

News Review of Current Events the World Over

Johnson Averts Textile Strike and Tackles Steel Workers' Threat—Steps for Drouth Relief—Fletcher Made Republican Chairman.

By EDWARD W. PICKARD
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GENERAL JOHNSON, administrator of the NRA, evidently must be given credit for a skillful piece of work in negotiating the agreement which forestalled the threatened strike of some 400,000 workers in the cotton textile industry. The immediate peril was to the workers themselves, for the cotton mill owners, embarrassed by over-production, would be willing to shut down their plants for a considerable time. Of course, the New Deal would have suffered a black eye, so General Johnson tackled the problem energetically and persuaded Thomas F. McMahon, president of the United Textile Workers of America, and George Sloan, head of the Cotton Textile Institute, to accept a compromise, and the call for the strike was revoked.

The employers are permitted to go ahead with their program of curtailing production 25 per cent, and the laborers have the promise of an NRA investigation into the matter of higher wages and other points of difference. The union also is assured of increased representation on the industrial relations board of the cotton textile code authority and on the NRA advisory board.

The next great labor trouble, the dispute between the steel masters and the Amalgamated Association of Iron, Steel and Tin Workers, promised to be more difficult for General Johnson to handle, and it seemed that prompt action by President Roosevelt would be necessary to avert the threatened strike. The men demand the right of collective bargaining through the union agents. Michael F. Tighe, president of the Amalgamated, declared it was up to Mr. Roosevelt to provide "prompt and unqualified enforcement of the law" on this point. He said the government had failed the steel workers and "their patience is exhausted."

General Johnson offered a compromise in the form of a special labor relations board for the steel industry, similar to that which was created for the automotive industry in March. But the proposition was rejected by both the steel masters and the spokesmen for the union.

According to the American Iron and Steel Institute, the strike threats are due to the activities of union leaders who seek government intervention "to maneuver themselves into positions of power and domination over the steel workers of the nation." In a formal statement, the institute asserted relations of steel companies and a great mass of their employees are "peaceful," and that the whole difficulty lies with the Amalgamated association.

The "closed shop" is the one point at issue, the statement says, and for the employers to "accede to such a request would be rank treachery."

ROUSED to action by the drouth, which is the worst the country has ever experienced, President Roosevelt telephoned from Groton, Conn., to the federal relief administration, directing that a special relief work program be put into operation immediately in the middle western states. On his return to Washington he called a council of war to expand his plans and hear proposals from various government officials. It was stated by Mr. Roosevelt that farmers should be given cash income from work and also employment on projects so that their immediate distress might be alleviated.

Harry L. Hopkins, federal emergency relief administrator, at once allocated \$6,500,000 to 13 states so that the work could start. The states receiving allotments are: Wisconsin, \$2,100,000; Minnesota, \$1,000,000; South Dakota, \$1,000,000; Idaho, \$250,000; Kansas, \$200,000; Montana, \$350,000; Nebraska, \$275,000; New Mexico, \$100,000; North Dakota, \$500,000; Utah, \$600,000; Wyoming, \$150,000.

Work projects, Mr. Hopkins said, will be put speedily under way to employ the heads of farm families in need. The projects will include the development of additional water supply through digging wells and through impounding or diverting water from rivers and lakes.

Projects employing men and women in the canning of meat, fruits and vegetables also will be used to conserve food resources of the area and furnish cash income for the families. Road work, as well, will provide considerable emergency employment.

The picture presented to the conference was one of live stock emaciated for want of water and food, grasshoppers and chinch bugs doing untold damage in the wake of the heat and drouth, thousands of acres of planted grain lying ungerminated or blighted and hundreds of farm communities praying for rain.

Plans of live stock owners in the most seriously affected states to drive their cattle into Minnesota, North Dakota and Wisconsin for feeding and grazing were forestalled by the action of the governors of those three states forbidding the carrying out of the scheme. In Minnesota Governor Olson mobilized the National Guard to patrol the borders and enforce the embargo.

HENRY P. FLETCHER of Pennsylvania has been handed the rather difficult job of managing the Republican party. The national committee at its session in Chicago elected him chairman to succeed Everett Sanders. This would seem to be a wise choice, for Mr. Fletcher is an able and energetic man, notable for his diplomacy and tact and also for ready wit. In 1898 he abandoned law practice to become one of Theodore Roosevelt's Rough Riders, and after the campaign in Cuba he transferred to the Philippine insurrection. He entered the diplomatic service in 1902 and after valuable service in Cuba, China, Portugal and again in China, he was successively ambassador to Chile, Mexico, Belgium and Italy. For a time during the Harding administration he was undersecretary of state, and after his retirement from the embassy in Rome he was chairman of the federal tariff commission.

The national committee adopted a statement of principles for the party in the fall campaign which in temperate but firm language condemned the doings of the Democratic administration, without any personalities, and more specifically set forth what the Republican party thinks should be done to restore the nation to prosperity. Opening with the statement that "American institutions and American civilization are in greater danger today than at any time since the foundation of the Republic," the statement plunged immediately into discussion of the need for social legislation.

There was assurance of liberal treatment of these problems in this paragraph: "Our nation is beset with problems of infinite complexity—the problems of recovery; of unemployment, with its unending tale of human suffering; of agriculture, with its lost markets and relatively low prices; of forever checking abuses and excesses that have become all too apparent, and thereafter the problems of a wider spread of prosperity, of relieving the hardships of unemployment and old age, and of avoiding these tragic depressions. These problems must be approached in a broad, liberal and progressive spirit, unhampered by dead formulas or too obstinately clinging to the past."

Solution of the problems, however, said the statement, should be "within the framework of American institutions in accordance with the spirit and principles of the founders of the Republic."

Further on the platform said: "We are opposed to revolutionary change without popular mandate—and all 'change by usurpation,' the customary weapon by which free governments are destroyed."

"We believe that the present emergency laws vesting dictatorial powers in the President must never be permitted to become a permanent part of our governmental system."

During its session the committee raised more than enough money to pay all its debts.

SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR HAROLD ICKES journeyed to Chicago and testified in the disbarment proceedings brought by him against two Chicago lawyers, C. W. Larsen and J. M. Malmin, the latter once a federal judge of the Virgin Islands. Mr. Ickes asserted the defendants had tried to blackmail him in order to obtain for Malmin the position of governor of the Virgin Islands and a federal post for Larsen. He said their "conspiracy" was based on "trumped-up charges" growing out of a probate court case he handled as an attorney some years ago.

The secretary's charges were later flatly denied by the defendants. The case was being heard by the grievance committee of the Chicago Bar association.

CARRYING forward the program of arbitrary federal acreage control which began with passage of the Bankhead cotton bill, the house voted, 206 to 144, for passage of the so-called Kerr tobacco bill vesting the AAA with statutory power to force compliance with its adjustment program.

The measure was sent to the senate over protests of Republicans who denounced the plan as just another step toward regimentation of farming.

The house also completed legislative action on the reciprocal tariff bill and it was sent to the President for his signature.

GREAT BRITAIN formally notified the United States that it would not pay anything on the war debt installment due June 15; that it would make no more payments until the United States consents to a downward revision of the debt, and that any discussion of revision at this time would be useless. All of which means plain default. The British note was sent in response to a blunt notification from President Roosevelt as to the sums due. It was evident, from foreign dispatches, that the other debtor nations, except Finland, would follow the course adopted by the British.

In his war debt message to congress the President said this country expected the debtor nations to pay unless satisfactory excuses could be offered, and he called attention to the vast sums those nations are expending on armaments. His plain language was not at all pleasing to the nations that owe us nearly twelve and one-half billion dollars.

THERE was rejoicing in Belgium when it was announced that a son had been born to the new king and queen, Leopold and Astrid. Mother and child were reported to be doing well. The monarchs, who were married in 1926, have two other children, Josephine Charlotte, six, and Baudoin, three, heir apparent to the throne.

MUCH interesting information was given the special house committee that is investigating "un-American" activities in the United States, these being especially the activities of the Nazis. Facts and figures were presented showing officials of the German government had spent money for the dissemination of pro-German information in this country, the German ambassador, Dr. Hans Luther, and the German consul general in New York, Dr. Otto Kiep, both figuring in the testimony.

Doctor Kiep was said to have paid \$4,000 to a New York city publicity and business promotion firm to "obtain publicity in this country" of anti-Semitic statements. He was said, also, to have contributed, unofficially and in behalf of a third person, \$300 in \$50 bills for the publication of a pro-German pamphlet. Doctor Luther was described as the financial backer and sponsor of the pamphlet.

Under examination, Carl Dickey, partner in the New York firm of Carl Eyoer and Associates, said his firm has a contract with the German tourist information office, receiving \$6,000 a month "giving advice, counsel, and getting together material for travel information."

About twice a month, too, he testified, a sheet titled "German-American Economic Bulletin" is prepared and mailed to a "list of about 3,000 newspapers and some few business institutions."

One witness, Rev. Francis Gross of Perth Amboy, N. J., linked Ambassador Luther with alleged pro-German propaganda in a letter which he read to the committee. Father Gross, a retired Catholic priest, told how he had published a pamphlet entitled, "Justice to Hungary, Germany and Austria."

Later the committee heard a story of the nation-wide distribution of Nazi "propaganda"—some of it allegedly brought into the United States without customs inspection. Evidence was presented to show that German consuls had encouraged organization of pro-German clubs to which the "propaganda" was sent.

Representatives of the State, Post Office and Labor departments were interested listeners to the testimony produced, and there were hints of later deportation proceedings.

LOUIS BARTHO, foreign minister of France, appears as the dominating figure in the negotiations that may dispel the war clouds hanging over Europe. The most important thing he already has accomplished is the engineering of an accord between France and Germany on conditions for the Saar plebiscite and setting the date for that vote on January 13, 1935.

The agreement gives assurance that France, under the pretext of preserving order, will not use force to prevent the return of the Saar basin to Germany. It also means that the Germans now have everything to lose and nothing to gain from a putsch in the Saar, so the possibility of a clash in the near future is virtually eliminated. Of special importance is a clause that amounts to recognition of the rights of Jewish and anti-Nazi minorities in the Saar.

In the disarmament conference in Geneva M. Barthou has been equally forceful though not so peaceful in his doings. He has stood out firmly against the German demands for arms equality and has greatly angered Sir John Simon, British foreign secretary. In connection with Counselor Rosenberg of the Soviet embassy in Paris, Barthou has been forming what is called an eastern Locarno pact to be signed by Russia, Rumania, Czechoslovakia, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, with France as its moral guarantor. This would be rather a shock to Germany and Poland, and the Franco-Russian bloc thus formed would force Great Britain into the background in matters concerning continental Europe. To block this scheme the British would be glad to have the arms conference agree on a minimum program and then adjourn.

Washington Digest

National Topics Interpreted
by William Bruckart

Washington.—Congress did a lot of wrestling in its closing hours, with new legislation designed to encourage the building of more homes by individuals, and in connection with this debate there developed what I believe to be one of the outstanding questions of the times. The housing bill, as it was called, would make borrowing easier for those who want to own their own homes. In other words, it is a program that will put more people into debt if they take advantage of the bill's provisions. And that is the question: After the conditions that have obtained through the last four years, is it or is it not sound economy to encourage individuals to contract new debts?

Debate on the housing bill, therefore, centered attention on one phase of the whole New Deal program that has caused concern in the back of many heads. Up to this time, however, apparently few of the legislators had paused to think of the trend of the course upon which the administration had embarked.

I noted in the committee hearings in the house that a number of the representatives exhibited a fear of too much new debt. Such timid men as Luce of Massachusetts, Byrd of Mississippi, and Hollister of Ohio, and some who are inclined to the inflationary side, like Goldsborough of Maryland, questioned whether the proposal was sound. Mr. Luce, for example, called attention to the old-time theory about debts, and the horror in which debt used to be held. Mr. Luce, of course, reflected the wholesome New England feeling and the attitude of New Englanders on savings. Mr. Busby, a southern Democrat, however, made observations that were of much the same tenor. To them, he added that a recent visit to his home ballwick had indicated to him the need of watching the government's step in encouraging debt. He suggested further that where the government had extended help in the South, things continued to hum until that aid was eliminated. Thereafter, there was another tailspin insofar as recovery was concerned.

Whatever one's conclusion about going into debt may be, the fact is unchanged that the federal government has put out approximately \$7,000,000,000 in the last year in various types of loans. The individuals or the corporations to which that money was loaned are in debt to Uncle Sam, therefore, in a corresponding amount. President Roosevelt and his associates and advisers defend their course with the argument that by making the loans they have enabled all of those folks to weather the storm. He argues that the economic casualty list would have been much higher had the loans not been made. He holds that those who borrowed from the federal government were actually unable to get money elsewhere and that the government was merely looking after its own folks. To those who criticize the use of taxpayers' money in this manner, Mr. Roosevelt has said repeatedly that these loans will be repaid and that the government will suffer no loss in the end.

But, after all, there are the debts, debts on top of debts. They must either be repaid or repudiated. If they are repaid, the borrowers must pay them out of future earnings. That condition, according to the latest line of argument that developed under the housing bill debate, means the borrowers can create little or no reserve for the future.

It is being said that the recovery program and the New Deal generally contemplates planning for the future in such a manner as to ward off a recurrence of the calamity of depression. But I have asked in a good many places; what if the theories of economic planning fail to work at all, or work only in part? The answers I obtained depended somewhat on the slant of the person questioned. If they are following the professors blindly, they said to me that the plans could not fail because they were sound by every theory under which they are drawn. If the person to whom the inquiry was directed examined the problem on a practical basis and studied it with the background of history in mind, I believe without exception the answer was: "Well, it will be just too bad."

My own feeling coincides with the latter view. If the New Deal program for economic planning, for adjusting production to consumption, for controlling crop planting and distribution, and the other items that enter into the plan fail to operate according to the theories upon which they are based, there can be no doubt of the result. It will be just too bad. There will be millions of persons more debt ridden than now, and there will be no way out. The government will be holding the bag.

On this question of debt, there is that troublesome international phase. The United States loaned something like eleven billion dollars to foreign governments to aid in prosecution of the World War against Germany. For a long time after the money was loaned, the United States got nothing

at all. In the meanwhile, there was a terrific bombardment of propaganda from the borrowing nations and from some of the misguided folks in our own country calling for absolute cancellation. But cancellation could not win. It was impossible. So there followed a lot of negotiations in which commissions from foreign governments came here and conferred at length with our debt funding commission.

Settlements were eventually worked out. The debts were funded. That is, the debtor nations were given a long time in which to pay. They were given enormous concessions by our debt commission in order to get some agreement for repayment of the various loans. I know whereof I speak regarding those concessions because it happens that I am the only newspaper correspondent in Washington who reported everyone of the debt conferences, and I say unequivocally that those funding settlements represented on the average a reduction of more than one-third in the total amount which the debtors contracted originally to pay.

Now, again we are in the midst of new efforts to get something done in the way of repayments. The foreign nations are not going to pay if it can be avoided. They put up the very natural argument that obtains with everyone who is in debt and who has been hit on the chin by depression conditions. They cannot raise the money, so they say. To avoid defaults, some of the foreign nations made what they called token payments a year ago at this time. Some of them have offered token payments again. But token payments amount to about the same thing as when your friend eats the apple and hands you the core. It was a nice apple to begin with, and the funding settlements were nice settlements when they were signed.

Frankly, I suspect that the United States is never going to get more than about 10 per cent of the total now due. There will be plenty of arguments, propositions and counter propositions, negotiations and hauling and filling, and after awhile some of the foreign governments will have succeeded in creating enough public sentiment among their home people to cause a national action of the same character as that taken by France a year ago.

The condition as regards the foreign debts owing the United States, I am afraid, will be paralleled right here at home by individual and corporation and bank debts owing the federal government. Many borrowers will run into hard luck, as they always have done, and they will appeal to the politicians to save them.

When those debts become a political issue, it will be an issue too strong for politicians to withstand. They will arise on the floors of congress and weep about the plight of "those poor people."

The special senate committee is getting under way with its inquiry into the various industries that manufacture materials for war, and it appears

now that it is headed into an investigation that will disclose plenty of things that will cause a stink to arise when the investigators have laid their findings before the committee headed by Senator Bye of North Dakota. I spent a couple of hours the other day with one of the wheelhorses commanding the investigating force and it was certainly his opinion that there are things awaiting revelation that will surprise the populace. He is confident, as he said, that the country will sit up and take notice of what the committee is preparing to bring to light.

The evening I was in the chief investigator's office eight men were receiving their credentials and money with which to start out on the trail. They were headed for what amounts to a raid on the files and books of some factory which the investigators believed had been engaged in the manufacture of war materials and which they thought also had been engaged in propagating information that would cause a couple of foreign nations to look with suspicion upon each other. Suspicion between two nations is obviously a prelude to more serious differences, and eventually war is the result. The committee has started out to expose such conditions, if they exist, and the investigators are convinced that things of that sort are being practiced by some of the makers of munitions.

I have no way of knowing where the investigators are going in their continuing effort, but from all indications they have orders to dig deep into files and records to see what they can find. They will come back to Washington, eventually, with great bales of letters and records that they think shed light on the various suspected activities, and, of course, when the committee begins taking testimony those things will be brought out. There is just no way out of it; a good many corporations whether they have engaged in war-provoking activities or not are going to be smeared.

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"Stuffed" Ballot Box in English Parliament

If an old yarn is to be believed, the people of the world owe their privileges regarding habeas writs to an old trick of crooked politics. When the act of 1679 was going through the English parliament there was strong opposition in the house of lords. The third reading, according to one Bishop Burnet, was carried by a trick. Two members of the house of lords, Grey and Norris, were appointed tellers to count the vote.

A very fat member was counted as ten members by Lord Grey who, so the narrator says, did it at first as a joke. Then, seeing that Lord Norris, who was in bad health, did not notice what had happened, Grey, who favored the bill, went on with his misreckoning, which added enough extra votes to carry the bill. "There must have been," wrote a famous English authority some years ago, "some mistake, accidental or willful, for the members were declared to be 57 to 55 for the bill and by the minute-book of the lords it appears that there were only 107 peers in the house."

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