

AMERICAN LEGION PAPER SHOWS UP WARTIME GRAFT

GROSS NEGLIGENCE SHOWN IN HANDLING OF ARMY SUPPLIES

ACTUAL LOSSES RUN INTO MILLIONS

Articles Sold At Less Than Cost Later Bought Back At Market Prices

Washington, Sept. 30.—The government paid 43.3 cents a pound for roast beef which was later sold to Philadelphia brokers for 1.6 cents; once in private hands, the beef went on the market at 9.1 cents a pound wholesale; but for the short time that the army was in the retail store business, it sold this same beef direct to the consumer for more than 31 cents a pound. Such was only one minor item in one sale.

This charge was made public today by American Legion officials in announcing that the American Legion Weekly next Friday, in an expose of war and postwar profiteering in meat, sugar and mosquito bars, will declare that official Washington is considering the replacement of incompetent men and the punishment of the dishonest.

The article in the legion publication was written by Marquis James following weeks of investigation and says in part:

"In a transaction between the Quartermaster Corps and Thomas Robers & Co., brokers of Philadelphia, 5,630,466 pounds of roast beef which cost 43.3 cents a pound was sold for 1.6 cents, netting a neat profit of a shade under 600 per cent, the government standing a loss which amounted to \$2,392,948.05.

"The foregoing is only a minor item in one sale to this fortunate Philadelphia firm.

"The War Department, praising the superior sagacity of its former Director of Sales, E. C. Morse, twice indicted, calls his disposal of surplus meat 'a feat believed impossible'.

"Why the Roberts transaction, which took place shortly after Mr. Morse's retirement from government service, and in which Mr. Morse's private business associates participated, was not altogether impossible is something that is hard to understand.

"When the Armistice came, men began to sift back to the proper levels where normal standards obtained. In the sale of our army surplus property, a colossal business undertaking involving billions of dollars no such reaction to normal is noted. There was no war. The emergency had passed.

"There is Ernest C. Morse, during whose tenure as Assistant Director of Sales the Government disposed of nearly a billion and three-quarter dollars' worth of materials, and we are informed by the War Department that the bulk of these sales were made under the direct supervision of Mr. Morse. What other merchant is there who in a year has done a billion-dollar business?"

"When the government had a billion-dollar business to do did it select a commercial figure of adequate magnitude? Did it offer \$50,000 or \$500,000 as the wage of that figure, which any private firm would have been glad to offer? The Government did not.

"It offered \$12,000 and it got E. C. Morse. He worked for the Westinghouse Electric and Manufacturing company for \$1,200 before the war, and his salary with that firm, at the pinnacle of high wages in 1918, was \$3600. Thus the government sought to obtain a normalcy by walking backward.

"How long could the Chicago packers stay in business if they were guilty of such-meant deals as the one we glanced at in the opening paragraph? How long could they tolerate a man like the one whose record we shall now review, beginning with a communication dated March 6, 1918, from J. J. Jusserand, French Ambassador to the United States, to the Secretary of State."

The letter is then quoted in full, accusing an American major of unduly favoring a company which has been selling to the public for a year and more trucks of three American makes under another brand, in violation of French decrees prohibiting imports.

An investigation was begun, the records of which would fill a locker trunk. On September 12, 1918, the day of the attack at St. Mihiel, a letter which is quoted, was written by Major General James G. Harbord, commanding the Services of Supply, to General Pershing, recommending that this officer, who by this time had been promoted to a lieutenant colonel, be relieved

from duty and his temporary commission be taken from him. Summarized, the recommendation stated "It is a case of being a fool or a knave."

When the war was over, this officer was still retained as one of the Army's leading business men. "To note one of his many transactions," the article states, "we quote from a travel order issued December 8, 1920, directing him to proceed on a mission 'in connection with the sale of 10,000,000 pounds of surplus canned meat.'"

Other startling excerpts from the American Legion charges follow:

"One of the methods by which the government has sustained heavy losses is through sales to favored firms without competition by means of 'negotiated' or 'informal' bids. Many such corporations have been shoeing affairs in which ex-army officers and ex-employees of War Department sales branches have been heavily interested."

"January 7, 1920, 517,104 yards of O. D. waterproof duck which cost \$1.93 a yard was declared surplus, and five days later 239,104 yards of it was sold by 'negotiation' to H. Miller & Co. of New York, a firm prominent in surplus transactions, whose backers operated under a half dozen different names. Miller paid 65 1-4 cents a yard, but on Feb. 17 the price was reduced to 47 1/2 cents when Miller contended the material was 'full of oil and has a bad smell.' Four days later much of this material was sold by H. Miller & Co. to Wilson D. Trueblood, Inc., Chicago, for \$1.41 a yard. Trueblood informed the Department of Justice it was in good condition and he was able to re-sell it for \$1.75.

"This is only one of a series of extraordinary transactions in army duck which could be cited."

"How many soldiers or sailors of our erstwhile fighting forces discovered taps a signal to crawl under a nice new \$4.65 mosquito bar and make faces at the New Jersey nightingales? If you weren't among them it may be because your mosquito net was among the 2,313,000 such that an astonished Quartermaster Corps found to be on hand after the Armistice. For these the government had paid \$10,755,450. In December the Zone supply officer at New York was told to sell 100,000 bars."

"The Atlantic Export Products Company offered him 50 cents a bar for 500,000 bars and sent in a certified check for \$25,000 to bind the agreement, and a few days later notified the government it had disposed of the bars to a Philadelphia firm. The government promptly cancelled the sale. A. H. Eastmond, vice-president of the Atlantic company, protested to Secretary Baker, claiming unjust discrimination and that the War Department officials were out 'gunning for our treasurer.'"

"Eventually," the article shows, an offer from Charles Cohen, of New York, to buy all bars at 17 1/2 cents for new and 10 cents for reclaimed, was snapped up the day the offer was made and the transaction concluded without competitive bids.

"Major W. O. Watts, executive officer, surplus property division, protested in a memorandum to his chief against the nature of the mosquito bar and other sales, which brought an investigation and criticism by Lieut. Col. W. C. Jones, confidential officer of the Quartermaster General.

"So fast did the army get rid of Camel cigarettes, 9,000,000 packs being sold to the R. J. Reynolds Tobacco Company, which made them, for 6 1-3 cents each, (which did not include the 6 cents the company had to pay later as a stamp tax) that in less than a year the army commissaries were calling for Camels. The army bought them back at 14 1-3 cents a pack, losing \$201,268 on the deal, though fortunately, 66 per cent of the loss was covered by tax dues collected by the Department of Internal Revenue.

"On July 26, 1919, when sugar was highest and scarcest, and small dealers were going to jail for making too much profit, the War Department found a surplus of 52,000,000 pounds which had been purchased for 8 1/2 cents a pound. The public was paying from 20 to 30 cents a pound at the corner grocery. The government sold 45,000,000 pounds at 8 and 3-4 cents, and on the next day E. C. Morse, director of sales, recommended that the army's active sugar reserve be cut from a six to a three month supply. The Department of Justice has evidence that some of this sugar was resold at 29 1/2 cents. In the same fiscal year the army's supply gave out and the army went back to the sugar men and bought 35,500,000 pounds at 14.4 and 15.08 cents, most of it being raw and the price did not include the cost to the army of refining it. The public lost \$2,162,929, not including extra refining costs."

Pendleton is making an effort to get the tracks off business streets and to get a new union depot.

Construction of the main gravity canal of Grants Pass Irrigation district is to start at once and is to cost \$73,500.

Looking In on Congress From the House Gallery

SENIORITY

By CONGRESSMAN GUY U. HARDY

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Seniority or length of service has long been a controlling factor in many things in the house of representatives. I suppose it has always been so more or less, and it is a little more so now than formerly, if possible.

A member gets his office room in the house office building, his seat at committee tables, his rank on his committee, his chairmanship of committee, his place as a conferee on conference committees of the house and senate, and many other little favors and big opportunities for influence through seniority.

There was a time when the speaker had some choice in fixing up committees and chairmanships. You heard Uncle Joe Cannon roundly "cussed" about his exercise of that privilege a few years ago. Even then most of the chairmen were selected because they had served longest on the committees. But the speaker had some latitude and he did make some independent appointments in an effort to put the best qualified man in the place. And often such appointment raised Cain. About twelve years ago there was a revolution, Uncle Joe was defeated for speaker, new rules were adopted. Committee assignments are now made by a large committee on committees and the seniority rule is closely adhered to. There has been but one notable exception in years.

The present chairman of appropriations was not the high man but the second high man on the list. Chairmen of committees have much power and influence in directing legislation. They can help write legislation, help push it through the committee or hold it back. They have charge of it on the floor. Many bills pass the house in one form and the senate in another. If one house refuses to accept the amendments of the other, the bill is sent to conference. Conference committees include three or five members from each house. The house conferees now usually consist of two Republicans and one Democrat or three Republicans and two Democrats who have served longest on the committee. These conferees get together and agree to anything they can and report their findings back. These reports are usually accepted by both houses.

The seniority rule has been much criticized, and there is room for criticism. But there is something to be said for it. Chairmen have the advantage of long experience on their committees. If they are not dubs they must have learned much about the business in hand, and usually dubs do not remain long in congress. Any other method of selection would start log-rolling, build up machinery and factions and breed strife and trouble. The old members are for the seniority rule, and while the new members may be critical, I rather fancy we will never get far away from it.

However, after all is said, it does sometimes appear that seniority and long service have more influence and power in the house of representatives than brilliancy and ability.

WHEN A CONGRESSMAN DIES

When a congressman dies the house solemnly passes a resolution of acknowledgment and then adjourns. But usually by common consent the resolution is held on the speaker's desk until the business of the day has been completed, and at about 5 or 5:30 o'clock the resolution is read, passed and the house stands adjourned.

The resolution always runs the same. It reads:

"Resolved, That the house has heard with profound sorrow of the death of Hon. Mr. Blank, a representative from the state of —."

"Resolved, That the clerk communicate these resolutions to the senate and transmit a copy thereof to the family of the deceased."

"Resolved, That as a further mark of respect this house do now adjourn."

Few things are permitted to interfere with the business of the house. The work goes grinding on through the weeks and months. The house passes laws setting apart holidays that others may rest, and celebrate, and reverse the memory of notable men, but the house goes on with the nation's business without resting or celebrating.

The house evidently thinks that the best respect it can pay to the memory of the country's notables and its own dead is to go on with its important work. And so it does, usually.

Occasionally, if business is not too pressing and if the deceased member was more or less prominent, the resolution is passed soon after the house meets at noon. And when that happens I dare say that most of the members feel a good deal as the schoolboy feels when a teacher or a fellow pupil dies and school is dismissed; they enjoy getting a day off.

Seventeen members are usually appointed to attend the funeral and when a member dies in office he is likely to have a notable gathering at his graveside.

A day is set apart when those who knew him best pay eloquent tribute to

his work and memory. Here again the economical tendency of congress is shown, as the day set is always a Sunday when other business is not up for consideration. The speeches delivered on this occasion are published in the Congressional Record, and a little booklet containing them is made up, each member being given a few copies.

The other day I looked up a copy of one of these memorials for a gentleman in Pueblo. It was the memorial address on the life and character of James N. Burns of Missouri, delivered February 23, 1889. Although this was over 33 years ago, I was surprised to note how many gentlemen spoke on that day whose names are well known to us of this day; and some of the addresses are notable examples of eloquence. Ex-Speaker Henderson, Dockery, Holman, Randall, Breckenridge, Butterworth, Stone, Grosvenor, Cockrell, Voorhees, Hale, Gorman and Vest. Surely an array of brilliant names.

It is customary for congress to vote a year's pay to the widow of a deceased member.

There are many deaths in congress. I am told about eighteen a year, and the flag on the house office building flies at half-mast a good deal of the time.

In the present congress there have been twelve deaths and it is only about half over. They are as follows: Fred L. Blackmon of Alabama, Samuel M. Taylor of Arkansas, John A. Elston of California, William E. Mason of Illinois, William H. Frankhauser of Michigan, Charles F. Van de Water of California, Henry D. Flood of Virginia, Prince J. Kahlo Kalaniano'ole of Hawaii, Lucian W. Parrish of Texas and Samuel M. Brinson of North Carolina.

Two of these members committed suicide and two were killed in automobile accidents.

Over in the senate when a death occurs the governor of the state appoints a senator to fill the vacancy until the next regular state election. A constitutional amendment has been suggested to provide that vacancies in the house should be filled in like manner. Such an arrangement would save the states much money which special elections necessarily cost.

Home Problem of Members.

One of a congressman's little troubles is the home problem, getting a house to live in. Washington is the highest priced city in the country. Property and rents are high. If a man is there alone he can live at a hotel. If he has a family he must have a house or an apartment. The hotels are high priced. The houses and flats are out of sight. What members pay for houses of course depends upon what they get and want to pay. Several members pay \$7,500 a year rent, and quite a number pay from \$3,000 to \$5,000. Of course they do not live on their salaries. They get something from back home. The members who try to live on their salaries, or nearly so, pay from \$150 to \$250 a month for a furnished house. And you don't get as much in Washington for \$200 a month as you can get in Colorado cities for \$50.

Within the moderate prices, houses are very hard to get and usually undesirable. Most residence property in Washington is built in rows—houses in solid blocks like store buildings. They are usually 17 to 20 feet wide, three stories high with three rooms on each floor, windows only in front and back, a front yard 10 or 12 feet deep.

First Congress Met in 1789.

The congress in session at this time is the Sixty-seventh congress. The first congress under the Constitution met in 1789. It should have met on March 4, but a quorum did not show up so it adjourned from day to day until April 1, when it opened for business. On April 6 of that year both houses met in joint session and canvassed the electoral vote for President and vice president. George Washington was found to be elected President and John Adams, vice president.

Congress Lasts Two Years.

Congress consists of a two-year term. There are two regular sessions and occasionally a special session or two. Members of the house of representatives are elected for two years and senators for a term of six years. The congress elected in November does not convene in regular session until the first Monday in December of the following year. But for several years a special session has been called soon after the 4th of March following the election.

Hearing the Other Side.

"You have decided to stay on the farm?"

"Yes," said Mr. Cobble. "I get discouraged durin' th' week, but I cheer up considerably on Sundays."

"How is that?"

"I listen to people who come out here from town in their automobiles. After I hear them tell their troubles I forget that I have any of my own."

Uncle John's Josh

ONE SAID, "I CAN'T LET GEORGE DO IT." GEORGE DID, AND GOT THE CREDIT.



CARD OF THANKS

We wish to extend our heartfelt thanks to the neighbors and friends for their many kindnesses during the illness and at the death of our mother; also for the many floral offerings.

FRANK BERNIS AND FAMILY.

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