

Bruckart's Washington Digest

President Hits Top in Precedent Breaking in Thanksgiving Change

Stirs Up More Comment Than Any Statement Ever Emanating From a Chief Executive; Element of Uncertainty Injected Is What Makes It Harmful.

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

WASHINGTON.—President Roosevelt's ability to keep things stirred up has been demonstrated numerous times since his accession to the White House. He seems to have a highly developed penchant for doing the unexpected. He calls it "precedent breaking."

It appears, however, that Mr. Roosevelt reached a new peak in precedent breaking when he changed the date of our annual Thanksgiving day. Probably no statement ever forthcoming from a Chief Executive stirred up as much comment—unless perhaps it was the famous statement by Calvin Coolidge that "I do not choose to run."

Next year, he proposes that the date should be moved forward another week so that thereafter the date upon which we pay homage to God, as a nation, will be the second Thursday in November, instead of the last Thursday of the month. In announcing his plan, the President said he was desirous of rearranging the November holiday so that "holidays will be more evenly spaced."

Thanksgiving Day Change Stirs Up Unusual Comment

Whatever the reason for the change, the announcement broke out all of the hissing steam that was pent up. Business interests here and there tried vainly to show a united front. But that was impossible because retailers disagreed as to its possible benefits.

Let us look at the thing, however, from a practical standpoint: Mr. Roosevelt made his announcement without consulting the state department. If he had sought advice there, he would have learned that a presidential proclamation can be enforced only in the District of Columbia and the territories of the United States.

There are 11 states that have laws fixing Thanksgiving day for the last Thursday in November of each year. Their legislatures are not in session. They will not be called into session again before the forthcoming Thanksgiving day.

Our nation has grown up, not in one piece, but in many pieces, each one fitted to another as smooth working as the gears of your automobile. When the engine turns over, it exerts pressure on the clutch, then on the drive shaft, then on the gears and then on the wheels, and the car moves.

Arouses Fear That All Our People Are Being Regimented

Mr. Roosevelt surely could not have guessed the repercussions, the backfire, that has greeted his announcement and that has continued in unabated fury. The politicians seized upon it for some of the dirtiest wisecracks I ever have heard. I heard one that really warrants

repetition here. The remark recalled that King George, on his recent visit to North America, reset his birthday so that it could be celebrated while he was in Canada—that being a prerogative of a king and emperor. The question was then propounded whether our President contemplated a flexible holiday schedule that would permit celebration of events whenever the White House thought national morale was low.

There is more to that remark than just a laugh. Behind the thought is an indication of a fear that all of our people are being regimented, told when to shout or when to weep, when to work and when to play, what to eat and what to wear and not to think, but to obey. Of course, it is an exaggerated viewpoint; it is not so exaggerated, however, that it is not possible of attainment. It is to be remembered that the people of Russia, and then of Italy and then of Germany have gone through that very stage. It was a step which they took, and disregarded as unimportant. It led directly to the conditions under which those people now live and have their being, regimented all, controlled, beaten down, living a life of fear.

Now, lest I be misunderstood, I hasten to say that I believe there was no such thought as those in Mr. Roosevelt's mind. I believe his action was taken because of his ever-present urge to make changes. There are many persons who hold that it was another move by the President designed to keep people from thinking of their troubles, to help them forget the terrible struggles through which we have been, and are, passing.

Take a Look at Practical Side of the Situation

Again, as to the practical side and the results flowing from the breaking of another precedent: Let us consider first the lithographing and printing industry of the country. There are thousands upon thousands of other businesses that use the product of the lithographer and the printer. Consider the calendar that hangs on your wall. It will show November 30 as the Day of Thanksgiving.

Take the transportation industry. Officials begin planning many months ahead for tours, special rates, excursions. Public events and ceremonies have been scheduled. Each ties in with some other—scheduled for Thanksgiving day when Thanksgiving day was to be November 30. The printing industry has done its job for most of those things ahead even of today. What a mess that is going to be!

Many editorials have been written, many interviews given out, concerning the effect of the new Thanksgiving date on the college football "industry," for college football receipts run into millions of dollars every year. Through all of the years, traditional games—the big games—the peak of the season—has been the Thanksgiving day game for hundreds of colleges. But if Thursday, November 30, is just another Thursday, what about the "gate" of those games?

Element of Uncertainty Is What Makes Change Harmful

And that brings us to the crux of this situation. It is the element of uncertainty that Mr. Roosevelt injected into our national life by the change in one holiday date that is harmful. Instead of promoting a feeling of security, my hunch is that the President has spread uncertainty and has caused confidence to crash in many a spot of which he never dreamed. Instead of creating a net increase in business by making a longer Christmas shopping period, I believe a cold analysis will show that the change will cost the country, as a whole, many millions of dollars in net losses.

Our nation has grown up, not in one piece, but in many pieces, each one fitted to another as smooth working as the gears of your automobile. When the engine turns over, it exerts pressure on the clutch, then on the drive shaft, then on the gears and then on the wheels, and the car moves. When any one unit of industry in America—any one phase of life—is changed suddenly, the clutch and the drive shaft and the gears and the wheels of others are affected. More than any other one thing that has happened in recent years, I believe, the President's announcement proves how closely knitted our lives are. It shows, too, that government can wreck national life as well as preserve and protect it.

(Released by Western Newspaper Union.)

Star Dust

- Real Star Starters
What a 'Stand-In' Is
Jon Hall May Go Native

By Virginia Vale

AT THE studios of Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer there is renewed interest in the filming of "Pocahontas"—if they do, they predict that early American history will come in for its rightful share of the spotlight. They've selected that continental glamour girl, Hedy LaMarr, to play the part of the Indian girl, Pocahontas, who captured the heart of Capt. John Smith when she, "whom no entreaty could prevail, got his head in her



HEDY LA MARR

arms and laid her own upon his to save him from death," when he was captured by her father, Powhatan, and was about to have his brains beaten out.

You probably know any number of people who claim that they gave this or that motion picture star the push that started him or her on the road to fame and fortune. All too frequently those star-starters actually had nothing to do with the person's success.

There are two men who can shine in reflected glory, if they want to, but they're so busy shining in their own glory that they can't be bothered. One is a well-known tailor in Hollywood, Eddie Schmidt.

Adolphe Menjou went to him when he first tackled Hollywood. He knew the value of good clothes, but he hadn't any money. He wanted to make a bargain. If Eddie Schmidt would make him six suits, and trust him for them, he'd tell everybody where he got the clothes. That wardrobe was the thing that turned the balance in Menjou's favor.

The other star-maker is Sardi, who owns the famous restaurant in New York where screen and stage players eat every day in the week. Not so very long ago William Gargan was stoney broke. He hadn't had a stage engagement for ten months, his wife was in the hospital. But he had to be seen in Sardi's, so that the theatrical world would know that he was still about.

Sardi had noticed him, and had faith in him. He invited the young actor to eat at his expense, also to entertain anyone who was important to him. The investment came to about \$800 altogether. Leslie Howard was influential in helping Gargan to make a tremendous success in the stage version of "The Animal Kingdom." Hollywood dangled a contract—and Gargan was set. Both Menjou and Gargan paid their backers' bills the first moment that they had the money.

Isabelle Sheridan, Mary Pickford's cousin, is in the movies yet not in them—and she has no desire to step before a camera. She's a stand-in—which means that she wears a star's costumes and stands patiently while lighting is tried out on her and the camera man figures what he wants. She's stood in for Constance Cummins, Merle Oberon, Virginia Bruce, Sally Eilers, Joan Blondell and various other actresses. At present she's doing it for Joan Blondell in Hal Roach's "The Housekeeper's Daughter."

Looks as if Jon Hall would go on playing native of the South Seas for the rest of his screen career. "Hurricane" started him, you may recall, and Edward Small's "South of Pago Pago" will keep up the good work.

Bette Davis' performance in "The Old Maid" is so good that people who've never liked her on the screen before are now admitting that the girl can act. And Warner Brothers' plans for screening "The Miracle" have been speeded up and put into production, after three years of discussion and preliminary work. Miss Davis will have the coveted role of the Nun.

ODDS AND ENDS—Sol Lesser is allowing Principal Productions employees an extra half hour for lunch, on condition that they'll play badminton during their additional time, on the courts across the street from his offices at Selznick-International. After trying for a year, Charles Correll of "Amos and Andy" has taught his dog to roll over. Irene Dunne thought you, the public, wouldn't like her as the hard-boiled heroine of "Front Page," so the part is being re-written.

(Released by Western Newspaper Union.)

'Swing Style' Reading Not New; The Greeks Had a Word for It

Every now and then, the newspapers report a "brand new" idea or a "brand new" discovery. Take, for instance, the report about "swing reading." According to recent headlines, "swing reading" is the latest thing imaginable—the invention of two smart eye doctors in Los Angeles.

As the papers say, the doctors disclosed their "idea" a short time ago at a national convention of the American Optometric association. Advocating a new system of printing in "swing style," the doctors said they had something that would help the eyes. In short, they urged this type of thing:

Many of the convention delegates a rof snoisses dennuhs yadretsey day on the golf course. The weath-enif saw re

This little excerpt must be read by swinging the eyes left to right along one line, then right to left

along the next, and so on.

Well, we don't like to make ourselves seem scholarly, but the doctors have unwittingly dug up something pretty old. As a matter of fact, the ancient Greeks had a word for it, used the system and gave it up. They called it boustrophedon, and you can find the word in a good dictionary even to this day. Pronounced boo-stro-fee-don, with the accent on the third syllable, it means literally "turning like oxen in plowing." It is a compound of two Greek words—bous, meaning ox, and strephein, meaning to turn.

P. S. Incidentally, the excerpt quoted above reads normally this way: "Many of the convention delegates yesterday shunned sessions for a day on the golf course. The weather was fine."

Anybody else got a new idea?—Pathfinder.

Finally Name Was O. K. Though Not 'O,' but 'K'

A gentleman had completed his purchases, and the clerk, in filling out the sales slip, asked:

"What is the name, please?" "Jepson," replied our hero. "Sixteen twenty-one West—"

"Your first initial, please."

"Oh, K."

"O. K. Jepson."

"I said 'Oh.'"

"O. Jepson."

"No. Rub out the O."

The clerk began to look haggard.

"Your initials again, please?"

"I said 'K.'"

"Pardon, you said 'O. K.'"

"I said 'Oh.'"

"Just now you said 'K.'"

"I said 'Oh,' because I didn't understand what you were asking me. I didn't mean it was my initial. My name is Kirby Jepson."

"Oh."

"No. Not O, but K. Here, give me the pencil and I'll write it myself. There, I guess it's O. K. now."—Annapolis Log.

SENSATIONAL LABOR DAY SALE
ON THE Famous Firestone STANDARD TIRES
THE THRIFT SENSATION OF 1939
HOW YOU CAN GET ONE OF THESE AMAZING TIRES AT

1/2 PRICE
BUY ONE AT LIST PRICE AND GET THE NEXT ONE AT 50% DISCOUNT

Table with 4 columns: SIZE, Price For The 1st Tire, Next Tire 50% Discount, YOU SAVE. Includes Firestone STANDARD and Firestone CHAMPION models.

Table with 4 columns: SIZE, Price For The 1st Tire, Next Tire 50% Discount, YOU SAVE. Includes Firestone HIGH SPEED and Firestone CONVOY models.

FOR GREATEST SAFETY AND ECONOMY PUT A NEW TUBE IN EVERY NEW TIRE
LIFETIME GUARANTEE • NO TIME OR MILEAGE LIMIT
SEE YOUR NEAREST FIRESTONE DEALER OR FIRESTONE AUTO SUPPLY AND SERVICE STORE