other ports.

On the north bank of the Thames, scattered for miles downstream from the Tower, stand these great PLA docks: London, St. Katharine, East and West India, Millwall, Victoria and Albert, King George V, and the Tilbury.

On the south bank, near London's heart, are ancient Surrey Commercial docks, with a lumberyard that covers 150 acres!

Besides the railways and truck lines that tie these docks to the outlying kingdom, some 9,000 Thames barges handle goods to and from ships' sides.

Each dock has its own character. St. Katharine docks are built on the site of the old Church of St. Katharine by the Tower, founded by Queen Matilda in 1148. What heterogeneous goods they store: wool, skins, wines, spices, sugar, rubber, balata, tallow, ivory, barks, gums, drugs, coffee, iodine, hemp, quicksilver, canned fruits and fish, coir yarn, coconuts, and brandy!

Navy at One Dock.
West India and Millwall docks lie in a river peninsula known as the Isle of Dogs. Here the passer-by may smell 12,000 puncheons of rum, a million tons of sugar and shiploads of dates.

Victoria and Albert and King George V docks form one huge structure, the world's largest sheet of enclosed dock water. Often 40 or 50 ships—equal to a good-sized navy—tie up here at one time.

Tilbury is the first dock one sees when sailing up the Thames. Its long landing stage forms a home-land gateway for people from Australia, New Zealand, India, China and other eastern countries who land or embark here. Fast trains of the London, Midland and Scottish railway touch the dock's edge and whisk passengers away to all parts of the kingdom.

In the city, PLA has still more warehouses. At its Butler street building are 70 rooms full of oriental carpets—enough to cover a farm of 120 acres!

People buy most carpets in June, for wedding presents, you are told. There are electric ovens, too, for conditioning raw silk, a mountain of Havana cigars and leaf tobacco enough to last one man, say, 500,000 years!

Here is a furtive horde of lean black cats, to help out the official human rat catchers. Musty wine vats use 28 miles of underground track on which to roll barrels that hold the 12,000,000 gallons of wine brought to London each year.

This is the world's ivory and tooth market. It takes 16,000,000 artificial teeth from the United States every year—and some 2,000 elephant tusks from Africa and Asia.

Not many tusks are from newly slain elephants. Most of them come from mudholes, left by animals long from mudholes, left by animals.

Tea for Londoners.
Wool was England's chief export in the Middle Ages. Today it is one of London's main imports. It takes the fleeces from about fifty million sheep to meet London's annual demands!

Tea trade has centered here for 300 years. In Mincing Lane you can see brokers bidding on lots which have been expertly sampled by PLA's own tasters.

When they "bulk" tea, or mix it, on some warehouse floors you may see it heaped up in mounds higher than men's heads.

Think of all the "liquid history" that has been packed into this ancient water front since Roman galleys traded here; since Danes and Vikings came to plunder; since the great companies of merchant adventurers launched their tiny ships for daring trade and colonizing far over then little-known seas.

Think of the 60,000 ships a year that now form smoke lanes from London to every nook of the world where goods can be bought or sold and you begin to see why this 70-mile stretch of "London River" is, incomparably, the world's busiest water front.