

# Washington Digest

National Topics Interpreted  
by William Bruckart

Washington. — I suppose most members of congress will deny it, but there certainly is every evidence of an agreement, an understanding, to let President Roosevelt's radical court reform legislation stew until the country is heard from. There is no doubt in my mind nor in the minds of other observers here that representatives and senators are anxiously awaiting word from their constituents because if any issue ever was loaded with political dynamite, the plan to pack the Supreme court of the United States with six additional judges surely contains highly explosive elements.

### Political Dynamite

The facts I have mentioned in the above paragraph explain largely why there are so many senators and house members who remain non-committal on the issue. They want to know which way to jump. Actually, I believe as many as half of them are going to try to determine which band wagon they ought to ride—whether they ought to go against the President or for him. In other words, the spot they are now on is not nearly so hot as the one upon which they may find themselves if they guess wrong at this time. No politician will ever jump from the frying pan into the fire knowingly.

In the meantime, the debate rages. Out and out supporters of President Roosevelt, the kind of men who follow him blindly because he is their leader, and the extreme opposition type who are against the President regardless of his position are battling for public attention. The radio is being used to an extent as great, if not greater, than occurred in the last campaign. Those who are committed for or against the President's reform proposition are anxious to sustain their positions and the remainder of the national legislature is egging on the more bold members in order that those who have not made up their minds can take advantage of word from back home.

In the meantime, as well, there are proposals and counter-proposals seeking a compromise. Few of them have any definite merit. Most of them, I believe, are purely and solely representative of floundering minds. Their sponsors entertain hopes that somehow, somewhere they will gain a streak of light that will guide them through to a proper answer politically.

There has been only one plan for giving the federal government more power than can possibly be described as sound. That is the original proposition by Senator Robinson of Arkansas, the Democratic leader of the senate, who announced early in the session of congress that he favored an amendment to the Constitution. While Senator Robinson did not then say so, nor has he said so since, the truth is that he and many others would like to see the people of the country have an opportunity to pass upon any program that would change the country's judiciary. The President regards this method as too slow. He thinks that any changes which he desires ought to be made at once and holds that the tremendous majority by which he was re-elected gives him authority to do so. Yet, as the picture now stands, there is every prospect of considerable delay and from the way I analyze the circumstances, delay will provide the vast majority of voters with an opportunity for determination of the question which is vital in this case: Does the country want to keep an independent system of courts or does it want to establish a precedent by which this administration or any other administration can influence those courts to do the bidding of the nation's Chief Executive?

Through many years and in every year there has been constant criticism of congress for delay in reaching conclusions. It is fortunate, in my opinion, that these delays constitute a part of our governmental system. They allow time for cooling off.

I think it will be generally agreed that every time legislation is rushed through congress ahead or as part of an emotional wave among citizens, there has invariably resulted unworkable, if not entirely unsound, statutes. Such is bound to be the result when men and women fail to think things through—when they fail to examine all of the phases of any problem.

President Roosevelt moved quickly, and I believe sincerely, in proposing the NRA and the farm relief plan under the agricultural adjustment administration. Yet, neither of these reform measures stood the test of workability; neither had been drafted upon a proper knowledge of the ends they were to serve and neither did justice to all of the people. It was only natural, therefore, that they should fall by the wayside.

These two laws are cited because they are the outstanding examples of emotional legislation. There are many others, most of them not as bad. But lately one offshoot of the NRA has arisen to plague the ad-

ministration. I refer to the so-called Walsh-Healey law.

In order to refresh memories, let me explain that the Walsh-Healey law prohibits the federal government from buying products of mills or factories, or any fruit of labor, unless the supplying contractor has complied with the same minimum hours and wages that were a part of the old NRA codes. Unless the contractor agrees to produce the material which the federal government is buying in accordance with those terms, his bid must be rejected under the law.

When the Walsh-Healey law was passed, there were comments heard in several quarters that the time would come when the government itself would regret the legislation. That time has arrived.

Everyone is aware, of course, that Great Britain has started on a naval building program under which it will expend approximately seven and a half billion dollars in the next five years. American policy always has called for matching the British navy ship by ship. Fifteen years ago when the Harding disarmament program was written into treaty form, we destroyed ships so that our tonnage was the same as that of Great Britain. Now, with the world in a turmoil, with Great Britain announcing an unprecedented building program in order to protect its vast colonies and dominion from aggression, the need arises for a building up of our navy again. At least that is Mr. Roosevelt's view and he has wide support for it.

To build up the navy requires vast amounts of steel and other products of industry. Much of the naval building will be done in the navy's own yards. Thus, it has come to pass that the navy has been unable to obtain steel and other equipment since the manufacturers of the needed equipment are not willing to subject themselves to the terms of the Walsh-Healey law. In some instances where the navy has sought to buy material, the manufacturers have refused even to make an offer or state a price at which they would sell the required material and there is a very real possibility that unless the Walsh-Healey law is repealed or dodged, our navy building program may have to come to a halt.

The reason for this condition is that the Walsh-Healey law, with its prescription on minimum hours of labor and wages would place a burden on industry that it cannot bear and return its cost of production. The government, as a buyer, is a tough customer in any event. Its specifications are always more difficult than is the practice in industry. Add to that, then, the requirement that men may work only 30 hours a week and that their pay shall not be reduced from the rate of their compensation when they were working 40 hours a week and you have burdened any manufacturing establishment with a load that will break its back.

Right now, the Navy department is trying to find a way to get around the provisions of the Walsh-Healey law. President Roosevelt has said nothing publicly concerning his attitude but there are many who believe he himself feels the law is not working out the way it was intended.

It is quite a distance, of course, from the Walsh-Healey law to the present controversy under Mr. Roosevelt's plan to pack the Supreme court with six new judges if one stops his examination of the two questions at the surface. It is not difficult, however, to see a direct connection. The Walsh-Healey law was driven through congress in haste. The bad effects of it are coming now two years after its enactment. If the Supreme court reform proposal is driven through as quickly and with as little examination as the Walsh-Healey law, we will reap the reward sooner or later and probably for many years to come.

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### "Gnu" of Hottentot Origin

The name "gnu" is of Hottentot origin, and was in use by natives when white settlers first went to South Africa. The name "wildebeest" is a Dutch word meaning wild ox, and probably originated on account of the animal's habit of prancing and capering in antics suggesting those of a bull enraged by toradors in a Spanish arena. It is said that the Boers, in early days, found that a red cloth excited these antelopes and was frequently used in hunting them. In addition to the white-tailed gnu, there is a species known as the brindled gnu or blue wildebeest, which is abundant in East-central Africa. Gnus have disproportionately large heads which give them a grotesque appearance. They have maned necks and distinctive tufts of hair on their faces. The bulls stand about four feet tall at the shoulders. The general color of the white-tailed species is a deep brown. Their horns are formidable weapons and under certain conditions the animals are dangerous.

## UNCOMMON AMERICANS

By Elmo Scott Watson

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### His Gun Became a "Judge"

SOMEONE once observed: "The Declaration of Independence stated that all men are equal, but the Colt revolver made that statement a fact." Certainly that was proved on the Western frontier where the quality of man depended upon his quickness of the "draw" and where this little weapon became the symbol of law in a lawless land—it was judge, jury and high executioner all in one. Little wonder then that it should become known as "Judge Colt."

The father of "Judge Colt" was a Connecticut Yankee, born in 1814. As a boy Samuel Colt listened to veterans talk about battles of the Revolution and especially about the feats of a rifleman named Tim Murphy who had a double-barreled rifle. If someone could invent a gun that would shoot five or six times without reloading, that nation would rule the world. But, of course, that was impossible, said the men of that day.

Young Sam Colt didn't believe it was impossible. So he began experimenting with a four-barreled rifle but he couldn't make it work satisfactorily. Then he was apprenticed to a sea captain and from the sailors he learned to carve out little objects in wood.

One day in the Indian ocean, while idly watching the steersman at the wheel, he noticed that regardless of which way the wheel was spun, each spoke always came directly in line with a clutch that could be set to hold it. As he watched he found himself envisioning holes in the rim of the wheel—holes which successively came into alignment with a stationary opening. In a flash he saw the answer to his problem of a repeating gun. Then with "a jackknife that cost less than a dollar he started to whittle out the foundation of a fortune which was to run into millions." From that model came the revolver which first proved its value in the war with the Seminole Indians, won an even greater reputation in the Mexican war and by the time the Civil war had begun was an indispensable part of a soldier's armament.

Not only was Sam Colt the inventor of a weapon which vitally affected military history, but he "was the first of the great American industrialists. Colt, not the modern motor car manufacturer, conceived and first utilized in his plant standardized machine production, division of labor and the 'assembly line.' He showed the way to the modern promoters of war . . . he was the precursor of the modern munitions kings—a pioneer in the art of playing one nation against another to increase his sales."

### An Important Vice-President

IT'S a standard joke that the vice president of the United States is about the most unimportant individual in our federal government unless the President happens to die. In that case he immediately becomes a very important man. But there was one vice president whose high place in American history is due to his own death, rather than that of a President.

In 1884 Thomas A. Hendricks of Indiana, who had served as congressman, senator and governor and who had twice before been an unsuccessful candidate for the Presidency and once before defeated for the vice presidency, was elected vice president when Grover Cleveland defeated Blaine, the Republican candidate. Hendricks died eight months after his inauguration but his death while in office was not unique. Four other vice presidents—George Clinton, Elbridge Gerry, William R. King and Henry Wilson—had suffered the same fate. But for the first time in three-quarters of a century America became aware of the potential dangers in such a situation.

The Constitution provides that in the case of removal, death, resignation or disability of a President, the vice president shall succeed him. But in 1885 the vice president was dead. Suppose now that the President should also die, resign or be removed from office? Who would then become President? Neither the Constitution nor any act of congress had provided for that emergency, and apparently no one had ever given any thought to its possible results.

So congress got busy and on January 19, 1886 it passed a law providing for a Presidential succession in case the vice president could not serve. Under its terms the secretary of state would become President. In case he, too, would be unable to serve, the next in line would be the secretary of the treasury and so on down the cabinet—secretary of war, attorney-general, postmaster-general, secretary of the navy, secretary of the interior, secretary of agriculture, secretary of commerce and secretary of labor.

Thus in bringing about this change Thomas A. Hendricks became an "important" vice president—but he had to die to do it!

## STAR DUST

Movie • Radio

By VIRGINIA VALE

IT HAS always been difficult to get permission to visit studios in Hollywood. From now on, popular comedians, like the Marx Brothers, Jack Benny, and Burns and Allen hope to make it impossible. In fact, if there were any way that they could make pictures without having a flock of carpenters, electricians, property men, and extras around, they would be heartily in favor of adopting it.

Thieves on the set are the reason for all this uproar. It would be bad enough if the thieves merely lifted jewelry, or furs, but these thieves steal ideas whose worth cannot be estimated unless you can think in staggeringly big figures. When comedians and their gag men have finally worked out a funny situation and filmed it, two months may elapse before it is shown on the screen. But almost at once comedians elsewhere introduce their funny situation. Obviously, someone from the studio told them about it—but who?

It is always gratifying to see a real trouper win out over all odds. That is why everyone is rejoicing over Alice Faye's hit in "On the Avenue."



Alice Faye

When Irving Berlin moved into the Twentieth Century-Fox studio with a knockout musical score under his arm, the studio officials said, "We've got something big here." So, they decided to build up a marvelous cast with players borrowed from other studios. They got Dick Powell from Warner's and Madeleine Carroll from Walter Wanger Productions for the leading roles. And then their own Alice Faye in a secondary role walked off with all honors that weren't taken by the crazy antics of their own Ritz Brothers.

A long time ago Paramount bought a story called "Easy Money" for Carole Lombard, but she has been so busy on other pictures she never got around to make it. Meanwhile the studio officials have been impressed by the bounding popularity of Jean Arthur and decided she would do nicely in the leading role. After a vacation in New York, she will.

For months Cary Grant has gone around saying that if his Paramount contract would only come to an end, he would never sign another with anybody. He would just make pictures when he felt like it, and spend the rest of his time lying on the beach at Santa Monica or taking leisurely trips to England. But after watching his work in the new Grace Moore picture, Columbia officials didn't like his idea at all. They decided they must have him under contract. No one has ever been known to win an argument with Jack Cohn, the grand mogul of Columbia Pictures, so Cary signed the contract he offered.

Back in New York all the young stage players and all the dramatic school students go to see Greta Garbo in "Camille" over and over. Two girls who are living on a tiny budget that permits eating only now and then and never riding on a street car or bus, had gone every day for six days and seen the picture at least 14 times. They were broke and hungry, but they felt they just had to see it again. So, they screwed up their courage and told the manager of the Capitol theater how much they were learning from watching her, and he arranged to let them in free.

Deanna Durbin, the fourteen-year-old sensation of Eddie Cantor's radio program and Universal's "Three Smart Girls" thinks New Yorkers aren't very good mathematicians. She realized her lifelong ambition of climbing the stairs inside the Statue of Liberty on her first visit to New York a few weeks ago. But the sign at the foot of the steep, winding stairs said there were 161 steps, and Deanna counted 165. Determinedly she dragged her weary feet up the steps again, only to find that she was right the first time.

ODDS AND ENDS . . . Clark Gable's birthday on the "Parnell" set was a hilarious occasion. Fellow-players gave him a cake inscribed to the greatest actor in the world—Robert Taylor . . . Joan Crawford has brushed out her curls, wears her hair very straight and plain and uses colorless nail polish. Judy Garland made a tremendous hit singing at a flood benefit, and will get some big film roles now.

## Dwelling on Grievances—

Power of Trouble Is Increased  
And Distributed by Talking of It

THERE is a curious and very much mistaken idea that by talking of our grievances and our troubles, we decrease their power over us to make us miserable. Instead, by dwelling on them we reinforce their power. We not only do this, but we scatter the seeds of their discontent, as we unburden our hearts, and a whole new crop of disturbing thoughts enters into the minds of those who bear with us during our outpouring of words.

**Making Misery.**  
If the person to whom we speak is near and dear to us, our troubles weigh on them almost as their own. We are unwittingly the cause to them of an added weight of discordant thoughts, and perhaps they may be trying to get the better of their own bothers.

**Sympathy Versus Help.**  
We have only to consider the effect on ourselves of listening to others talk of their worries, misfortunes, and hard luck, to realize the depressing power of such conversation. It is seldom we can do anything to help them. In fact persons who talk of their troubles seldom do it to get helpful suggestions. They are bespeaking sympathy and often are disturbed, hurt or annoyed, when they get advice, even though it be excellent. What is wanted is to hear expressions of understanding of their position as difficult, and to hear their actions considered wise. Is this not really what we, ourselves, hope to hear when we air our troubles?

**Trouble Mongers**  
When we are awakened to the fact that talking of our woes adds to those of the listener without lessening ours, that we are implanting troubles in the minds of others, we surely will try to be

more careful about giving vent to the misfortunes by talking about them. Moreover, if we do continue to be trouble mongers, no one will be eager to talk with us.

**Winning Out.**  
If, instead of dwelling on our grievances, we discuss pleasant topics, we are not only giving pleasure to others, but we are actually doing ourselves a kindness as well. We diminish our own depression by rising above our troublous thoughts, thus becoming conquerors in and through our conversation.

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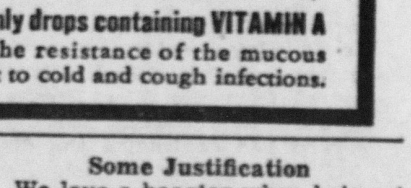
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## Uncle Phil Says:

**Doubt, the Pernicious Weed**  
A suspicious person raises a large crop of doubt.

Add one new word to your conversational vocabulary every day; first you will surprise your friends, then floor them, then lose them.

**Raise the Standard**  
Equality of all men doesn't mean that the "quality" of all is to be reduced to that of the lowest level.

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