

The Burma Road China's 'Life Line' Is Packed With Heroicism While Death Always Lurks

By CLIFF LANGE

(Released by Western Newspaper Union.)
Dispatches to the newspapers in the United States have been keeping the people well informed on the Japanese activity in bombing the Burma road, life line of China. Since the United States declared war on Japan, news coming out on this famous road has been pushed to "inside pages" of newspapers because of other war activities closer to the people in the United States. Nevertheless, this road which means so much to China still plays an important part in the activity of the Allies against their enemies.

This famous road begins at Rangoon, India, as a rail line northeastward to Lashio, near the Chinese frontier. At Lashio the goods for embattled China are transferred to trucks and carried along the twisting, dangerous, wreckage-strewn highway to Chungking, headquarters of Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek's government.

From the railroad at Lashio, the Burma road in its 726 miles, crosses mountain ranges 10,000 feet high, and then plunges into canyons of two of the world's greatest rivers: the jungle hedged Mekong, and the verdant trimmed Salween. Within the distance of 40 miles—easily an hour's travel on a highway in the United States—this fascinating, adventure-packed highway rises and dips twice from 2,500 feet to 7,500 feet.

Throughout its tortuous length the road twists and turns through some of the most hazardous driving terrain in the world. The roadbed, in some places is just about nine feet wide, but never more than twenty. It hugs the edge of seemingly bottomless chasms, and sneaks over chassis-breaking ridges.

Engineering Feat.

It is no wonder that engineers consider this road as one of the world's greatest engineering feats, comparing with China's other great defensive effort, the Great Wall. Fortunately, this important highway carrying supplies to the capital of China was completed to its present condition before Japan attacked not

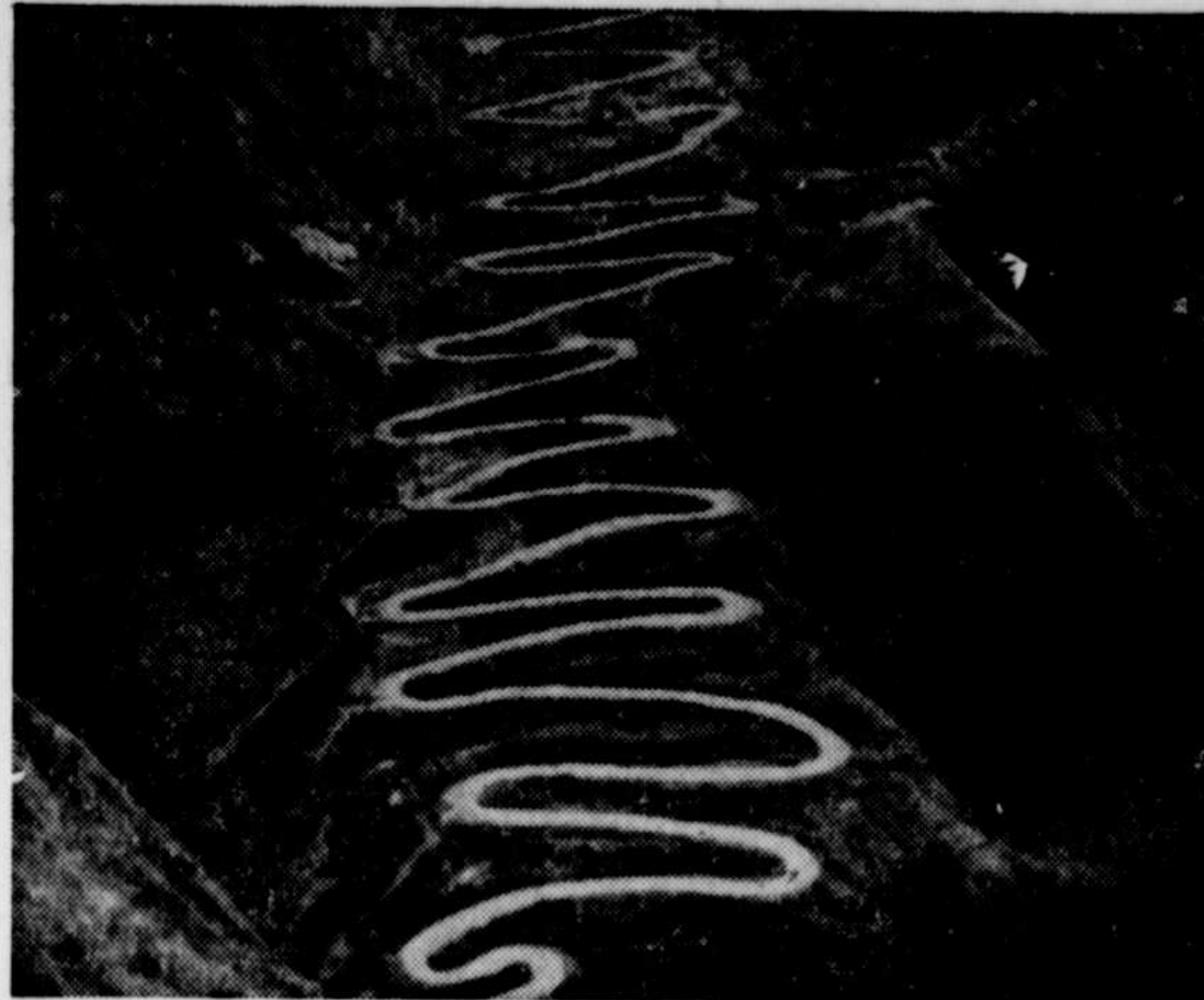


Another Burma road casualty on one of the hundreds of hair-pin curves along the route bringing war supplies to embattled China's capital in the interior. Since the road opened at least 1,300 trucks have been destroyed by rolling off precipices. This "off the road" casualty is not as bad as some of them. Sometimes "off the road" means a mere drop of something like 7,000 feet.

only the possessions of the United States in the Pacific, but also those of the Dutch and British. The United States, way before the attack by the Japs, fully realized the great value of China as an ally. For over a year now the U. S. has been sending supplies over this road. And more recently she has been seeing to it that the frequent bombings by the Japs wouldn't go unchallenged, by having volunteer corps of U. S. aviators patrol the road, ready for a scrap at any time.

Military authorities are not reticent in saying that this tortuous, grueling road may decide the battle of Asia now well under way. For without supplies going to General Kai-shek's capital, China would soon be forced to drop out of the way—possibly ask for terms with her hated enemy, Japan, who has been attempting to batter her into submission for at least five years.

Literally the Burma road is the life-line to China and her armies. Except for the overland route from Soviet Union Turkestan, it is the only inlet for material which China



This unusual shot of the Burma Road as it twists and curves over the mountains in Chungking has been compared to a snake. Possibly it will—as the story notes—be the "snake" that will help strike down Japan in her present fight against the democracies.

needs so badly. The present conflict between the Soviets and the Nazis has practically cut off the supplies which had been coming from Russia, in the north.

Recently, American truck line transportation experts came through here on General Kai-shek's invitation on their way to inspect the road. Their purpose was to put greater co-ordination and efficiency in its operation. For reports of indifference, lassitude, and perhaps graft began to reach the General's ear. With a typical "westerner's" reaction he did something about it. The U. S. transportation officials came over for a check-up.

Over 400 trucks a day are rolling over the road loaded with American military supplies sent by terms of the lend-lease bill, and relief supplies sent through the United China Relief. These same trucks returning from China carry tungsten, tung oil, wolframite and other strategic U. S. defense-program materials to pay for these supplies.

Sudden Death.

Many lives were lost in building this road. Today, the loss of lives continues. Not so much from bombing by Japanese airmen, continually blasting away at it, especially the two major suspension bridges across the Salween and the Mekong, but from the drivers and the road workers on it. Since the road opened, 1,300 trucks have been destroyed by falling off the precipices along the hundreds of hairpin turns such as shown in the picture above.

Thousands, too, have fallen victim to malaria, for the road traverses the worst malarial swamp in the world. Medical relief on the road today is under the care of the American Society of Friends, member agency of United China Relief.

Since the inspection of the road by the traffic experts invited over by Generalissimo Kai-shek, many projects calculated to eliminate inefficiency and truck delays have been instituted.

A complete system of auto repair, gasoline and dispatching stations is being established along this vital route. A school for automobile mechanics, to teach the essentials of repair and maintenance, has been opened in Chungking by the College of Science of the University of Nanking.

The awakening, and fighting, Chinese aren't going to let it be said that they, once being shown how, didn't do anything to prevent their life-line from functioning properly. At the present time the trip over the Burma road requires from 10 to 12 days of hard, tough driving. After the improvements recommended by the experts are made, the trip will take a week or less. Asphalting will improve the efficiency of the road and also reduce the ever lurking risks.

Heaven by Hand.

The Burma road will then be greatly different from the day when it was first completed by 150,000 peasant men and women, working entirely with hand tools, and who finished the job in a little more than a year. (American and British engineers estimated the job would take four years to complete.) The immensity of the project is near appalling when it is remembered that those peasants actually hacked the road out of the granite cliff edges. Within a very short time the hand-crushed rock and gravel topping this highway-for-freedom will be asphalted.

In a short time, when the 30,000-

ton figure is reached, providing the force of the Japan military machine doesn't achieve and keep the upper hand of the present battle now raging, the turning point in the war over here will be reached.

For then goods will be moving in sufficient volume to permit China's armies to undertake their first major sustained counter-offensive. A counter-offensive which will make the recent one against the Japs who were moving in on the beleaguered British at Shanghai, small in comparison.

Watch the military activities evolving about the Burma road. There, too, you will read more tales of great heroism such as have surrounded the road ever since it was first begun. The fate of the Burma road will decide the fate of the battle of the Pacific—and the battle of the Atlantic, too.

Wide Powers Given To State Governors For War Emergency

CHICAGO.—Armed with emergency war powers granted recently by their legislatures or by state statutes of 1917 still in force, most of the 48 governors are prepared for speedy mobilization of military and civilian resources of their states, a survey by the Council of State Governments indicates.

So broad are the governors' powers that it seems unlikely states will have to enact the mass of legislation found necessary during the first World War. For this reason, special sessions of the states in 1942—an off-legislative year—may be less numerous than anticipated.

The governors' war emergency powers, in addition to complete supervision of state defense councils, cover a wide range of subjects, from organizing state guards to controlling oil supplies. Twenty-seven states adopted state guard acts in 1940-1941, and in 26 of them the governor has authority to dispatch the guard in response to calls for help from neighboring governors.

Mobilizing State Resources.

In two states—Massachusetts and New Jersey—governors last year were authorized to undertake unusually wide wartime mobilization of state resources, according to the survey. The governor of Massachusetts, permitted to "take any measures which he may deem proper to carry into effect any request of the President of the United States for action looking to the national defense or to the public safety." Massachusetts last year also re-enacted a 1917 statute authorizing the governor to take possession of any equipment and supplies in the state for service of the state or country. This act further permits the governor to seize, sell or distribute gratuitously cattle, poultry, provisions, fuel, gasoline and other materials to inhabitants of the state.

The New Jersey act, approved late last month, directs the governor to render the United States in the present crisis any assistance within the power of the state. To accomplish this, he may organize and employ any and all resources within the state, whether men, properties or instrumentalities, and is directed to exercise any or all power convenient or necessary in his judgment to give such assistance.

Nine other states, under 1917 statutes, give the governor power to organize all of the state's resources.

Practically every state constitution provides the governor shall be the commander-in-chief of the militia and volunteer forces of the state, the council survey showed. Twelve states have provided specifically by statute for the declaration of a state of martial law by the governor.

In 12 states also the governor can appoint special police to guard strategic areas. Nebraska and New York give their governors particularly wide powers in the use of county or municipal officers to enforce criminal laws, it was pointed out.



U. S. LABOR AND CLOSED SHOP

LAST SPRING, W. O. Hart, editor of the Orange (Calif.) Daily News, under a heading "The Fifth Freedom," wrote and printed an editorial which has attracted nationwide interest and has been reprinted from the Pacific to the Atlantic seaboard.

In that editorial, Hart demanded for American workers the right to employment without the payment of tribute to labor racketeers; the right to join or not to join a union, as they chose. He insisted the right to work was the basic right of all freedoms, that without it all other rights were valueless.

The "closed shop" principle, for which labor racketeers are contending, is a violation of the constitutional privilege of the more than 50 million American workers now employed, of which only about one-fourth are members of unions. Labor racketeers would say that the other three-fourths that they could not work to support themselves and their families without paying tribute—such amount of tribute as the racketeers may levy.

We have been suffering from minority rule. Congress has listened to these organized blocs in the matter of legislation. Congress has failed to realize they are but minorities and do not represent a majority of the American people. Congress will find a majority of the American people will vote out of office any group of senators or representatives who attempt to impose upon them any law that deprives the worker of "Bill" Hart's "fifth freedom"—the right to work without the payment of tribute to union racketeers.

ADDING 'GADGETS' TO GOVERNMENT

SINCE 1913 they have added many new gadgets to automobiles that have made of them better machines which are more easily operated, more pleasant to ride in, and the improved cars sell at a much lower price than those made in 1913. Automobiles are a product of private enterprise.

Since 1913 many new gadgets have been added to the national government. New departments, new bureaus, new commissions have been added, but the machine is not more easily operated and it does not provide any additional pleasures for us average Americans. But government does sell at a much higher price. In 1913 the national government cost for each man, woman and child in the nation the modest sum of \$7.17, or a total of \$692,000,000 for all of us. By 1939 the new gadgets brought the cost for each of us up to \$69.76, a total of \$9,142,000,000 for all of us. In 1939 we were not paying for any war preparations, as we are now.

The cost has been multiplied up to 10 times what it was in 1913. If congress really wants to reduce the cost of civil activities of government, it should study that old 1913 model which we, the people, liked.

FARM PRICES IN WAR TIME

THE WORLD WAR I price of farm products, with wheat at a top of \$2.97 a bushel in 1917 and other items proportionately high, harmed more farmers than it helped. Such prices encouraged them to buy land at exorbitant values and the mortgage holders closed them out when neither principal nor interest could be paid as prices dropped to normal, or below, after the close of the war.

In this war America does not have the problem of feeding the greater part of Europe, as it did from 1914 to 1919. Now our one customer is England. But war does make a difference. Top price of wheat in 1939 was 72½ cents. In 1941, top price was \$1.28½—not enough to encourage high land values.

CHANGE IN ATTITUDE OF BRITISH

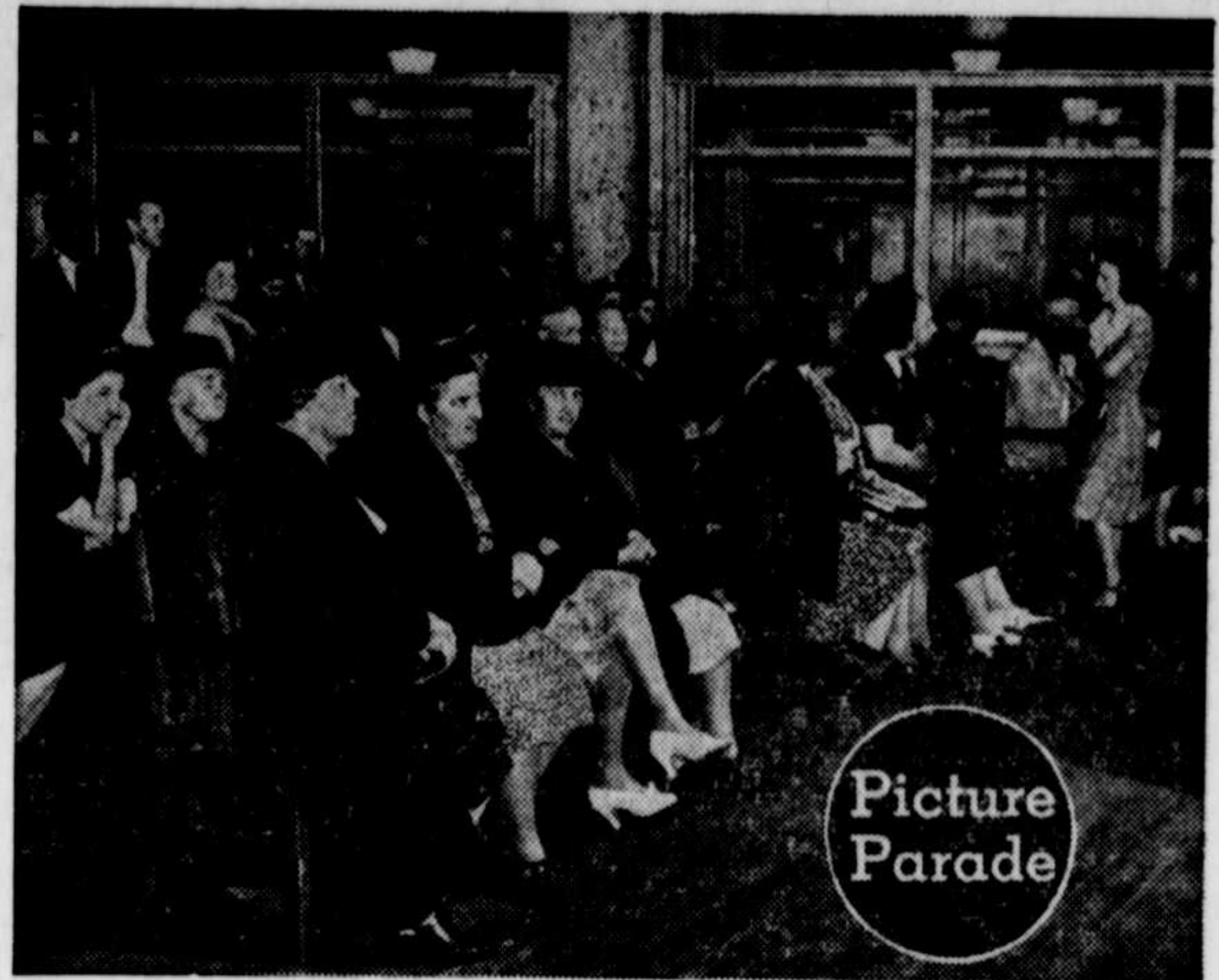
IN 1918, in company with Sir Evelyn Wrench, then a major in the British army, I walked down the Strand in London. Just in front of us, walking in the same direction, was a distinguished member of the British house of lords. Coming towards us, and towards his lordship were four British tommies, arm in arm. As they approached, his lordship stepped off the sidewalk to let them pass.

"That," I said to Major Wrench, "typifies the England of the future. The common man of England has found that he 'rates.' He will no longer make way for the nobility. He has defended England and he knows it."

The recent visit to this country of Jenny Lee, the Joan of Arc of the Welsh miners, reminded me of that incident. As an aftermath of the present war, she is demanding for the English working classes such opportunities as the American workman has always enjoyed—the chance to advance and a standard of living that is commensurate with his value to the nation. She and her followers will get much of what they are demanding. The dominance of English nobility is passing. Being an earl or a lord will soon be rather meaningless.

Becoming an American

Within the last six years more than one million persons cut their last ties with the "old country" and became citizens of the United States. And now, with America at war, there is a rush to be American. Nor is there anything difficult about attaining citizenship in the U. S.—if one is fit to be a citizen. The following series of photos shows you some of the steps taken by the foreign-born in becoming American.



Picture Parade

Awaiting their turn to file first papers in one of the ante rooms of the naturalization bureau. Many of these applicants have known oppression and are eager to cut ties with the past.



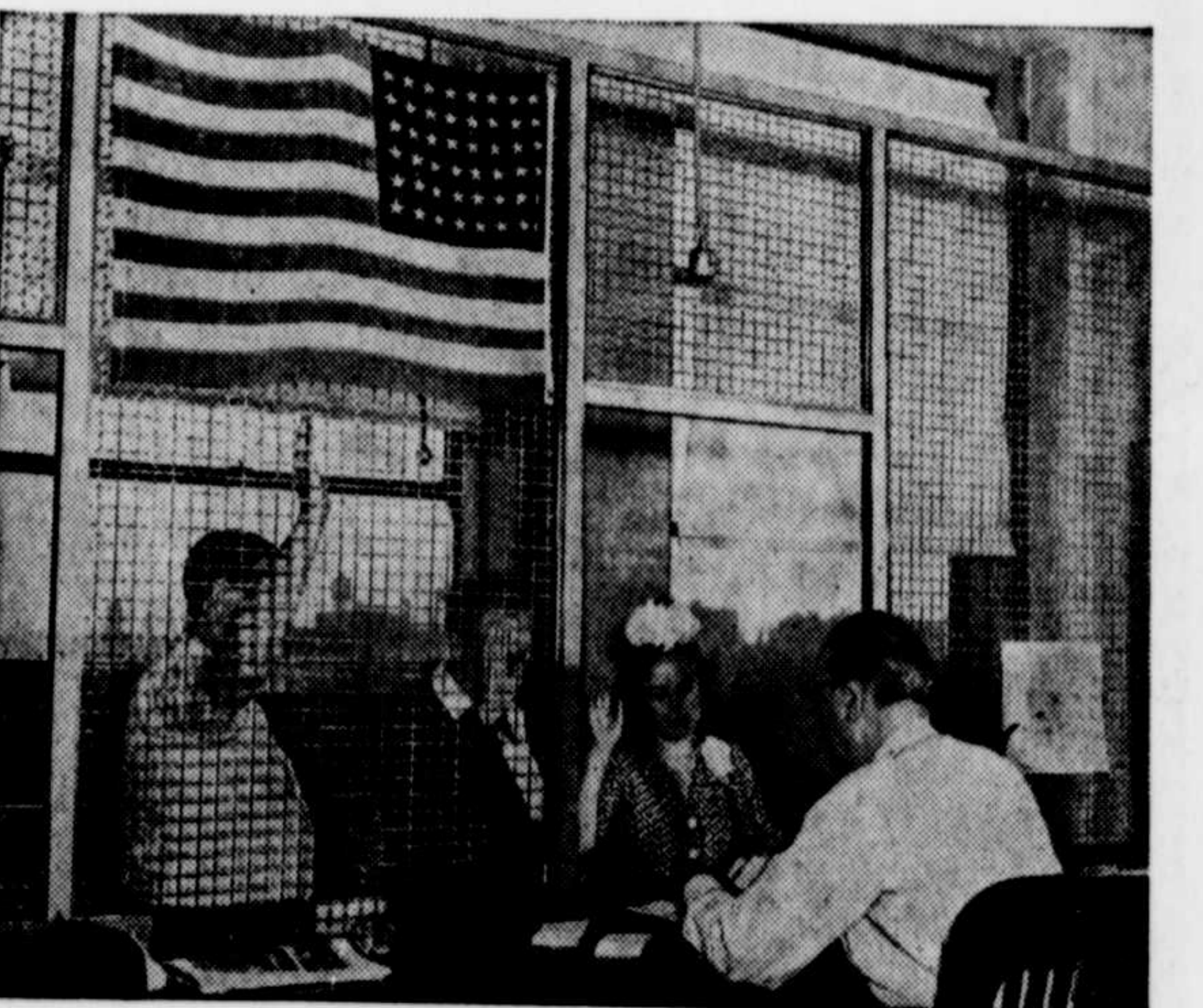
RSVP—This huge pile of applications is only a small part of the year's total. The girl is sorting them for further action.



Here are clerks checking applications for citizenship against an index containing confidential information.



A courtroom scene during the naturalization of a group of applicants. The judge (back to camera) is administering the oath of allegiance to the United States of America.



Last step. Accompanied by two witnesses, an applicant for naturalization is shown taking the oath at time of filing petition for citizenship. This is the application for the final papers.



A veritable tower of babel is this room of a naturalization bureau, where skilled linguists question the applicants.

Interesting Notes on the Famous Burma Road

With hand tools only, 150,000 Chinese peasant men and women completed it in less than 13 months.

It is 726 miles long, and hacked out of the edges of granite cliffs.

The road spans 2,000 culverts and 300 bridges, including two major suspension bridges across the Salween and the Mekong.

Since opened, 1,300 trucks have been destroyed by falling off precipices on its hundreds of hairpin turns.

A recent estimation (actual movements are a military secret) place the present volume over it from 18,000 to 20,000 tons a month.

The present trip over it requires from 10 to 12 days of hard driving.

It crosses mountain ranges 10,000 feet high—plunges into canyons of two of the world's greatest rivers.