Washington Digest

National Topics Interpreted

by William Bruckart

Washington.—The farm aid program with respect to wheat now has entered its second phase. It is facing its real test at this time, just as the cotton program faced a real test when the farmers were asked to plow under their growing crop, which has succeeded insofar as gaining the support of the cotton planters is concerned. Secretary Wallace is asking the wheat growers to reduce their acreage for next year's crop, 15 per cent below their average in recent years. It is now distinctly up to them, therefore, if they want to go on through with the allotment plan for which there has been much agitation in congress during the last six or eight years. Contracts are being sent around for the farmers to sign and agree to go through with the plan to boost the price of wheat by controlling the production.

Farm Aid Faces Test

Accompanying this development in our strictly nationalistic program, however, is another of international character. I refer to the agreements recently reached at London whereby a step has been taken to deal with the wheat problem by concert of nations. It can have far more influence than can our program at home if it succeeds, but Washington observers seem to have their fingers crossed until they see some movements abroad indicative of complete sincerity on the part of some of the nations that have signed the London agreement.

The conference at London placed several significant elements into written form. A general understanding was worked out—and signed—that:

The major wheat importing and exporting countries of the world face the facts of the world wheat problem and agree on a program of action to seek to correct them.

The exporting nations agree to control exports and to adjust production so as to help eliminate the excessive carryovers of wheat.

The wheat importing countries agree to cease further efforts to expand production within their own countries and agree to a policy of gradually removing tariffs and trade barriers as world wheat prices rise.

The countries participating in the conference will establish a joint committee to watch the working out of the plan in its various steps. This committee will meet from time to time and will be responsible for seeing that additional steps are properly taken.

So we have an agreement among all of the nations on a start, and we have our own program well under way. The international understanding is long on promises, and to my way of thinking will be a long while in fulfillment. Our own program, whatever its merit be, is proceeding along quite different and quite definite lines and if the theory be right is dependent for its success upon those who grow the wheat and not upon whims of international politicians and jealousies between nations.

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There are so many "ifs" in the international agreement which, after all, hinges upon what the nations themselves do. If all of the signatory nations perform and try to adjust production downward, such as the United States has started to do, and remove tariffs and quotas and other trade barriers, then it is considered as possible that something may come of the conference understanding. But those whom I mentioned as having their fingers crossed are asking whether, for instance, Australia, or the Argentine or Canada, will enforce production control. And, if they don't, then what? Also, what about the situation if Italy, which now has a tariff of $1.07 (gold) on imported wheat, doesn't cut off some of that amount? Statesmen may sit in a conference and fix things up in a big way, and later their governments have a way of forgetting just what the agreements were, or else find loopholes in them.

Many "Ifs" in Pact

I had a letter from one of my readers in central Kansas, asking whether I thought the London agreement would have any effect on the wheat situation this year. My reply was that it would have none and could have none, and I might have added the further thought of my own that it probably never will have much effect, because it is unlikely there will be the necessary concessions by all concerned. If all of the participating nations entered into an international arrangement wholeheartedly, wheat production and wheat prices could be stabilized. There remains, however, that ever recurring "if."

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To get back to the domestic plan: Secretary Wallace's decision to cut the acreage 15 per cent next year brings up several questions. Fifteen per cent of what, for example? Let me quote George Farrell, of the agricultural adjustment administration, so there can be a definite statement:

"In many western counties, where drought has prevailed during the last three years, three-year averages are not representative of farmers' production. These counties have favored using county average yields and individual farmers' acreages as the basis for farm allotments. Other growers, however, whose yields are higher than the average and who are able to attest their production, feel that the county average plan discriminates against them.

"To meet this situation, we have presented to wheat growers a combination plan which is expected to insure determination of fair allotments to all farmers.

"The combination plan provides that in each county, where the combination plan is used, the total production of farmers who submit authentic records with their applications for allotments, will be subtracted from the total production of the county as shown on the official figures in the department of agriculture. Allotments for farmers who do not have proved records will be calculated on the basis of the average yield for the county, less the proved production."

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The net result of this all is that farmers can claim their benefit payments on the basis of actual production on their individual farms for the last three, four and five years, if they are able to supply records showing what that production was. This can be done even if the county committee decides to use average county yields and the average acreages of growers as the basis upon which the 15 per cent reduction is to be calculated.

Benefit Payments

This arrangement applies only to the 1934 crop. There may be more or less than the 15 per cent reduction ordered in the fall of 1934 which will affect the 1935 crop.

On the basis of a theoretically complete sign-up of the farmers and a 15 per cent reduction, there would be approximately 9,600,000 acres now in wheat that would not be planted for harvest next summer. On the same theoretical base of average production, the reduction in wheat grown would be about 124,000,000 bushels.

With wheat prices about where they are now, the income from the current wheat crop is calculated at about $325,000,000, which is something of a gain over the 1932 return on wheat, which has been figured at $177,000,000. But if the wheat reduction program goes over, the farmers this fall will receive something in addition to the prices for this year's crop. They are due to receive cash from the processing tax. The Department of Agriculture has figured the tax will yield something like $120,000,000, and so the total return this year may be as large as $450,000,000.

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Some weeks ago, I reported in these columns that the patronage dam had broken and that plum picking for office holders was going on full speed ahead. That was true. It has gone out full speed ahead, but if one may judge from the enormous amount of grumbling, the patronage flood has not gone in that direction that old line Democrats, or many of them, would like to have it go. Indeed, President Roosevelt's appointments have not been pleasing to the bulk of his loyal supporters.

I can report now that things have come to such a pass that between 26 and 30—no one will say just how many—senators have signed a petition asking Mr. Roosevelt to be a little more regular about his appointments. It is not certain that the petition, one of these round robin affairs, ever was sent to the White House, nor is it certain it ever will go to the President if it has not been given to him yet. Nevertheless, it is significant. It shows the feeling.

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The truth about the matter is that some old line Democrats, men whose word has been Democratic law for years, are growing nervous over the potentialities in the Roosevelt course. Deep down in their souls, they fear that Mr. Roosevelt is engaged in building up a "Roosevelt party" as distinguished from the Democratic party. They point out that he has played ball with the Norris-LaFollette-Johnson wing of the Republicans, that he has named such men as Secretary Woodin, to the treasury, after Mr. Woodin has spent years in the Republican fold, and Secretary Ickes to the Department of the Interior, after Mr. Ickes had attained absolutely no prominence at all in any partisan way except as a Progressive Republican, and that he has disregarded party recommendations in dozens of cases only to pick men and women who might just as easily be called Republicans as Democrats.

Old Liners Worried

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The depression conditions hit the ice cream business last year, but the consumption of butter and evaporated milk moved higher according to final figures for 1932 that have just been compiled by the Department of Agriculture. It was quite natural, the experts told me, that there should have been a falling off of ice cream, because a good many thousands of people just did not have the money to buy it. If they had money, they bought the usual amount of butter and evaporated milk, along with the regular supply of milk, but ice cream was in the luxury class. At least, that is the explanation given for the decline in the manufacture of ice cream from 208,239,000 gallons in 1931 to 160,138,000 gallons in 1932.

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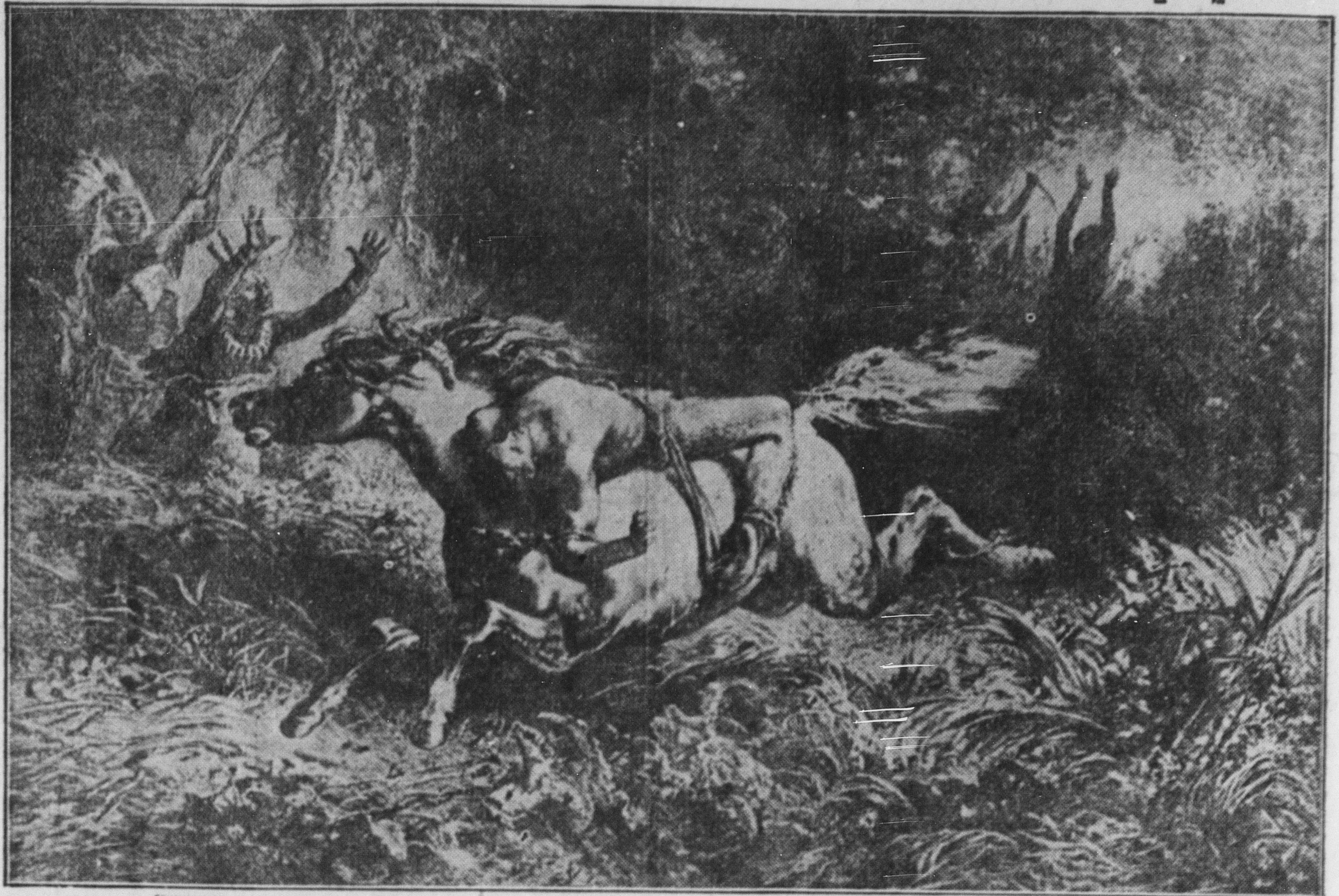
SIMON KENTON, the American Mazeppa



"Simon Butler, or, Mazeppa americain" LITHOGRAPH by MILLET and BODMER.

Simon Kenton PORTRAIT by L. W. MORGAN

Daniel Boone PORTRAIT by CHESTER HARDING

By ELMO SCOTT WATSON

IT WAS just 155 years ago this month that a stirring adventure befell a frontiersman on the banks of the Ohio river, the story of which not only became a classic in border history, but fastened upon this frontiersman the title of "The American Mazeppa" and was the inspiration for a famous picture upon which two artists of world renown collaborated. The frontiersman was Simon Kenton, or Simon Butler, as he was also known. The picture was "Simon Butler, or, Mazeppa Americain" and the two artists were Jean Francois Millet, the Frenchman famed for his "The Angelus" and "The Sower," and Karl Bodmer, the Swiss, who was one of the earliest and greatest painters of the American Indian.

In the summer of 1778 Col. John Bowman, commander of the fort at Harrodsburg, Ky., sent three men, Simon Kenton, Alexander Montgomery and George Clark (not THE George Rogers Clark) on a spying expedition to the Shawnee Indian town of Chillicothe beyond the Ohio river. A short time before this, Kenton and Montgomery accompanied a party led by Daniel Boone on a similar spying expedition to Paint-creek-town in Ohio, recaptured four horses which the Indians had taken from the Kentucky settlers and brought them back safely to Logan's Station.

So when the three men started out to scout for Bowman, they took along a quantity of salt and some halters in case they should have a chance to capture some more Indian horses. Such a chance did present itself and on the night of September 9, 1778, they fled from Chillicothe, taking with them seven Indian horses. By riding hard all night, all the next day and the next night they reached the Ohio river on the morning of September 11 only to find its waters so whipped up by a storm that they could not force the horses to plunge in and swim for the Kentucky shore.

Despite the certainty of pursuit by the Indians, they resolved to wait there until the river should subside instead of selecting the three best horses and making their escape while there was still time, as Kenton himself later admitted they should have done. The result was that on the morning of September 13 a party of Shawnees "jumped" them as they were preparing to round up the horses and proceed down the Ohio to Corn Island, where there was a garrison of Kentuckians. Kenton was the first to fall into the hands of the enemy. Montgomery, coming to his aid, fired at the Indians but missed and fled for his life with some of the savages in hot pursuit. In the meantime Clark dashed down to the river, plunged in and, clinging to a piece of driftwood, managed to reach the Kentucky shore.

The Indians who had been chasing Montgomery soon returned bringing with them his scalp and they took turns slapping Kenton across the face with it, exclaiming as they did so, "You steal Indian hoss, huh?" The Shawnees were in an ugly mood, for Daniel Boone had recently escaped from them and returned to Boonesborough in time to help beat off an Indian attack on that fort. But now they had a captive who was almost as great a foeman as Boone and they had no intention of allowing him to escape. They knew him for a brave man and they were resolved that he should show "how a brave man can die," which meant that he was doomed to the torture stake.

However, they would wait until they had returned to Chillicothe, where all the members of the tribe could enjoy his death agonies. In the meantime they would inflict upon him a long series of beatings, kickings and other cruelties, always making sure that none of the injuries should prove fatal. So as they started north for Chillicothe there began for Kenton that "adventure which for its momentous succession of perils, transitions and hairbreadth escapes has not its parallel in all the adventurous annals of western border history.

It would be impossible to condense all the perils of those two months within the brief scope of this article, so only the highlights can be given. The first one was his famous "Mazeppa ride" which came the next morning after his capture. Among their recovered horses, the Indians found a wild, unbroken three-year-old and on this animal they fastened their prisoner, tying his hands behind him and his feet under the horse's belly. Around his neck they tied a halter with its ends fastened to the horse's neck and tail. When this was done they released the horse and gave it a sharp blow to start it on its way. As they did so, one of them exclaimed, "You like Indian horse, huh? You ride one now."

At once the horse began to rear and pitch to rid itself of its burden, then started to run through the woods. Bushes and brambles tore at Kenton's feet and legs and low-hanging branches of the trees raked his face and body. But his greatest danger lay in his being shaken loose from the horse, for then he would be strangled by the halter around his neck before his captors could stop the fear-maddened animal. However, he managed to hang on somehow and after a while the three-year-old ceased its efforts to throw him off and quietly followed the others.

During the next two days Kenton was again and again tied on the colt but by this time it had become more accustomed to him and after a few plunges it quieted down and carried him along quietly with the rest of the party.

Upon his arrival at Chillicothe, the cruel preliminaries to his torture at the stake began. He was forced to run the gauntlet, the first of nine he was to run before at last he was tied to the stake. Then the Shawnees decided to take him to their principal village, Wappatomika, for the last act of the drama. On the way he was forced to run the gauntlet at every village through which he and his captors passed.

At Wappatomika the first of his miraculous escapes came to pass. For there he was recognized by Simon Girty, the white renegade, as "Simon Butler" (Kenton had taken that name when he fled from Virginia early in his career), a comrade in arms during the Dunmore war, and Girty succeeded in winning over the Shawnees to freeing their prisoner. But his freedom was short-lived, for a war party which returned from an unsuccessful raid in Virginia demanded that his torture proceed. Even Girty could not prevail against them, but he did succeed in having the date for the torture postponed until the gathering of all the tribes at Sandusky.

On the way to Sandusky the famous Mingo chief, Logan, befriended Kenton and spared him some sufferings, but near Sandusky he was again forced to run the gauntlet, his ninth time. Then when preparations were going forward for burning him at the stake, again fate intervened. As the torch was applied to the wood piled up around him, a heavy rain started to fall and put it out. It was two days before the wood was dry enough to try again. In the meantime Peter Druillard, a British agent from Detroit, arrived and ransomed Kenton so that he could be taken to Detroit for questioning by Gen. Henry Hamilton, the British commander there. Kenton was held a prisoner at Detroit until June, 1779, when he escaped and safely made the perilous journey back to Kentucky.

As for the story of how Simon Kenton, the frontiersman, became the subject for a famous picture by two celebrated artists, it came about when Karl Bodmer, a Swiss artist, accompanied Maximilian, prince of Neuweid, to America to illustrate the book his royal patron was to write on "Travels in the Interior of North America, 1832-1834."

After Bodmer's return to Europe, he lived for awhile at Fontainebleau in France, where he was a neighbor of Jean Francois Millet. He told Millet some of the classic stories of the American border, especially that of Kenton's Mazeppa ride, and Millet began to make drawings of Indians in crayon and charcoal. Eventually he and Bodmer collaborated in a series of lithographs, Bodmer doing the landscapes and horses and Millet doing the human figures, both Indians and white men. These were published in 1852 and one of them was "Simon Butler, or, Mazeppa Americain."

And this was another curious manifestation of the fate which intervened repeatedly in the life of Simon Kenton—that his last "portrait" should be painted more than a decade after his death by a foreigner, a man who had never seen him and who, noted for being the delineator of quiet, pastoral French scenes, would be about the last man on earth one would expect to portray an incident in the tumultuous life of an American frontiersman!

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