

CURRENT EVENTS IN REVIEW

By Edward W. Pickard

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Death of Charles Curtis, Former Vice President

CHARLES CURTIS, former Vice President of the United States and before that representative and senator from Kansas, died suddenly of heart disease at the Washington home of his brother-in-law and sister, Mr. and Mrs. Edward E. Gann. He was seventy-six years old, and was the first man of Indian blood ever to preside over the senate. He was one-quarter Kaw Indian, his grandmother having been Princess Julie of that tribe who married a French voyager. In his boyhood Curtis was a jockey, and later a reporter. Having studied law, he became a prosecutor at the age of twenty-four in Shawnee county, Kansas, and was elected to congress in 1892. He was made senator in 1907, was defeated in 1912, and two years later was again elected senator. He was elected Vice President on the ticket headed by Herbert Hoover, and was renominated for that position in 1932.



Charles Curtis

Mr. Curtis was greatly liked by his associates in Washington and his death caused genuine grief. President Roosevelt said: "I am deeply distressed to learn of the sudden passing of my old friend, Charles Curtis. Whether they knew him as a senator, as the Vice President of the United States, or as the man he was in his own right, his legion of friends will remember him, always affectionately, and will mourn his passing."

"I was always fond of him. I was associated with him in the house and senate. He was a fine man and a good friend."

Funeral services for Mr. Curtis and the interment were in Topeka, Kan.

Long Newspaper Tax Is Held Unconstitutional

ONCE again the Supreme court of the United States comes to the rescue of a free press. Unanimously the nine justices ruled that the Louisiana law imposing a punitive tax on the advertising of the principal newspapers of that state is unconstitutional. The law was passed by a legislature controlled by the late Senator Huey Long. The court said of it: "It is bad because, in the light of its history and of its present setting, it is seen to be a deliberate and calculated device in the guise of a tax to limit the circulation of information to which the public is entitled in virtue of the constitutional guarantee."

"A free press stands as one of the great interpreters between the government and the people. To allow it to be fettered is to fetter ourselves. In view of the persistent search for new subjects of taxation, it is not without significance that, with the single exception of the Louisiana statute, so far as we can discover, no state during the 136 years of our national existence has undertaken to impose a tax like that now in question."

"The form in which the tax is imposed is in itself suspicious. It is not measured or limited by the volume of advertisement. It is measured alone by the extent of the circulation of the publication in which the advertisements are carried, with the plain purpose of penalizing the publishers and curtailing the circulation of a selected group of newspapers."

Raskob Sued for Alleged Income Tax Deficiency

ACTION against John J. Raskob, former chairman of the Democratic national committee when Al Smith was the Presidential nominee, and who is now president of the American Liberty league, has been begun by the government for an alleged deficiency of \$1,026,340 on his 1929 income taxes. The claim was filed in an amendment to the petition recently filed against Pierre S. du Pont two days before Al Smith had bitterly assailed the New Deal. In the petition, which Raskob described as "New Deal persecution," Mr. du Pont was alleged to have understated his 1929 income by \$2,897,832 and an additional tax of \$617,316 was asked. In the amended petition accusing Mr. Raskob, it was alleged that he and the industrialist engaged in "fictitious" sales of securities, one to the other, to a total of about \$30,000,000 for the purpose of showing losses.

When a borrower under the modernization credit plan defaults on a loan, the lending institution files claim with the housing administration for the insurance on the loan. The matter of collecting the defaulted obligation then is turned over to the Federal Housing administration. "In such cases it will be the policy of the Federal Housing administration to be just as rigid as the Treasury department in the collection of taxes. The collection machinery is well organized and, while every reasonable consideration will be given to borrowers in default, the public must not get the impression that the housing administration will be lax in performing its duty."

"There is no reason to assume that borrowers in default will be treated like tax evaders, but rather along the same lines as an individual who is in default of tax payments."

New Farm Bill Pushed for Early Adjournment

LEADERS of congress hope for an early adjournment, by May 1 at the latest, and therefore they pushed the new farm bill forward, trying to get it through both houses by the end of the week. In their desire to get away from the Capital, they already had decided to let the proposed per-

manent neutrality legislation go by the board.

The farm bill as rewritten by the senate agriculture committee is based on the soil erosion prevention scheme. Some Democrats joined with many Republicans in opposing the measure, one of them being Senator Walsh of Massachusetts. In a statement issued to the press he declared it was a "dangerous" bill conferring "autocratic and blanket authority" on the secretary of agriculture. He said the measure was "neither valid in law nor valid in economics."

Chairman Doughton of the house ways and means committee said he expected definite word from the White House or treasury soon on the amount and kind of taxes that might be imposed to finance the new farm program.

Speaker Byrns said he could see no reason why the tax measure should not emerge from the committee by the end of February.

He and Doughton insisted they had no advance information on what the administration might propose. Many congressmen who are usually well informed said they looked for a recommendation for levies to raise more than \$500,000,000, perhaps through excise taxes.

Liberty League Hits at Share-Wealth Schemes

AMERICAN LIBERTY LEAGUE has issued a document concerning plans for sharing the national wealth, calling them "not only impractical but utterly impossible." Reminding that wealth is not money, but land, buildings, industry, railways, raw materials, manufactured goods and metals, the league said the most feasible method of dividing it equally among all the people would be for the government to issue securities against all property, and then to take over its management.

Actual division of wealth might "give a city apartment dweller an unwelcome pig or sheep," the statement added, while the farmer might receive an equally unwelcome piece of urban property. Division also would destroy wealth, the league argued, because separate units of income-producing wealth "would have no value."

Michigan Party Chief Convicted of Fraud

ELMER B. O'HARA, Democratic state chairman of Michigan and former clerk of Wayne county, which includes Detroit; State Senator A. J. Wilkowski and 36 others of lesser prominence were convicted in Detroit of having attempted to steal the 1934 election. Eight defendants in the recount case, which had been on trial for nearly 12 weeks, were acquitted. Two other defendants previously had pleaded guilty, thus bringing to 20 the number facing sentence for their part in the vote recount conspiracy.

For O'Hara, the verdict came as the culmination of a series of calamities in a brief political career. Last November a jury in Macomb county, adjacent to Wayne, found him guilty of bribery in a drainage transaction in connection with real estate deals he had made before 1932 when he entered politics and was elected Wayne county clerk. He awaits sentence under that conviction. After conviction he was removed from office.

In the recount case O'Hara was found guilty on three counts, permitting others to alter ballots, conspiring to permit others to alter ballots, and conspiring to permit others to conduct the recount in an unlawful manner and change the result of the November, 1934, election.

Work was started some time ago on the canal, which, if completed, will cost between \$140,000,000 and \$200,000,000.

Rigid Policy Announced on FHA Mortgages

HOUSEHOLDERS defaulting on government-guaranteed renovation and mortgage notes will be no more gently treated by the Federal Housing administration than are tax delinquents by the Treasury department. Stewart McDonald, FHA administrator, says there has been a general misunderstanding of this matter, and so he enunciates this policy: "When a borrower under the modernization credit plan defaults on a loan, the lending institution files claim with the housing administration for the insurance on the loan. The matter of collecting the defaulted obligation then is turned over to the Federal Housing administration."

"There is no reason to assume that borrowers in default will be treated like tax evaders, but rather along the same lines as an individual who is in default of tax payments."

Relief Given Industrial and Farming States

INDUSTRIAL states, such as Illinois, New York, Pennsylvania and Ohio, although they pay most of the internal revenue taxes, receive much less of federal relief largesse than such agricultural states as North and South Dakota, Mississippi, Alabama, New Mexico, Arkansas and Arizona. This was pointed out in a statement released by the Illinois Manufacturers' association which compares the internal revenue collections of the various states with the amount each state received in relief funds for year ending June 30, 1935.

Illinois collected \$323,138,933 and received in federal relief grants only \$113,185,365 or 35 per cent of what it sent to the United States treasury. New York collected \$672,473,493 and got back \$262,898,655 or 39 per cent of what it sent to the United States treasury.

Pennsylvania and Ohio did somewhat better. Pennsylvania collected \$244,355,727 and received in relief funds \$173,151,832 or 71 per cent. Ohio collected \$104,079,273 and received \$107,702,953 or 66 per cent.

South Dakota received \$27,565,643 and collected only \$1,540,795. In other words, South Dakota got back from the United States government nearly eighteen times the amount paid in internal revenue.

North Dakota got approximately \$25 for each \$1.75 paid in taxes, receiving \$25,087,327 and collecting only \$1,748,637.

Mississippi received \$18,745,417 in relief funds or nearly seven and one-half times the amount collected in internal revenues.

Senator Borah Formally Enters Nomination Race

WILLIAM E. BORAH, the liberal Republican senator from Idaho, is now a full fledged candidate for the Republican Presidential nomination.

He formally put himself in the running by announcing that he would enter the primary in Ohio which will be held May 12. That state requires that the candidate shall declare himself in writing, and this Mr. Borah said he would do.

The senator's statement follows: "After a thorough survey of the Ohio situation I am convinced that the people of that state should be given an opportunity to express their choice in the Presidential primary on May 12. Under the so-called 'favorite son' plan this privilege is denied them."

"To obtain an expression of popular will it is my intention to place at least eight candidates or delegates at large in the field. I shall make a number of speeches in Ohio and present the issues as I see them."

Mrs. Huey Long Takes Husband's Senate Seat

MRS. HUEY P. LONG, widow of the slain senator from Louisiana, took her seat in the senate to complete Huey's unfinished term, becoming the second woman member of the upper house. After eleven months she will be succeeded by Allen Alexander, speaker of the Louisiana house of representatives, who was nominated for the regular term.

Mrs. Long, middle aged and comely, said: "In my mind I have a hazy idea about the things I want to do, but I am not yet ready to announce them. I want to take my seat in the senate and get right to work—I'll need a lot of luck."

Vandenberg Doubts Value of Florida Canal

SENATOR VANDENBERG of Michigan has grave doubts of the economic necessity or value of the ship canal that is being dug across central Florida, and offered in the senate commerce committee a resolution for investigation by a special committee. In support of his move he produced letters from eleven companies operating steamships saying they would not use the canal even if no tolls were charged. They asserted the expense of employing canal pilots added to the risk of damage to ships would offset saving in navigation costs.

Work was started some time ago on the canal, which, if completed, will cost between \$140,000,000 and \$200,000,000.

Great Britain Rushes Rearmament Program

IF THERE must be another war in Europe, Great Britain proposes to be in readiness. The government is hurrying up its rearmament program, which will be financed by a loan of probably about \$2,000,000,000. Plans for the expansion and modernization of the army, navy and air force will be submitted to parliament early in March, and it is said will include mechanization of the entire army. Impetus to the work was given by the latest statement attributed to Mussolini that the Italo-Ethiopian war "may yet be a world-wide disaster."

There were indications that Il Duce was looking more favorably on suggestions for peace, and so some observers predicted that the extension of sanctions against Italy would be delayed. The Italian armies in Ethiopia, however, were continuing their activities, one of their latest exploits being an attack on Dessay by seven planes. For an hour high explosive bombs were rained on that town, which is the field headquarters of Haile Selassie.

Washington Digest

National Topics Interpreted by William Bruckart

National Press Building Washington, D. C.

Washington.—Five important stones in the New Deal recovery arch have been torn from their moorings now and, from all of the comments I have been able to pick up, it appears that the general situation has been clarified thereby. Two of the major New Deal items—the NRA and the AAA—have been tossed overboard by the Supreme court of the United States and, at the request of the President, now has thrown three others into the limbo of unnecessary things by repealing the legislation for control of cotton, tobacco and potatoes. These three with their parent, the Agricultural Adjustment act, represented all that was basic in the New Deal farm program.

New Farm Legislation

The importance of the President's act in requesting repeal of the three compulsory crop-control laws cannot be minimized. Mr. Roosevelt recognized, when the AAA was invalidated, that the other three crop-control laws would be of no further use because they were predicated upon the national law. He recognized further that to remain adamant would be only to permit delay in invalidation of those three laws because they were all headed for an adverse decision by the Supreme court anyway. In seeking their repeal, therefore, Mr. Roosevelt truly took time by the forelock and girded his armor for a fresh start on farm relief legislation.

Where or in what form the new farm legislation will finally emerge, none can foretell. The house and senate will pass some kind of legislation to supplant the laws invalidated by the court or repealed by congress. Necessarily, this new farm legislation will be of a stop-gap character and I don't believe that any of its ardent supporters can tell you exactly what the result will be in so far as its effect upon agriculture is concerned.

As far as the compromises have been worked out, it appears that some of the leaders are willing again to enact legislation directed at crop-control in a semi-compulsory manner. If that is forthcoming, the new law actually will be nothing more than a thinly disguised attempt to circumvent the prohibitions laid down in the Supreme court opinion holding the AAA unconstitutional. In any event, the tragedy in the situation appears to me to be the absence of clear thinking, or else the circumstances we see represent political cowardice of the worst type.

It is to be remembered that in this session of congress more than any other since President Roosevelt took office, there exist a greater number of blocs; cross currents of opinion; partisan jealousy. A great deal of it is in opposition to brain trust policies sponsored by the New Deal but for political reasons the individuals who oppose these things dare not openly show their disapproval of Presidential policies as such. Thus, a consensus has arisen among Washington observers that representatives and senators concerned with directing enactment of new farm legislation are likely to meet the situation rather than come forth with a definite and workable proposition.

The situation at the White House and in congress in connection with agricultural policies probably is the best illustration in a definite, tangible form, of how many important federal policies are being dealt with in a partisan political way rather than, as they should be, in a scientific manner with partisan politics in the background. I need not recall how many pieces of legislation have been put through congress bearing a New Deal tag of "must." Of course, Mr. Roosevelt cannot be blamed entirely for issuing orders when congress is willing to obey. It is a fact, nevertheless, that time after time and with reference to the major New Deal experiments, the legislation has been drafted by men serving under a Presidential appointment in executive departments, the copies forwarded to given representatives or senators and instructions passed along that the administration will take no substitute. It wants the specific measure and in that form.

The result of all of this has been that in numerous cases legislation was passed without more than a few members of the house and senate having even read the bills before they were asked to cast a favorable vote on their passage.

Now, representatives and senators are seeking to dodge the responsibility for their acts. This was shown definitely in the celerity with which congress acted on the Presidential request for repeal of the three crop-control acts named heretofore. I know personally of a considerable number of representatives and senators who were delighted at the opportunity to vote repeal of those laws. They never did like them—after they found out what they had passed. But a politician is the last person in the world to admit his mistakes and the representatives and senators who voted for repeal of the crop-control laws with such enthusiasm were no different than the others. The repeal request simply gave them an opportunity to get out from under a thing which, if the legislation had gone through processes usual and nor-

mal for congress, they would never have taken in the first place.

Admits His Mistake

President Roosevelt likely will receive some credit for seeking repeal of the discredited laws. He said if he made a mistake he would be the first to admit it. So, now he has in a way admitted that he made a mistake in approving those laws although his statement concerning the repeal request was that these were useless without AAA.

It is to be noted, however, that long before the Supreme court outlawed AAA there was a growing volume of discontent with the principles that law sought to apply. It cannot be that Mr. Roosevelt was not aware of this growing dissatisfaction and that his political advisers smelled a rat because a good many plans for modification had been under discussion privately among AAA advisers long before a Supreme court decision was in prospect. Practical men working with Secretary Wallace and Administrator Davis were steadily trying to accomplish changes in administration of the AAA law, and the three others as well, to make it workable. They were confronted, however, with a superabundance of brain trusters who could make a beautiful case in print for their views and during that time the brain trusters had the ear of the President while the practical administrators were left out in the cold.

It is thus that we see a development under the New Deal whereby most of the responsible people are attempting to dodge the responsibility that belongs to them. Some of them are attempting to clean their own skirts, or make their skirts appear clean, by damning the Supreme court; others are blaming our "system" for failure of the theories to work in practical application and still other groups point the finger of scorn at those charged with administration of the agricultural policy, blaming them for the failure. Things like this have developed before in Washington and have died down in due time but I believe that seldom, if ever, has occurred a situation in which the responsibility was so general and the blame so generally denied by those responsible.

Washington observers are watching the President's latest maneuvers on government finance with considerable interest. The President, you know, already has told agencies of the government that are equipped with borrowing power that they must reduce this borrowing. He has, in effect, withdrawn from them authorization that would have permitted the borrowing of about \$1,000,000,000 during the next year.

During the last few weeks, the Chief Executive has been concerned also with reduction in governmental spending and at the same time with plans to raise additional money. He has presented a tax bill to congress, an obstinate congress. Representatives and senators do not like to campaign after passing a new tax bill so they frankly do not like the idea of new taxes at this time.

It is too early to forecast the full importance of the President's latest moves. There are those who insist that Mr. Roosevelt is making a sincere effort to cut down government spending and to convince the nation that he is seeking to reduce the waste that is naturally attendant upon such a volume of disbursements of money as has taken place in the last three years. There are others who take the position that the President is simply building up a picture which can be shown to the voters when election time comes. They say that Mr. Roosevelt wants to be in a position to point to an accomplished reduction in federal expenditures and to assure the voters that he had permitted only such expenditures as were necessary to bring the country out of the depression.

An unbiased conclusion is that a little of each claim is true. If expenditures actually are reduced, obviously the action will be welcomed by the taxpayers. On the other hand, the White House and executive departments concerning the withdrawal of borrowing power was rather unjustified. It was unjustified for the reason that the move was simply a bookkeeping proposition and, further, there was even a hint that such agencies as the Reconstruction Finance corporation and Home Owners Loan corporation had no plans for borrowing extensively during the forthcoming summer and fall.

If one looks into the future in connection with the Presidential program of curtailing borrowing and cutting expenditures, it is rather difficult to escape the thought that a continuation of policies such as have been sponsored by the New Deal in the last three years will force a renewal of these expenditures in due course. In other words, the administration course regarding these expenditures is going to depend upon the results of the November election: If Mr. Roosevelt is returned to the White House and he continues with a substantial Democratic majority in congress, there is no reason to believe that present spending policies will be entirely abandoned.

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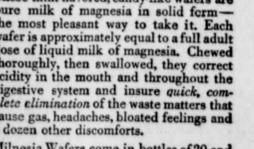


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