

Increases in Social Security Pay Slated To Start After Jan. 1

(Editor's note: Social security coverage will be extended to millions of Americans under new laws effective Jan. 1. In addition increased benefits are in store for those who retire after Jan. 1. This is the second of two stories on the new social security laws.)

By REX CHANEY
United Press Correspondent

Washington — (U.P.) — Social security benefit increases ranging from \$5 to \$35.30 a month are in store for workers who retire after the new social security law becomes fully effective Jan. 1.

There will be tax increases on some, too, to help pay for the higher benefits. Beginning with the new year, the two per cent social security tax will be levied against the first \$4,200 of an employee's annual pay compared to a tax against the first \$3600 under the old law.

The effect of this on workers who earn \$4,200 or more a year is that the social security tax on an annual basis will be \$84 in 1955, compared to \$72 in 1954. The matching amount paid by employers directly to the government will go up correspondingly.

Coverage Extended

The tax and benefit increases are part of the new law enacted by the last Congress. Besides boosting benefits, the new law extends coverage to some 10,000,000 additional persons, including farmers, many farm and household workers, architects, accountants, engineers, many state and local government employees, and clergymen.

Persons who become totally disabled are given special consideration under the new law. And it is now possible for a retired worker between 65 and 72 to earn as much as \$1200 a year

without sacrificing any social security benefit rights. Under the old law the maximum earnings permitted was \$75 a month, or \$900 a year.

Persons covered by social security who already have reached the retirement age of 65 started receiving their benefit increases in checks mailed about Oct. 1.

These increases ranged from a minimum of \$5 to a maximum of \$20.30 for a retired worker who had been drawing a benefit check of \$127.50 for himself and his wife.

Higher Payments

Persons retiring in the future will fare even better. Those who retire after paying in at the \$4,200 annual base for the next 18 months—until July 1, 1956—will get the maximum increases. The top payment for a retired worker and his wife will jump from \$127.50 to \$162.80. The top payment for a surviving widow with at least two children will go up from \$162.75 to \$200.

These benefit increases are based on three actual changes in the old law.

Changes In Law

The first was hiking the tax base from \$3,600 to \$4,200.

The second was a new "drop out" provision. Under this provision, a worker can forget about his four years of lowest earnings, which might pull his overall average down. Thus, it becomes easier to qualify for higher benefit payments.

The third change which contributed to an increase in benefits was in the basic formula. Under the old law, a worker used as a basis of computation 55 per cent of the first \$100 of the average monthly wage, plus 15 per cent of the remainder up to \$200.

Under the new law, the benefit is figured by taking 55 per cent of the first \$110 of average monthly earnings and adding 20 per cent of the next \$240 of average earnings.

Federal Aid Set For Slum Clearance

Washington — (U.P.) — The administration, launching a sharply curtailed public housing program, has offered federal aid to cities planning slum clearance or redevelopment projects.

Housing Administrator Albert Cole notified mayors of such cities that the government can help rehouse families forced to move when slums are torn down. But he said there are strict limitations on such aid.

Meanwhile, Rep. Edward A. Garmatz (D-MD) announced he will ask the new Congress to enact legislation re-establishing the original 1949 housing program under which the government would build 810,000 public housing units over six years.

Multnomah Police Nab Burglary Suspect

Portland — (U.P.) — Multnomah County police captured a 21-year-old burglary suspect after a wild auto chase early Monday, but the man's two companions escaped.

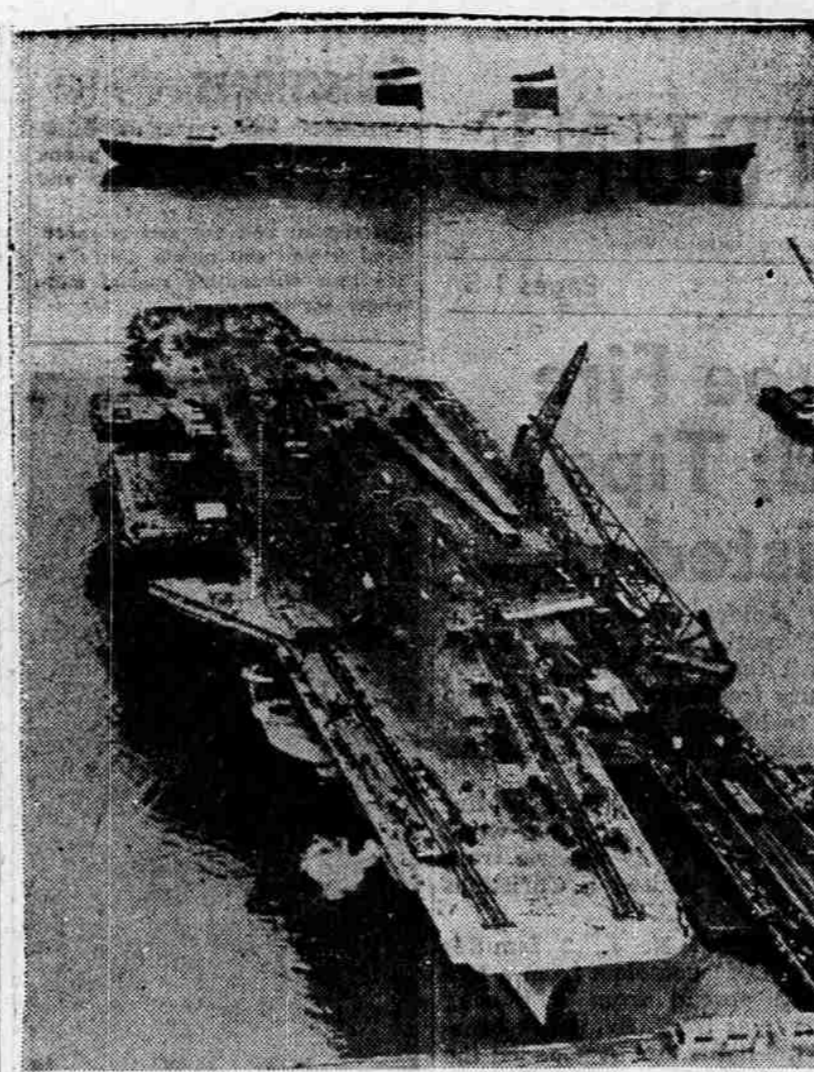
Held in the county jail for breaking and entering was Gerry Lavell, Portland, Lavell, who is on three years probation for burglary, is charged with stealing some \$491 in loot from a food market outside the Portland city limits.

Lavell was captured after county police, making a routine check of the store, flushed the burglars. The three men fled in a car with their loot, but the car failed to make a turn and crashed into a plowed field.

Lavell tripped and fell and was apprehended. His two companions outran the officers.

The men entered the market by cutting a hole in the roof. The loot included two deep-fat cookers, a portable radio, wrist watches and beer, but no money.

WEATHER BY UNITED PRESS
Northern California: Fair except fog and local drizzle in Cloudiness extreme north.



MONSTERS OF THE SEA—The luxury liner, SS United States (background) moves past the newly-christened USS Forrester at Newport News, Va. The big passenger ship is being moved to drydock for its yearly overhaul, and final touches are being put on the Forrester, including moving of its superstructure.

Once-Famous Opera Singer Recalls Good Old Times

Madrid — (U.P.) — From riches and fame to rags and oblivion is the story of Ramonita, a mezzo-soprano who once shared the limelight with Enrico Caruso.

But this happened so long ago that time has effaced her past glories and dulled her memories. The young Spanish girl, who at the turn of the century commanded fees of over 1,000 pesetas for one night's performance today is a partially blind woman of 74 who sells lottery tickets for the blind on a street corner barely a stone's throw from the Royal Opera House where 40 years ago she had been applauded by Alphonse

XIII, then boy-king of Spain.

Shared with Caruso

In the golden days, Ramonita sang mezzo-soprano roles in "Aida," "Lohengrin," "Rigoletto" and "Carmen" in Milan, Rome, Warsaw, Odessa and St. Petersburg.

But what she remembers most vividly is sharing the public's applause in Milan's Teatro Lirico with an up-and-coming Italian named Enrico Caruso.

"That was in the 1880's or 1890's, but I can't be sure of any dates—it has all been so long ago," she said. "Caruso was beginning his career then. I was in 'Rigoletto' with him for just one performance. That was because the mezzo-soprano billed with Caruso was suddenly taken ill, and I was called in to take her place."

She wistfully recalled the high life of pre-revolutionary Russia: "How much gold there was in Russia . . . how many rubles . . . what beautifully attired women! Everybody, it seemed, spoke French, and St. Petersburg was more fancy than Rome or Milan, though perhaps not so much as Paris."

Begins in 19th Century

The story of Maria Ramona Galan begins in the latter part of the 19th century when, at the age of 14 and at her father's insistence, she commenced to study voice in Madrid. Her voice coach was an Italian baritone named Battistini.

"Somehow, I remember him quite well," she said. "He was a big man with a fine powerful voice."

From Madrid, she traveled to Milan for an audition and was booked by agents of the Teatro Contanzi in Rome.

"I lived in Milan for 20 years," she continued. "Milan, you understand, was the mecca of opera singers."

The last time Ramonita appeared in the Madrid Royal Theater was in 1926, the year the theater closed. It has remained closed ever since. The civil war wiped out her savings. The Republican government in 1936 impounded all savings accounts with banks to help finance the war.

Years of Sickness

Then came long years of sickness. She was forced to go on relief. Eight years ago she underwent an operation for cataracts. The operation was only partially successful and she was admitted into O.N.C.E., a self-supporting government relief organization for the blind.

Today Ramonita lives alone and forgotten in a small unheated room on Calle Independencia, barely 100 yards from the Opera House, still nursing dreams for the future.

"I'd like to start my own little business," she said. "I'd like a kiosk where I could keep warm in the winter and sell papers and magazines. I could do it with 2,000 or 3,000 pesetas. Maybe, one day, it will come about."

4-H Club News

Griffia Creek Sewing Club
The 4-H Sewing Club "Buttons and Bows" met at the Griffia Creek school cafeteria Dec. 18, for a Christmas party. All 22 girls and 4 mothers were present.

We had a short business meeting in which a schedule was worked out for the rest of the year.

The girls were anxious to start the party. We had games and exchanged gifts and then refreshments were served by the leaders.

Elise Eskew,
Reporter.



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