MEN AND AFFAIRS AT WASHINGTON

★ National Topics Interpreted by WILLIAM BRUCKART ★

Washington — Senator O'Mahoney of Wyoming has prepared a bill for introduction early in the new congress that will set up, if it becomes law, a comprehensive mechanism to control and regulate some of the principal activities of business corporations. It is a far reaching proposition, as it now stands, and it cannot be passed off lightly. There is support for it in a number of quarters. While it undoubtedly will not become law in its present form, it must be regarded as the opening wedge.

To Control Business

The Wyoming senator's principal idea is to require businesses of an incorporated character to take out a federal license. If they do not comply, the proposed law would deny them the right to ship goods into retail trade between states.

While the main theme of the proposition does not seem anything about which one should get excited, it is the things that can be done behind such a general requirement that must and will be examined by congress and the country before it takes a step of the kind advocated by Senator O'Mahoney. For example, if the federal government is permitted to require businesses to obtain a license or charter from Washington, those businesses may be compelled to meet all manner of requirements before such a license or charter is granted. In the reverse, if after they have the license, they fail to observe the provisions laid down either by congress or bald - headed bureaucrats, revocation of the license is the penalty that may be exacted. It should be added that exaction of a penalty of this kind, once the license provision is established as a federal government right, becomes a powerful weapon and the limit to which that power may be exercised is scarcely to be forecast.

While, as I said, the O'Mahoney legislation may not be expected to become law in its present form, its terms and provisions give a hint of what can be expected of any legislation of a similar character.

Take this provision, for example: "Rates of pay shall be increased and hours of work shall be reduced in accordance with gains in the productive efficiency of the industry, arising from increased mechanization, improvements in technological methods, or from other causes, to the end that employees shall have an equitable participation in the output of industry, and that employment and mass purchasing power may keep pace with industry."

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Dictatorial Powers

It seems quite obvious that under such a basic statement of principles, a business could easily be made to agree to collective bargaining among its employees, to establish minimum wages and to follow the dictates of some bureau or commission in Washington in actual management and promulgation of policies. Indeed, it is set forth in the O'Mahoney draft that the federal trade commission would be authorized to obtain all "relevant and detailed data as to production costs, prices and profits."

As I see this sort of thing and from the views of experts with whom I have consulted, I cannot escape the conclusion that such legislation simply extends to the federal government dictatorial powers over virtually all private business.

It means, moreover, that politics and politicians would be the guiding force and that if union labor leaders were in control of the agency having supervisory powers over business or if communists or conservatives or any other class were in control, business would be directed in accordance with the economic views of that school of thought. Since our nation frequently hands the responsibility of government control from one political party to the other, the implications of such legislation as this are tremendous, to say the least.

Constitutional questions enter into this legislation and it may be that the basic theory advanced by the Wyoming senator will not hold at all. As I understand it, Senator O'Mahoney is holding no pride of authorship as to the language of his bill but to the principles he strongly adheres. So, it is made to appear at least, as I said above, that this proposal constitutes an entering wedge on an entirely new theory of government's relation to private business. For that reason, it is one of the most significant propositions to come forward in recent years, more significant, I believe, than the ill-fated NRA. It certainly is a proposition that should be watched closely by all citizens.

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Mixing in Love Affairs

Affairs of the heart are all right privately, our American Department of State holds, but it reserves the right to horn into any love affair that involves an American foreign service officer. It is all perfectly open and above board. The Department of State has put its conclusions into writing, into an official regulation, and hereafter no foreign service officer can marry an alien while he is in the foreign service unless he gets the consent of "father" State department.

It is immensely interesting but not significant in an international way that the State department's order concerning international marriages should have been promulgated during the heat of the British constitutional crisis over King Edward's determination to marry the American - born Wallis Warfield Simpson. It simply happened to come along at the same time, but since all the world loves a lover, in Washington one hears reference to the Simpson-Edward affair mentioned many times in the same breath with the State department decree. This obtains because nearly all of our foreign service people have relations or friends in the national capital and the decree forbidding international marriages set many tongues to wagging.

But the State department ruling ought to be treated with utmost seriousness and sincerity. It is important. It is necessary to stretch the imagination a great way in order to assume that international marriages of the type banned by the State department would "shake an empire" after the manner of international marriages among royalty. On the other hand, it seems to me to be quite fair to say that international marriages among official representatives of a nation can very easily prove embarrassing to the government by which the foreign service officer receives credentials. In fact, there are instances on record where such marriages have proved to be serious obstacles in the settlement of disputes between governments.

Then, it must be considered that there is a genuine possibility of war in Europe in the next few years. A tremendous tragedy is being prepared there. While obviously any governmental decision that has the effect of keeping lovers apart arouses antagonism, a sympathetic feeling among all with tender hearts in this circumstance, the rule seems well justified. In addition to following the lead of other nations on the point, our State department has banned these international marriages largely in order to keep our nation free from any possible entanglements in event of that European tragedy that looms like red fire on the horizon of the future.

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Yuletide in Old New York

© Yale University Press

There was a hot time in old New York when Christmas rolled around. The Dutch were a merry people and the streets rang with joy to commemorate the birth of Christ. In 1654, for instance, the city fathers declared themselves a Christmas holiday that began December 14 and lasted until three weeks after New Year's day. That was a real Christmas vacation!

what Irvin S. Cobb thinks about:

Defenders of Communism

SANTA, MONICA, CALIF. —Every time I write a squib against communism, there follows a flood of letters from persons who begin by saying they're not communists—perish the thought.

But either I'm attacking free speech — as though free speech meant free license to undermine our government; or, by indirection, I'm trying to undermine trade unionism, although what trade unionism has in common with communism is something which I don't quite see.

Irvin S. Cobb

One camouflaged red — or anyhow he must be reddish—states there are only 100,000 known communists among 120,000,000 of us, so why worry? But wouldn't you worry if 100,000 lepers were suffered to go at large among us, or 100,000 stinging lizards to run wild?

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"Smitty's" Travels.

READING about a police sergeant who retired after forty years' service and never set foot off of his native Manhattan island made me think of a gentleman known as "Smitty" who, in my reportorial days on Park Row, was general roustabout at Andy Horn's saloon.

Smitty was born in the shadow of Brooklyn bridge and grew up there. He had traveled the various boroughs, but no matter where he went was always within the greater city. Finally he took a tour to foreign parts. He went to visit his sister, who'd married a truck gardener back of Newark, and the brother-in-law, who owned a car, toured Smitty about the landscape.

I was one who greeted Smitty on his return.

"Fur me," he said, "never again! I don't like that Joisey. Why, all them towns over there is got different names."

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Dolling Up Lobbyists.

WHAT ever became of the bill introduced into the Louisiana legislature requiring lobbyists to wear special uniforms while following their trade? As I recall the original act, it provided that lobbyists of less than three years' experience should wear green skull caps and rainbow-hued plaid trousers; veterans were to wear the green caps and all-white suits, which latter seemed especially appropriate, white being the color for purity.

It's just too bad if the notion has been allowed to languish. And if an amendment were tacked on requiring that a certain type of legislator must wear garments with no pockets in them and buttoning up the back, princesse style, so the wearer couldn't slip anything inside his bosom—well, there you'd have an idea that any state in the Union could profitably adopt, or, anyhow, almost any state.

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Styles in Women's Hats.

HAVE you noticed those sub-divisional hats the women are wearing this season? If not, kindly do so. It'll distract your attention from the part-time frocks some of them are wearing.

The average woman is wearing what looks like part of a hat—say one-half to two-thirds. I've heard the more of the original hat the milliner chopped off, the higher went the price for what was left. I suppose with hats, as in the case of a good clean appendix operation, if they'd cut the entire thing away, only very wealthy women could afford to go bare-headed.

IRVIN S. COBB.

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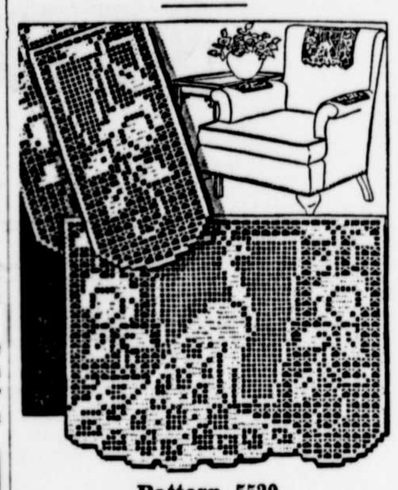
It's Easy to Crochet This Set of Lace Filet



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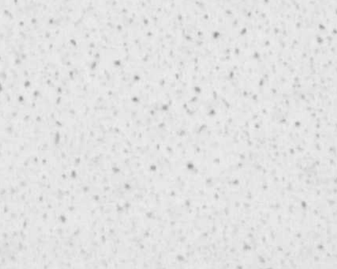
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I talk like this when I can't think
Of anything to say.