

Bruckart's Washington Digest

Small Telephone Companies Hit
By Application of Labor Law

Again the People Are Made Victims of Too Much Government; Act Forces Small Industries Into Spot Where They Cannot Do Business or Hire Labor.

By WILLIAM BRUCKART
WNU Service, National Press Bldg., Washington, D. C.

WASHINGTON. — On President Roosevelt's list of "must" legislation a year or so ago was a bill that, when it eventually became a law, was called the "Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938." It was made to apply to all business crossing state lines, or to products thus manufactured that went into channels of trade outside of the state where they were produced. It set certain rates of minimum pay and established a limitation on the number of hours workers could continue on the job. Everyone refers to it now as the wages and hours law.

At the time of the appointment of Elmer F. Andrews, as wages and hours administrator, I discussed the potential success or failure that lay ahead for such a law. In looking over my files of the time, I found that I wrote, concerning the law, that "Mr. Andrews can either make or break it" by the policies he adopts and the interpretations he makes of the law's provisions. I said also that he must use great care in the selection of subordinates.

All of which leads into discussion of a situation that has arisen respecting application of the law to several industries. Generally, too, it forces a conclusion that here is just another law under which government is interfering in the normal living of people. As usual, the people are the victims of too much government.

While there are several lines of industry about which I want to write in this analysis, the most flagrant misgovernment and the most damaging result, as far as I can see, is the application of the wages and hours law to the little known, but widely used, small independent telephone companies. I am referring to that type of telephone company which serves the small towns and villages and the farmers who live around those small, yet very essential, trading centers.

Nearly 30,000 Independent Telephone Companies in U. S.

When I heard that some of the subordinates in Mr. Andrews' agency were determined to apply the provisions of the wages and hours law to the independent telephone, I began to dig around for information about them. I am acquainted with those units of service. I know what it is to turn the crank on the big box that hangs on the wall in order to ring a neighbor on a party line; it is not an unfamiliar fact either to hear of how the switchboard, located in somebody's home in the village, closes down at nine o'clock at night, and no one is supposed to ring unless it is a case of sickness or other emergency.

I was stunned, however, to realize that there are nearly 30,000 such companies in the United States. Nor was I prepared to understand, at once, that there are approximately 4,100,000 "stations" or subscribers to those companies. If we figure an average family as five, we arrive at the conclusion obviously that nearly 21,000,000 persons depend upon that type of service.

The wages and hours administration does not propose to apply the law to all of these; it eliminated more than half of the total, but a bunch of the smart boys under Mr. Andrews have decided the law should apply to 12,461 such companies. They decided the law can be applied, even though the companies are entirely within the confines of a county, in most instances, because the little switchboards are able to make a connection with "long distance" companies. It may not happen more than five times a month, but the little company is doing "interstate" business. Hence, your Uncle Sam, acting through the bureaucrats, proposes to tell the local companies they must pay the wages designated by the federal law and limit the hours of those who earn their living that way.

Would Force Companies to Increase Their Rates

Now, I am thoroughly familiar with the limitation of opportunities of employment for women and girls in the small towns. I know that the small telephone companies employ them as operators, or they employ somebody not physically able to do other types of work. The pay is small, but it provides a comfortable living in most cases. Perhaps, the pay ought to be higher, but if the pay is higher, the town and country subscribers will have to pay more. The reason those companies succeed and render the valuable service that is rendered is because they hold down expenses and provide service at a dollar, or around that figure, per month. One realizes better what that rate means when a comparison is offered of the five or six dollars per month charged in cities.

Should the smart boys in the wages and hours administration get away with their program, it would mean that a small exchange would have to increase the pay for operators. The minimum for operators would be \$2,190 a year instead of

whatever rate now is paid; and it would mean, moreover, that there would have to be three or four operators. That is to say, no operator could work more than 42 hours per week—a seven-hour day of a six-day week. And what would that mean? Every one of those companies would be forced to collect three or four times as much per month from the subscribers, or close down the system.

Then, to show how widespread the effect would be, let me cite the number of exchanges in a few states: Iowa, 802; Illinois, 917; Alabama, 167; Arkansas, 299; Indiana, 695; Maine, 128; Michigan, 351; Minnesota, 578; Missouri, 776; and Texas, 898. It is to be remembered that these are purely local companies. Whatever number of exchanges are operated in those states by the Bell Telephone company are in addition. But we are not concerned with the Bell system. That outfit is big enough to fight its own battles.

Cannot See What They Are Doing to the Country

Why these smart boys cannot see what they are doing to the country, is a question which I cannot answer. Either they are utterly dumb or they are promoting the organization work of the C. I. O. which is responsible for passage of the wages and hours law. The C. I. O. certainly has demonstrated it does not belong in the list of real American organizations, but it still has political power. The connection with C. I. O. agitation might be traced through the fact that the law contains a provision permitting a worker to sue for damages if the employer (in this case the telephone company) compels violation of the law by forcing overtime work.

The political phases of the situation are quite important because of the vast number of voters directly affected. I do not mean to say that Senator Herring and Representative Harrington, both of Iowa, have introduced bills to exempt the local companies, from purely political motives. But I suspect that the political pressure will cause many members of the house and the senate to favor passage of those bills.

I have mentioned heretofore how often the "unelected" officials of the government—those appointed by the President or his subordinates—either have ignored political history or they know nothing about political history. The case of the independent telephone companies is a splendid illustration.

Lately, the little independent steel companies have felt the dead hand of government through the same law. I am not informed as to all details of their case, but there were 44 eastern independent steel companies appeared recently before the propaganda spreading temporary national economics committee, seeking relief. The independent steel companies are to the great steel manufacturers as the little independent telephone companies are to the Bell system. The wages and hours law will wreck them, they told the national economics committee which has come to be known as the monopoly investigation.

Forces Industry Into Spot Where It Cannot Do Business

If those little fellows have to meet wages and hours set for them by Miss Perkins, secretary of labor, to whom Mr. Andrews is subordinate, the steel people say they will go broke. Or, at least, they charged, they could get no government contracts because of failure to comply with the law. Since the government is spending billions of dollars to create employment and for general relief, I can not help wondering why it wants to force one segment of industry into a spot where it can do no business and employ labor.

The whole thing, however, gets more cockeyed as time goes on. There seems to be no limit to the lengths to which bureaucrats, drunk with power, will go in abusing the nation. Who was there that did not express the greatest disgust at the assinine story which came out of New York city the other day. I refer to the problem before the New York state labor board which was called upon to decide whether a professional woman-model was fired because she had been active as a union organizer or because her hips were too wide. The woman claimed she had been fired because she was trying to organize a union of models. Her former employers said her hips were too broad to properly wear the clothes they wished to display.

While the story is not lacking in humor, it must be treated seriously because the width of this girl's hips may yet be a question of national importance. It is a fact, and not a witicism, that the national labor relations board may yet be called upon to measure those hips and determine, as judges of fashion, whether she can properly display the latest mode of spring apparel.

© Western Newspaper Union.

Star Dust

★Mickey Sets the Pace

★So Joan Goes Dark

★Directors Who Must In

By Virginia Vale

MICKEY ROONEY'S brief stay in New York was a lesson for older and more experienced screen stars, who will when they are faced by a long list of dates with interviewers. Mickey saw folks from the newspapers and really talked to them. He signed autograph books for mobs of fans. He dashed about town, going to theaters, hearing swing bands (that was one of the things he specially wanted to do while in New York) and dropping in at Madison Square Garden for a hockey game.

Mickey is quite a musician, you know. He plays the trumpet, trombone, piano and drums. He also composes songs—"Have a Heart" is his latest. Recently Mickey and Deanna Durbin were honored by the Motion Picture Academy of Arts and Science "for their significant contribution in bringing to the screen the spirit and personification of youth."

You'll be seeing him in "Huckleberry Finn," which he finished be-



MICKEY ROONEY

fore leaving Hollywood for his brief vacation, and "The Hardys Ride High" is also ready for release. Those Hardy pictures will go on forever, apparently.

Joan Bennett likes the way she looks when she's a brunette, although she didn't find it out until she saw herself in the black wig she wore for "Trade Winds." And people all over the country wrote to her saying that they preferred her with dark hair. So she'll don a wig again for "The Man in the Iron Mask," in which she's slated for a leading role.

It's a rare director who can resist the temptation to stay out of his own pictures. Sometimes they play a hit, but usually they're just extras in mob scenes. That's what Cecil B. DeMille did in "The Crusades"; he put on a helmet and breastplate and whooped it up with the other extras. He was in one of the train sequences of "Union Pacific," too. Tay Garnett was recognized by his friends who looked quickly at a man who leaned against a wall in "Trade Winds."

Henry Koster played a scene in one of his pictures so that his mother, in Prague, could see him. William Wyler held a glass of punch during the party sequence in "Jezebel," and will be seen in "Wuthering Heights," in the costume of a Yorkshire squire, just walking into the scene and walking off again.

Dolores Costello is doing very well indeed in her journey up the come-back trail. Before "The King of the Turf" was finished word got around that she was giving a grand performance as the feminine lead, opposite Adolphe Menjou. Offers began to pour in from other studios. The week after the picture was finished she signed up for "Outside These Walls."

Now it's Warner Brothers who have joined the movement to keep the movie stars off the air. Humphrey Bogart was refused permission to appear on Kate Smith's program recently; Twentieth Century-Fox is said to be trying to dissuade Alice Faye from doing eight shows a year for radio, and to get Don Ameche to drop that Sunday night program of which he has been a feature for so long.

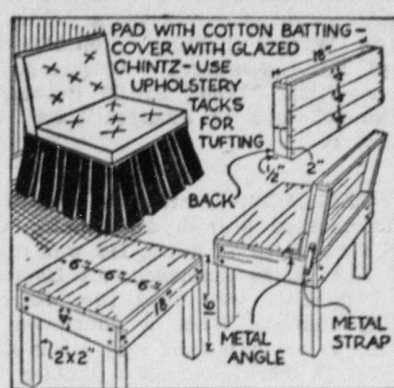
It's reported that Darryl Zanuck, of Twentieth Century-Fox, started all this when he heard the first broadcast of "The Circle."

ODDS AND ENDS—Andy Devine's new baby boy has been registered for Culver Military academy, class of '39. . . Joan Blondell and Dick Powell are going to take a vacation in New York, chiefly to see Joan's sister Gloria, who is preparing for a radio career. . . Ben Bernie collects horseshoes—not to bring him luck, but to remind him of how lucky he was to escape becoming a horseshoer in his father's blacksmith shop. . . Quite a squad of medical authorities was engaged to check up on the script for that new radio show, "The Life and Love of Dr. Susan."

© Western Newspaper Union.

HOW TO SEW

by Ruth Wyeth Spears



contains 48 pages of step-by-step directions which have helped thousands of women. If your home is your hobby you will also want Book 1—SEWING, for the Home Decorator. Order by number, enclosing 25 cents for each book. If you order both books, copy of the new Rag Rug Leaflet will be included free. Those who have both books may secure leaflet for 6 cents in postage. Address Mrs. Spears, 210 S. Desplaines St., Chicago, Ill.

Uncle Phil Says:

Demagogues Flatter 'Em

People are patient with demagogues longer than they are with statesmen.

Wish that backbone could be inculcated as easily as learning.

Gone to join the bootjack, the woodshed and the "oyster supper"—the band wagon.

No kind of a vine clings to the cactus. The cactus attended to all that.

The Fox Discovered It

Saying "the grapes are sour" is nevertheless a consoling philosophy.

Becoming sophisticated is losing one's gusto for anything.

"A spirit of adventure" is what makes a man prefer to pick the lock rather than look for the key.

TIPS to Gardeners

Know Your Herbs

HERBS are becoming more popular each year because they are easy to grow and help make everyday dishes more appetizing and flavorful. Here are important facts about the more important herbs which you can grow in your backyard garden:

Anise—Seeds used to flavor bread, cake, cookies, candy; green leaves good for flavoring salad.

Borage—Leaves and flowers give unusual tang to fruit drinks and are good salad garnish; blossoms good cut flowers.

Caraway—Seeds used to flavor bread, cake, cookies, cheeses, baked apples.

Chives—Young leaves eaten like onions, or cut up to flavor soups and salads.

Dill—Seeds and leaves used for making dill pickles.

Marjoram—Used for seasoning poultry dressing; young leaves good for soups and salads; makes attractive house plant.

Sage—Excellent in meat and poultry dressings.

Napoleon in Exile

The world's most restless and ambitious nature, Napoleon, spent the last six years of his life in exile on the little Island of St. Helena, learning enough English words to read what was going on in the Europe he once controlled, dictating his memoirs, gossiping about his English custodians, preserving order and harmony in his little French household, the sole crumbs of existence left him to mumble.

The Safety Sensation of 1939!

THE NEW
Firestone
CHAMPION

The Only Tire Made with the
NEW SAFETY-LOCK CORD BODY
and NEW GEAR-GRIP TREAD...

NEVER before in our experience has a tire met with such instant and unanimous approval as the new Firestone Champion Tire. It's the Safety Sensation of 1939! Our customers have started a word-of-mouth campaign that is making this the biggest selling tire we've ever had. Motor car manufacturers have been so impressed by its superior performance that they have adopted it for their 1939 models.

Why? Because the Firestone Champion Tire is an entirely new achievement in safety engineering.

Stronger Cord Body. This is accomplished first, by the use of a completely new type of tire cord called "Safety-Lock," in which the cotton fibers are more compactly interwoven to assure cooler running and provide greater strength. Then, the fibers in each individual cord, the cords in each ply and the plies themselves, are all securely locked together by a new and advanced Firestone process of Gum-Dipping which provides amazingly greater strength. And greater strength means greater safety.

More Non-Skid Mileage. The new Safety-Lock cord construction provides the extra strength needed for the use of the new, thicker, tougher, deeper Firestone Gear-Grip tread which delivers remarkably longer non-skid mileage. This sensational new tread is called "Gear-Grip" because of its unique design—it has more than 3,000 sharp-edged angles which grip the road with a sure-footed hold to protect against skidding and assure a safe stop.

Let your nearby Firestone Dealer or Firestone Auto Supply and Service Store equip your car with a new set of Firestone Champion Tires—the only tires made that are safety-proved on the speedway for your protection on the highway.

Firestone CHAMPION	Firestone HIGH SPEED	Firestone CONVOY
5.25-17. \$14.05	6.00-18. \$17.15	5.25-17. \$11.00
5.50-16. 14.15	6.25-16. 17.95	5.50-16. 12.75
5.50-17. 14.05	6.50-16. 19.35	5.50-17. 13.20
6.00-16. 15.95	7.00-15. 21.35	6.00-16. 14.35
6.00-17. 16.50	7.00-16. 21.95	6.00-17. 14.05
		7.00-16. 19.75
		4.50-21. 88.35
		4.75-19. 8.00
		5.00-19. 9.35
		5.25-17. 9.05
		5.25-18. 10.00
		6.50-16. 14.50

TRUCK TIRES AND OTHER PASSENGER CAR SIZES PRICED PROPORTIONATELY LOW

Listen to The Voice of Firestone with Richard Crooks, Margaret Sparks and Alfred Wallenstein, Monday

Listen to The Firestone Voice of the Farm—Everett Mitchell interviews a Champion Farmer each week evenings over Nationwide N. B. C. Red Network.

during noon hour. See local paper for station and time.



LOUIS MEYER

Only Three-Time Winner

Annual Indianapolis

500-Mile Race

Champion race drivers,

whose lives and chances of

victory depend on tire safety,

know tire construction and

that is why they select and buy

Firestone Tires for their cars.

Firestone

LIFE PROTECTOR

the Tire within

a Tire

This amazing

new Firestone

development makes

a blowout as

harmless as a slow

leak.

Should a blowout

occur the exclusive

Firestone Safety-

Valve holds sufficient

air in the inner

compartment to

support the car until

it is brought to a safe stop.