Washington Digest

Defeat of Wheeler Marks Passing of Able Legislator

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There was something rather painful about it to me when I heard Mr. President say two words that marked the obituary of a long career. The terse reply was made at a presidential press conference when a reporter asked Mr. Truman if he cared to say anything about the senatorial primary in Montana in which Burton K. Wheeler was defeated by Leif Erickson.

There was nothing more that the President could say. He already had endorsed Wheeler with that remarkable loyalty that he has for his friends—a virtue which easily may go down in history as one of his faults.

Wheeler gave the freshman senator, Harry Truman, his first opportunity to show his mettle by letting him bat for him as chairman of the important Interstate Commerce committee. Truman made good, and a strong friendship developed.

But even Presidential aid couldn't save Wheeler.

The other day I was looking over the autographed photographs with which Harold McGrath, superintendent of the senate radio gallery, had decorated the walls. It was just about the time that things began to look bad for the senator. We commented on the senators we had known who had ended long careers in defeat.

Of course, Sen. George Norris was the classic example. Five terms. Then he was replaced by an anti-Roosevelt man, Sen. Kenneth Wiggery.

Senator Norris' closest contender for the longevity record in recent years was Ellison ("Cotton Ed") Smith of South Carolina, violently anti-New Deal. He was defeated by a pro-Roosevelt man the year after Norris lost out.

Up on the radio gallery wall is a picture of Henry Ashurst, the senator whose tongue lately dripped epigrams. He came to the senate when New Mexico was admitted to the Union. That was 1912. He left in 1940, serving five terms, plus five years.

The year 1940 was a bad one for veterans—besides Ashurst, William King of Utah left up, having served since 1917, and Lynn Frazier of North Dakota, who came to Washington in 1923.

Senator Wheeler served only four terms, but his vivid personality made it seem longer. He made many enemies. Many people disapproved of his isolationism and some of his other views most thoroughly. But there are many, even among his detractors, who respect him for his integrity, for his ability as a legislator, something which perhaps is understood in Washington better than elsewhere, and also because they consider his pacifism sincere.

I remember a conversation I had with Jerry O'Connell, former representative who tried to take Wheeler's seat in a campaign somewhat similar to the one which brought victory to Erickson. Jerry was pretty sore. He had a copy of the Anaconda Standard in his hand as well as a clipping. The clipping was a report of one of Senator Wheeler's campaign speeches, made early in his career. I can't remember the phraseology, but the general idea (expressed by Wheeler) was that if the Anaconda Standard, which was supposed to represent the aspirations of the big copper interests, ever praised Wheeler, it would be a sign that he was no longer worthy of the support of the people of Montana.

O'Connell read that to me. Then he picked up his copy of the Standard, and read from it some very kind words for Senator Wheeler.

However, I think it would be greatly unfair to say that Senator Wheeler ever "sold out," even figuratively, to any interests. As far as I know, he is as sincere today as he was when he made his first fight on whatever issue had a side unpopular enough to attract him.

In February of 1936 I had a long interview with Senator Wheeler. I have the following clipping before me. It is illustrated with a huge photograph (more picture than text) showing Wheeler, his fist clenched about to drive it into his palm—a favorite gesture. I remember when the picture was taken.

Here are two paragraphs from the story:

"Last autumn (remember this was written in February, 1936), citizens of Montana sent the same young man to Washington as a senator for his third term with the largest majority ever given a candidate by the Mountain State."

A decade passes and new voters grow up.

"Wheeler (I observed this in the same interview) came back to his office in the Senate building with the pictures of the high mountains and the deep valleys of his adopted state on the walls, and a victory measured in the same magnificent dimensions. He felt as if a little thinner than it was but he can make the echoes with the same thunder he released when he first arrived. He is still up and at 'em. And the higher they fly the more anxious he is to make them fall."

Wheeler, Norris, Ashurst—they, too, flew high.

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Matron Upsets Solons's Aplomb

It was during the day and night senate session in 1934. The senate convened at 4 p. m. to continue deliberations at 9 p. m. Sen.-elect Sen. Styles Bridges of New Hampshire, bitter GOP opponent, and Mrs. Bridges went to a restaurant for dinner. Coming out, they were caught by a sudden sharp rainshower. The dapper, white-haired senator hailed a passing cab, and he and his wife piled in. Before they could shut the door (and to accordance with Washington's group ethics) a huge and very hangy Labrador retriever bounded in, landing in the senatorial lap. The dog was followed by his conjugal mistress. Some moments elapsed as the quartet arranged themselves in the cab's back seat. The dog continued to struggle and drip on the white linen suit.

Suddenly the corpulent lady, glancing sharply at the senator, said: "Why, you're Senator Bridges, aren't you?"

Bridges, pleased to be recognized, smiled graciously.

"Well," said the lady, jerking the sympathetic canine away from the Republican senator, "I'm a registered Democrat!"

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Schwellenbach Yearns for West

There's a persistent rumor that Labor Secretary Schwellenbach would like to desert the Potomac for Puget Sound. That's not hard to understand since heavy pressure is being exerted to make drastic changes in the labor department and since Schwellenbach is as popular as he is in his home state.

In 1934, when he was running for the United States senate, Lew Schwellenbach carried every county of the state—the first time this ever had happened.

Vicariously, as shown in the recent remarking success of his brother, Edgar Schwellenbach, in winning the Supreme court judgeship of the state—his popularity persists today. Edgar Schwellenbach, almost unknown outside his own community, filed against the incumbent. The court elections usually don't draw a very heavy vote—yet the man with the former senator's name received more votes than were cast for the Republican and Democratic candidates for the senate.

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Senator in Far Happy Futures

The eyes of Washington Post readers bugged out recently when they read in a story describing senatorial wives' experiences with varying prices that "Mrs. Glen Taylor buys groceries for a family of 15, the youngest of whom was an 18-year-old baby." I understand unofficially that the reporter had named 18-DAY-old baby, because just two weeks before I had the pleasure of stalking one of the 30 cardboard cigars and up to the radio correspondents gallery by the senator.

It isn't often that cigars are distributed in the senate for this particular reason, as most of the legislators have yet with childish things. But radio correspondents awarded Senator Taylor's cigars and congratulated him on his third son, as well as on the other honor recently tendered him by a panel of radio experts. They voted him the "legislator most likely to succeed in radio." The two honors had no connection.

BARBS . . . by Baukhage

A new bird-proof windshield has been approved by the Civil Aeronautics administration. Now, let us look for a bird-proof automobile top.

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"The average person of 20 now has as many years of life remaining to him as a newborn child had in 1840," says the Metropolitan Insurance service. But can he use them to any better advantage?

Some 20,000,000 homes have the central heating system, says Petroleum Notes. But what is worse—several million veterans have no homes.

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As late as 1899, 40 per cent of men's clothing was ready-to-wear, says the Twentieth Century Institution. In 1940 it may be ready but it's already pretty worn.

FARMERS TAKE TO AIR . . . More than 100 flying farmers from Illinois, Michigan, Wisconsin and Indiana left their tractors and combines to fly to Lafayette, Ind., to attend the first annual flying farmers' field day at Purdue university, and to prove that the airplane will play an important part in Midwest agriculture. The new group, which has 1,500 members, watched demonstrations.

THREE-MAN DECONTROL BOARD . . . Future price control will rest with a three-man price decontrol board. Recently named to the board by President Truman are, left to right: Daniel W. Bell, Washington, D. C., former undersecretary of the treasury; Roy L. Thompson, New Orleans Federal Land Bank president, chairman; and George H. Mead, Dayton, Ohio, former chairman of the industrial advisory board under the NRA and member of advisory board of Office of War Mobilization.

EYE-DROPPER BABY—THEN AND NOW . . . When Richard Seaman was born in 1941, he weighed just 14 ounces. Doctors fighting to save the life of the tiny mite fed him with an eye-dropper, as shown at left. He was kept in an incubator. Today, Richard is a sleeping pudgy man of 48 pounds, of sturdy body and well-developed muscles.

REGAINED MEMORY AND RICHES . . . Rajah Rajmat Ramendra Narayan Rai of India, who was believed to have died and been buried at funeral pyre, 12 years later regained his memory and was awarded his property rights. He reported that tale had put out the fire and brought him out of coma and that he years he wandered as a beggar over India. The Lord Privy council now has ruled that he is the rightful owner of a huge estate with a yearly income.

BATTING FOR HAY FEVER SUFFERERS . . . Fall was so ragweed, which is blamed for most of the misery of hay fever victims, was spread in Brooklyn as a campaign got underway to eradicate the weed in vacant lots. Photo shows city employees spraying a luxurious growth of the pesky weeds with a herbicide, dichlorophenoxyacetic. In six to eight weeks, treated plants die from a 40 per cent solution of spraying. Complete control of ragweed is now possible.

POTATO BLOSSOM QUEEN . . . Miss Yvette Gagne, Van Buren, Me., who was chosen from some 11 queen candidates and crowned Maine potato blossom queen by Gov. Horace Hildreth during festival at Houlton, Maine.

Gems of Thought

GRANT that I may not criticize my neighbor until I have walked a mile in his moccasins.—Indian prayer.

A penny will hide the biggest star in the universe if you hold it close enough to your eye.—Samuel Grafton.

Change hays not but hand upon truth.—Beaconsfield.

Government, religion, property, books are nothing but scaffolding to build man. — Von Humboldt.

We can all afford to give freely the best that we have, because in giving it we have it doubly.—Benjamin Franklin.

CLASSIFIED DEPARTMENT

AUTOS, TRUCKS & ACCESS.

CLOTHING, FURS, ETC.

FARM MACHINERY & EQUIP.

MISCELLANEOUS

TARPAULINS
TENTS AND DROP CLOTHS

Buy U. S. Savings Bonds!

HIGH ENERGY TONIC
helps build summer
STAMINA! ENERGY!
SCOTT'S EMULSION
YEAR-ROUND TONIC

INDIAN LODGE

You can relieve
ATHLETE'S FOOT
80.6%
SORETONE
50¢ and $1.00

One of the best home ways to
BUILD UP
RED BLOOD

When Your Back Hurts—
and Your Strength and Energy is Below Par
DOAN'S PILLS