

In 183 years, 604,773 Americans have died in battle. In the past 40 years, 1,182,959 Americans have died in highway accidents.

Almost two and a half times as many Americans died of cancer in World War II as were killed in action in the armed forces.

CPAs Return From Annual Tax Forum

Oliver P. Taylor and John Graff, Medford certified public accountants, attended the 10th annual tax forum in Eugene Friday sponsored by the Oregon Society of Certified Public Accountants.

Talks included Oregon tax developments, tax aspects of buying and selling a business, highlights of federal tax legislation, changes in tax accounting methods, and problems confronting the taxpayer who will use the new 1960 form.

Boy's Auto First To Cross New Bridge

Miami-UP—A new \$14-million causeway between Miami and Miami Beach opened Saturday, but despite the detailed planning of city fathers the governor's car was not the first to cross the ribbon barrier at the Miami end.

That honor went to 4-year-old David Costa, who pedaled a toy fire chief's car around the concrete bridge and back under the ribbon.

Social Security Benefits May Be Sweetened Before Election

Washington — If election-year history is repeated in 1960, Congress will find some way to sweeten social security benefits before voters gather at the polls next Nov. 8.

Changes enlarging the coverage of the Social Security Act of 1935 have been voted in the last five election years. Both Administration and Democratic leaders already have promised that 1960 will follow the pattern.

Activities during the between-session recess have served to focus attention on the issue.

Hearings held this fall by a special senate subcommittee on problems of the aged and aging unearthed strong sentiment for legislation to ease the plight of elderly persons unable to make ends meet or pay for adequate medical care.

Drug Costs Aired

The senate judiciary committee antitrust and monop-

oly subcommittee, headed by Sen. Estes Kefauver (D-Tenn.), currently is exploring pricing practices of drug manufacturers at hearings which opened Dec. 7. Complaints by social security recipients that their checks have not been big enough to cover costs of medicine are expected to be aired.

Seymour E. Harris, a Harvard University economist, Nov. 26 submitted to the joint economic committee a report calling for an increase to \$9,000 in the amount of wages subject to social security taxes. At present only the first \$4,800 earned by a worker is taxed each year. Harris also declared that more than \$200 billion will be in the Old Age and Survivors Insurance Trust Fund reserve by the year 2020, and that it would be sensible to "increase benefit rates now and not build up such large reserves."

Battle site for the 1960 debate on social security legis-

lation will be the house ways and means committee. It already has held hearings on a federal health insurance bill introduced by Rep. Aime J. Forand (D-R.I.). The Forand bill would set up a federally administered program providing hospitalization, surgery and nursing home care for social security recipients.

The plan would be financed by raising social security taxes by one-quarter of one percent for both employer and employee. But legislators are wondering whether voters will accept further tax increases, particularly since the tax rate goes up one-half of one percent (to three percent) on Jan. 1. Combined employee-employer social security taxes already are scheduled to reach nine percent of the payroll by 1959 without further legislation.

Ways and Means Committee Chairman Wilbur D. Mills (D-Ark.) on Dec. 5 sprinkled cold water on hopes for the Forand bill when he cautioned against proposed changes that would raise social security taxes.

Mills also indicated he questioned the advisability of trying to enact any across-the-board increase in monthly benefit payments. But he did say his committee would probably want to consider legislation similar to a bill Rep. Burr P. Harrison (D-Va.) has announced he will introduce expanding the disability insurance program.

Leading the fight for the Forand bill is the AFL-CIO, which considers a health insurance plan the most important objective in the social security field. The American Medical Association heads the opposition, claiming that voluntary health insurance plans eventually will be able to handle needs of the aged.

At present, persons 50 years or older who have participated in the social security program are entitled to regular benefits if they become totally disabled. Harrison's measure would eliminate the age limit.

He believes the cost of his amendment could be covered from existing or anticipated surpluses in the trust fund.

Arthur S. Flemming, Secretary of health, education and welfare, Dec. 2 disclosed the administration would offer a "positive plan," not yet announced, for medical care for recipients of old age and survivors insurance. He also said he would ask congress to approve a new federal program for independent self-care for the infirm and severely handicapped on public assistance rolls.

Robert M. Ball of the social security administration predicted early this month that congress would broaden the disability pension program. He also disclosed that the administration was considering a plan to tie social security payments to the cost of living.

Oldsters in the years to come will constitute a potent political force. The nearly 16 million persons over 65 now comprise 8.8 percent of the total U.S. population. Their number will increase by about one million every three years.

The aged are not too old to vote. Both the Republican and Democratic parties want to show they are friends of the 13,486,122 retired or disabled workers and survivors now receiving social security checks.

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