MEN AND AFFAIRS AT WASHINGTON

★ National Topics Interpreted by WILLIAM BRUCKART ★

Washington.—There is an "era of good feeling" going the rounds that is quite different than anything we have had since early in 1929. It is being promoted with a great deal of enthusiasm and present results as well as indications justify the promotion work that is going on in the New Deal press agent circles.

Era of Good Feeling

This era of good feeling is quite an interesting thing from another angle, namely, politics. It is being used by the politicians again to establish President Roosevelt in the same situation as he found himself at the beginning of his first term in the White House. I am afraid he is being built up again as a superman and, in politics, a superman or his position is hard to maintain in the public mind.

Business also is indulging in this era of good feeling. Business always puts its best foot forward, just as lovers do. It wants to develop a spirit of good will on the part of the public and it wants to show its financial backers how things are coming along all hunky-dory. There is nothing wrong in the attitude. It is perfectly logical and human—and it is very interesting to see this wave of healthy feeling grow.

The important, as well as the interesting, thing about this era of good feeling is that to the expert students it shows a gradual, if not conclusive, decline in depression conditions. It proves that things are on the up grade—not that they are at the top yet, but that a momentum is being established which may carry the economic recovery to the top if the federal government settles down and treats business with fairness.

As I said above, New Deal press agents are promoting this business recovery for all that it is worth. Naturally, they are attributing it to the re-election of Mr. Roosevelt as the basic factor in this upward surge of business. They are capitalizing it to the fullest because by so capitalizing it, the political party in power gets its due share of credit. There is no doubt that they will continue on this course because everyone likes to read or hear about improved business conditions, restoration of dividend payments, increasing volume of traffic, any and all things that show the nation is slowly but surely getting back on its economic feet.

While the New Dealers are shouting from the housetops how President Roosevelt has accomplished all of these things, there comes a discordant note from business itself. Business leaders, just like politicians, want credit for whatever is accomplished, whether they are responsible or someone else.

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Whose the Credit

Business is seeking to show that it is pulling itself together, opening new factories, raising wages, in spite of New Deal policies with the handicaps that some of those policies include. So, business is seeking to counterbalance the politicians and the politicians, speaking through New Deal press statements, are trying to fortify their own position as saviors of the country. Neither one is correct. Without doing too much debunking, I believe it ought to be said that President Roosevelt and his associates have executed some government policies that have been helpful to the business structure. With equal frankness, it ought to be said that business leaders have taken the bull by the horns and have proceeded to help materially in putting commerce and industry back on the right track again. Neither one ought to take too much credit. Some credit is due each but neither one nor both together is entitled to claim all of the credit for the recovery of business that is now underway.

The answer to the upward swing of business lies chiefly in the fact that the depression has worn itself out. It would have worn itself out just the same whether the administration was New Deal or Republican. It would have accomplished just as much in the way of expanded buying power and increased production whether Mr. Roosevelt was re-elected or whether he had been defeated and Governor Landon of Kansas had been elected at the end of the recent national campaign.

I am reminded by this discussion of a remark that the late Eugene Black made while he was governor of the Federal reserve board. On that occasion I asked him whether there were signs of the end of the depression. His reply was, "not yet." He added, however, that the depression would destroy itself as every other depression in history had done and that when this point of exhaustion had been reached, commerce and industry would take an upward swing. Then, he added with reference to some of the economic students of the administration in power: "It will wear itself out and good times will come back again—and every doggone professor and economic theorist in the world will try to claim credit for it."

So, I think it can be said without equivocation that if anybody or anything is entitled to credit for the indicated recovery movement, we had better be fair and admit it was a combination of circumstances, not the least of which was the natural law of supply and demand. It seems utterly silly to me for any individuals or groups of individuals to attempt to corral all of the praise.

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Wage Increases

Those who have access to the market pages of the great metropolitan daily newspapers must have been impressed by the rapid fire announcements coming from big industrial corporations of wage increases, bonuses for employees and melon cutting in the form of dividends for the shareholders. They must have been impressed, likewise, with the sharp rise in security prices that obviously has reflected the expanded business and increased earnings.

A prosperous nation may not always be a happy one but there is a certain psychology about a prosperous nation that makes it carefree. It is a psychology that makes the average man and woman forget to a large extent about the recent pinch of economic displacements and, as well, those same people are inclined to disregard and give no consideration to the morrow.

Let us look into those circumstances. When corporations or other forms of business have reasonable years in their particular lines, early in the winter they begin to see what the year's total will be. They can figure rather accurately what the returns will be in the last two months, say, after they have made their totals for the first ten months of the year. So, whenever they reach that stage in a reasonably successful year they can make their plans for distribution of the profits.

Now, we have a tremendously high tax rate on corporation surpluses and we have rather high tax rates on incomes of individuals. Corporations and other businesses, therefore, start figuring how to do the best they can with the earnings of the year. Some of them determine that their employees should share substantially in the profits of their labors; others want to distribute as much of these earnings as they may to their stockholders because such a showing creates a demand in the market for their shares and such a demand is influential in establishment of the corporation's credit for borrowing money if it needs to borrow from the banks.

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How It Works Out

I have merely touched on the effect of distribution of earnings among the holders of capital. It is just as important to consider the effect of distribution of these earnings on the laboring classes. Labor has been convinced under the American system for many years that it is entitled to some share of the profits from its products. Employers are taking that same view to a greater extent than anywhere else in the world. When labor gets bonuses or gets increases in its pay, there is a reaction among those workers who have sound judgment that prompts them to do the best they can on their jobs. That is to say, they become contented workers and they are less susceptible to the propaganda of radicals who seek to promote strikes and labor disturbances to further the ends of communism. That is a part of the era of good feeling as much as the added earnings of corporations or the enthusiasm of politicians over victory.

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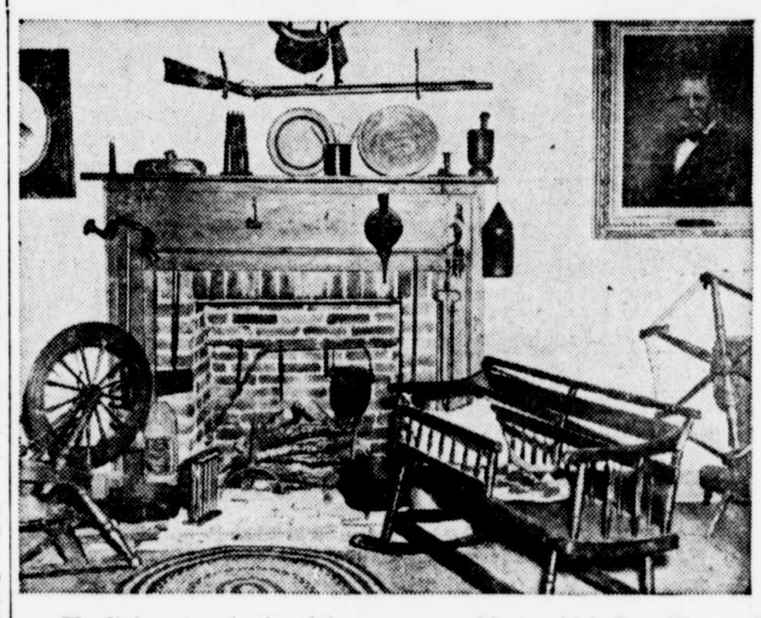
Restore Cabin Birthplace of Gen. Grant



The living room in the plain two-room cabin in which Gen. Ulysses S. Grant, eighteenth President of the United States, was born. The cabin has been restored to its original site at Mt. Pleasant, Ohio, after an absence of more than fifty years, and has been furnished as far as possible with household belongings of the Grant family. Jesse Grant and his young wife were in poor circumstances at the time their son, Ulysses, was born. Some time later they moved to Georgetown in an adjoining county. There they prospered and were able to build a comfortable two-story home.

STAR DUST

MOVIE AND RADIO

By Virginia Vale

IT'S said that Fred Astaire has been much upset over the fact that his radio programs haven't come up to expectations. In fact, it's reported that he wanted to drop the whole thing—but just try to get out of a contract to broadcast, once you're in it! He's continuing—and if they'll just give him the right scripts to work with there's no reason why he shouldn't be tremendously successful.

You may recall that Maurice Chevalier felt that same way about his broadcasts—but they were popularly considered flops right to the last, if the opinion of the great American public that stayed home and listened to them counts for anything. Al Jolson was pretty unhappy about his first programs, but he gritted his teeth and went right on, determined to improve, till he got the knack of it and became a success on the air.

—★—

Clark Gable abandoned his New York vacation after three days of being almost torn apart by autograph seekers and enthusiastic fans, and Carole Lombard didn't even start for the East after hearing what had happened to him.

Clark Gable

Incidentally, during his brief stay in New York a girl who's part of the movie business there noticed a man on the street who looked very much like the famous Clark—face, figure, even clothes bore a strong resemblance. The only difficulty was that he was blacked up—she insists that the man was a white man who'd used burnt cork.

—★—

Ruth Chatterton's buying a new plane; she just can't get enough of flying when she pilots her own. Incidentally, doesn't she do a grand piece of work in "Dodsworth"? Never has she given a better performance. And of course it's an exceptionally good picture—the kind that makes audiences applaud when it turns out the way they want it to.

—★—

It's reported that James Cagney has had so much difficulty with his first picture made under his new affiliations that he'd be glad to bury the hatchet and go back to working for Warner Brothers.

James Cagney

Which brings up the fact that Bette Davis has shown that she can take it. After losing her legal fight with Warner Brothers and being forbidden to make pictures in England, she announced that she'd come home and go back to work as if there had never been any trouble.

—★—

ODDS AND ENDS . . . Greta Garbo certainly has changed; she goes to parties occasionally nowadays . . . She may do a modern picture to follow "Camille," before she gets into costume for "Beloved," which is laid in the time of Napoleon . . . If you think Colonel Stoopnagle and Budd sound a bit breathless when they begin their broadcasts, remember that they've probably been practicing jig steps to Don Voorhees' music by way of warming up . . . Paramount plans to have Bing Crosby make pictures with plots, and sing just incidentally, from now on . . . At least one of the big motion picture companies has been signing up young actors and actresses on 30-day contracts—but paying them no money; just keeping them from signing with anyone else.

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Solo Flying at 11

Jack Chapman is the youngest human being who has ever made a solo flight. He made his first air trip at the age of four. He had seven and one-half hours of flying instruction before he tried his own wings. He soloed at Suffolk Airport, Westhampton, Long Island, in October, 1931, when he was eleven years old.

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