

# Washington Digest

National Topics Interpreted  
by William Bruckart

Washington.—The Roosevelt administration suddenly has taken on renewed interest in development of basins for trade between the United States and other nations and thus, for the first time, it seems to appear that a very definite trend has been set up to take care of our surplus farm crops and our surplus manufactured products. How far it will extend is a question that none can answer at this time, but the situation and the circumstance certainly constitute a factor that should be examined in a larger sense than piece-meal discussion because of the far-reaching effect that conceivably will flow from the course upon which the government seems to be traveling.

### Seek Trade Outlets

International trade has been a subject about which too many high-sounding phrases have been grouped. Individuals in the interior, for example, were too prone to pass it by as having no effect on them, whatever their calling in life may have been. Such is distinctly not the case. It has a direct bearing on the success of a farmer as it has a direct effect on the success of a manufacturer. In each instance, the benefits or the damages flow on through the various lines of commerce and industry and into the lives of all. That is why, in my opinion, the trend that now appears to be developing is a matter of concern to the humblest laborer and of great consequence to the agricultural areas of our country.

In a speech at the recent Pan-American conference at Montevideo, Cordell Hull, secretary of state, observed that "international trade is hopelessly clogged with prohibitions, embargoes, quotas and other arbitrary restrictions." Thereupon, he proposed concerted action to do away with those barriers to trade among nations.

Secretary Hull offered several propositions to the statesmen assembled at Montevideo and initiated numerous discussions privately along the lines of elimination of trade barriers. But the secretary talked about "multilateral treaties," agreements between many nations, and appears to be carrying on that policy. Here in Washington, however, we are repeatedly told that multilateral treaties are impossible of consummation. President Roosevelt thinks that there are few possibilities in that direction, and he is talking about treaties between pairs of countries. For example, a commercial agreement between the United States and England, or France, or the Argentine, or some other nation with which the United States engages in heavy international trade.

It is yet too early to tell which way we are headed. Likewise, none can forecast whether the bilateral agreements or the multilateral pacts will work to our best advantage. Nothing can be more certain, however, than that there will be a lot of discussion in congress as it gets under way, and I believe it is equally certain that there will be a lot of debate by members of the house and senate who will be wholly uninformed as to the meaning of their words.

### Centralized Information

The President, in announcing formation of the council, explained that there were so many governmental agencies of nationwide scope that it seemed advisable to formulate a program by which individuals everywhere could go to a single center in their county and obtain information. He pointed out how wheat farmers or cotton farmers required advice on acreage reduction problems, how the national recovery administration reached into hundreds of cities and towns, how farm owners wanted to know how to proceed with their applications to borrow under the farm credit act, how home owners in small and large towns would always have problems to discuss in connection with home loans, and various other phases of normal and emergency governmental activity. The President thought it was a fine move to concentrate in one place all information respecting these matters.

But here in Washington, observations on the plan direct attention to the fact that there are in excess of three thousand counties in the United States. Each county will have one of the central information agencies, and there will have to be two or more persons assigned there. In other words, a minimum of two jobs to dispense. Another suggestion heard frequently is that if there are criticisms of the administration, they can be discovered quickly and means adopted to offset them.

### Two Types of Treaties

I think there can be no doubt that the information service can be of great help to persons residing far away from the headquarters of things governmental.

The row in the agricultural adjustment administration that preceded the transfer of G. N. Peek, administrator, to new duties in charge of export trade promotion apparently left an unpleasant taste in the mouth of some farm leaders. Reactions have come from various sections of the country. Representatives and senators, returning from their homes for the new session, brought back many blistering remarks about the fuss between Mr. Peek and Secretary Wallace and Assistant Secretary Tugwell, of the Department of Agriculture. Mr. Peek always has been interested in agriculture because it was his business to be while he was head of the great Moline Plow company and other farm implement enterprises. But he apparently was unable to convince Messrs. Wallace and Tugwell that he was on the right track in the way he administered the adjustment act.

On the other hand, there is that balanced trade idea on which some authorities rely to force open doors that are now partially closed. If Poland could be persuaded to buy more from the United States than has been the

case, of course, the result will be advantageous to our side.

### Barred by Tariff

There can be no doubt that high tariff rates hold out some foreign products. That is the purpose. The multilateral treaties, it appears from explanations given me, will cut down some of those rates, while the bilateral treaties may also strike the rates, but are more naturally directed toward removal of other obstructions. Bilateral treaties conceivably can be carried so far that the United States will be trading only with those countries willing to sign such agreements and limit themselves on the sources of supply.

The natural assumption to be drawn from the various aspects of the new trend, it seems to me, is that an attempt is being made to get away from the high tariff policy which has been an issue between the Democratic and Republican political parties so many years. My own conviction is that it cannot be accomplished; that world conditions are such as to make it impossible for the United States to let down any barriers now stopping the potential flood of foreign products, and that adoption of such a course will eliminate some of our own institutions and make further inroads into what is left of agriculture.

If one is willing to concede that our nation, or the majority of its people, favor the protection policy, then I gather that the job to which most attention ought to be paid is that of finding markets in this country for foreign products that do not compete, or do not seriously damage our own economic structure. If attention is given to that end, economists who are not politically minded tell me that outlets will be opened abroad for American-made goods. We will have our coffee, our rubber, our bananas, our cork, and a score of other things, and we will pay for them. So it is with some other peoples. They will have our cotton, our tobacco, our canned fruit, and so on, and they are willing to pay for them. It surely is made to appear, therefore, that the government is not attempting to increase trade in one way that it could be done, namely, help the foreigners increase their markets here for the things we do not produce. If that is done, economists who have studied the problems from all angles insist there will be a parallel growth in our exports.

There has been considerable adverse comment aroused in Washington to the action of the administration in organization what it calls a "national executive council."

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## A Busy Year Ahead



### Her New Year's Resolution

By Helen Gaisford

JOHN LARKIN was too busy for frivolities on New Year's Eve. He sat at his massive desk till eleven, and then, to rest his eyes, turned off his lamp and sat in darkness, watching the lights and figures on the street below.

When he woke with a start an hour later at the sound of horns and sirens, he was cold and stiff. Suddenly he realized that some one else was in the room. He sat very quiet, scarcely breathing. A beam of light flashed and was gone. A moment later the unseen visitor had picked out the safe, and delicate fingers twirled the dial.

Although he realized that a shot might pass unnoticed in the din outside, he could scarcely sit and be robbed. With a sudden lunge he grasped both of the intruder's wrists—and in his arms lay a frail form, quite motionless. He looked for a weapon, found none, and turned on the lights.

"A girl," he exclaimed, "in boy's clothes!" She stirred and sat up. "Well," he demanded, "tell me what you wanted in my safe."

"Nothing. Let me go." "I suppose you were responsible for those letters that were stolen last week. But they were in code, so you came back for the key." "Do you mean these?" She took from her shirt a sheaf of papers. "I was going to put them back. I have decoded them." He took the papers. Above the code ran a perfect translation. He looked at her a long time. "Don't, please," she said, and covered her face with her hands.

### The Passing Year

By Henry Loukas, in Detroit News

THE year that we measured has ended; And has faded with the eons sublime. The land-marks we know have all blended In the age old image of time.

Its sun and its shadows have perished, Like the loves that we quickly forget; But the spring and the autumn it cherished Still haunt with a tinge of regret.

We meet on this threshold each season; And we sigh as the sands must drift by. Each grain is as precious as reason, For they total the years 'til we die.

or fat broke by the last day of the year.

"That night I read in the paper of your exploits in the stock market—how everything seemed to rise or fall at your command. I decided to throw my lot with yours—only I knew that of course you would not divulge your methods to a stranger."

"When the stranger is so beautiful one might do many things," he murmured. "Was your ruse successful?" "Very. I now have ten times what I had then."

"But I don't understand how you got into my office, and found the combination to my safe."

She laughed. "That was easy. My father was a locksmith; when I was a child locks and their mechanisms were my toys. I could open them by touch."

"And decoded the messages." "That did take work. I sat up all that night, trying again and again. You see, the possibility of a code had not occurred to me when I first decided to rummage among your personal effects. That was why I had to take the papers away. Instead of just reading them. But at last I was lucky, and once I got a start, it was just a question of time."

"You have a good start into the New Year as a safe-breaker," he observed.

"Please don't say that. I was so desperate, and it hasn't hurt anyone." "But it has," he insisted. "I'll never be the same unless I am sure you are keeping out of such delirium."

### New Year's in the Family

By Charles Frederick Wadsworth

JIM TROMAN stamped the snow from his feet and entered the front door of his home.

He stood straight, with chin up and a good-humoredly challenging look in his eye.

Anne Troman, busy preparing the table for the evening meal, looked up.

"Well, Father," she smiled, "you look pretty well pleased with yourself this evening."

"I don't know how I look, but I feel like a million dollars!" was Jim's reply.

"And why?" Anne wanted to know. "Just because," Jim spoke deliberately and impressively, "I am going to start the New Year with a clean slate. I have paid every bill I owed. No man can say I owe him a dime. And I have yet one day to go before New Year's!"

"That's surely is fine," said Anne. "It does make us feel good, doesn't it?"

"Hold on there, Daddy Jim," warned little Bert. "You haven't paid me back that three dollars and thirty-one cents I let you have some time ago out of my bank."

"Nor the two dollars and eighty-six cents I let you have out of my bank," little Agnes reminded him.

Daddy Jim laughed. "Oh, that is all in the family. You know I'll pay you back, don't you?"

"Of course," said Bert, "but so did all those other folks you paid off. So why do you think you had to pay them and not us?"

## A New Year's Adventure

by Katherine Edelman

ON CARLTON gripped the wheel tightly as the car plowed a zig zag path through the mire of the country road. What a fool he had been to allow himself to be talked into taking the short cut between Webster and Holton! But he had been in such a hurry to get back to Chicago to join with the crowd in welcoming in the New Year. If only he had made sufficient inquiry he could have found out about this awful detour. He hadn't thought there were any roads left that were quite so bad, and he couldn't have foreseen the quick and annoying thaw that had set in.

Down the steep grade the big car careened—now on one side of the road, now on the other. He couldn't hold it to the ruts. It got more and more beyond his control every minute—until finally the left rear wheel slid into the heavy three-foot bank at the side.

Don made a sound that was almost a groan. He was beyond speech for the moment. Could anything be worse? Marooned in the dark on a country road, and on New Year's Eve! As hungry as a hawk, without even a sandwich to bite on. Hang it all, anyway! Why hadn't he used a little common sense?

Stumbling out of his seat, he stood upon the running board for a moment. There didn't seem to be a thing that he could do. The heavy night was all around him, and there probably wasn't a house within miles.

But there was! For the friendly light of a Christmas candle was blinking at him from the window of a small cottage that stood back some distance from the road!

Braving the sticky mud that made walking so difficult, Don approached the house and knocked.

"I—I beg your pardon for bothering you," he said apologetically, "but my car got stalled out in front and I

thought maybe I could use your telephone."

There was something likable in the face of the lad standing inside the door. "I'm sorry, we've got no phone, mister, but—but I know man would be glad to have you come in. Wouldn't you, mam?" He turned toward a slender and charming dark-haired woman as he spoke.

"Why, of course," she said, with a smile. "We're always glad to assist a stranger, and—and we can fix you something to eat, and you can stay here until some one comes along to help you."

Soon the appetizing odors of ham and eggs and coffee filled the room. Don inhaled the fragrance while he talked to the children. He found the other three just as pleasant as the boy who had opened the door. There was something especially likable about them all.

Don did a lot of thinking while he ate the delicious meal. His sharp eyes had taken in the situation at a glance. There was poverty in the little home—not the kind that shows itself to the world unashamed—but the shabby refinement. A few new toys of the cheap kind were the only things to show that Christmas had come to the little family.

He thought with a thrill of the package that lay under the back seat of his car. He was glad now that a mistake had been made on the shipment to the Nelson Stores and they had asked him to bring the things into the factory branch for credit.

But instead of going to the factory branch, he made up his mind that the contents of the package would remain in the Dalton cottage. And he felt quite sure that he was going to have a lot more fun out of the thing he was going to do than he ever could have celebrating the New Year with his bachelor friends in Chicago.

An hour later, after help had come along, and while he was being towed to the highway, there echoed in his ears above the plop-plop of the horses' feet, the hearty thanks and good wishes for a happy New Year that the Dalton family had repeated with such sincerity. And he felt that such good wishes must come true.