

Out of the Woods

By JIM STEVENS

Dirty Work at the White House . . .

No, this is not about the Reds but about another breed of propagandist that has been using the renewal of the White House for dirty work. The bunk that these babies have been peddling, with many a Washington correspondent and commentator swallowing the bait, is that wood has failed in the structure of the home of the Presidents.

Even the standby bogey of termites was brought into the story, without any basis of fact whatever. "Smear wood" was the order of the day in a campaign to demolish the historic building which is a symbol of great traditions and of history's mightiest events to the American people. There was no conscience and no patriotism in the proposal. All that was considered was the op-

portunity afforded to deal lumber as a competitive building product, a body blow—a body blow below the belt.

But the lumber industry associations have engineers of their own, able at their profession and willing to fight. They pitched in and produced the facts of the trouble in the innards of the White House. They won support from neutral engineers of highest standing. Their good work means more than can be measured to every man who is drawing a paycheck from the lumber industry and is looking forward to a future in it for his children.

These paychecks and futures depend on continuing good markets for wood.

The Real Story . . .

The truth about the White House and its need for renewal was told in the November issue of "Civil Engineering", by W. E. Reynolds,

Commissioner of Public Buildings, Washington, D. C., and member of the Society of Civil Engineers. The story was simply told, so that I could understand most of it. It is a story of wood standing up under well-nigh unimaginable abuse.

"It is a tribute to the toughness of good timber that it has successfully withstood such abuse for so long," says Commissioner Reynolds.

Mr. Reynolds describes three major operations on the White House, beginning with the fire set by the British in 1812, and big repair and remodeling jobs of 1902 and 1927. In 1902, for example, a brick bearing wall that was a main support of the second story was taken out and 10-inch steel beams were substituted. The old wood girders were ruinously notched at the supporting ends to receive the beams. This left about 5 inches of the original 18-inch depth of the girder timbers to carry the load—yes, 5 inches out of 18! Can you imagine it?

"How any timber could stand up for 45 years under such treatment is hard to imagine—force of habit, perhaps," says Engineer Reynolds. "No indication of decay was noted in the timbers resting in the brick walls, nor was there any structural evidence of termite infestation."

The article by the Commissioner of Public Buildings in the national capital gives examples that might be made to cast discredit on materials that compete with wood. The lumber industry association engineers are not using them as propaganda, however. They are gentlemen and scholars, only a little this side of the angels.

Origin of Wood Smearing . . .

Seems to me I've mentioned before in this space how in 1926 I attended a New York gathering of newspaper and advertising men and there heard the story of how the foremost "public relations expert" of his day had earned a fee that would choke a sawmill hog by inventing the wood smear as an instrument for wood's competitors.

It was a mixture. One element

DETROIT

By MRS. J. A. WRIGHT

George (Scotty) Scott who has been ill at his home here for the past two weeks, was taken to Portland Friday by Archie Matton. He will stay at their Portland home until his health and weather improves.

The state unemployment registrar was unable to get to Detroit this week working quite a hardship on many families.

The mail bus was about an hour late Saturday morning due to the fact that the driver Cecil Newton was held up about a mile west of Stayton when the road was blocked when several trucks and a tractor got into trouble on the icy pavement.

Mrs. R. E. Byrkit left Thursday for Los Angeles to meet her brother for the return trip to her home in Minneapolis after spending about two weeks with her mother-in-law Mrs. Ed. Byrkit here.

Ernie Smith returned the first of the week from a month spent visiting a brother and sister in Kansas whom he had not seen for twenty years, and some cousins and an uncle in Iowa. He reported a fine visit, but said he traveled in snow all the way home.

was to propagandize buyers of wood with the story that "the forests will soon be gone, so switch to other products now before you are forced into it." Another was the termite terror. Another was the fire fear. Another: "Wood won't last." There were numbers more.

In 1926 the advice of the public relations expert was working. It still is. Despite the fact that all the great losses of life and property in recent years from building fires have been in so-called fireproof buildings, the fire fear propaganda is even snaked into building codes. The foresters of the lumber associations have been kicking the straw man of disappearing forests into flinders. Now the timber engineers are fighting with flat and boot against the other slanders. Let's all help!

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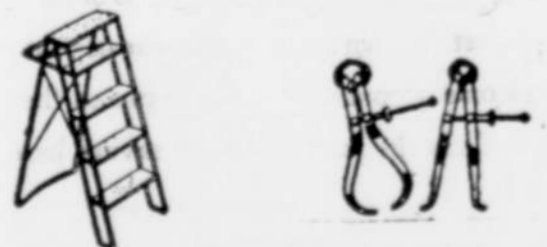
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