Weekly News Analysis

G.O.P. Keeps Election Promise, Drafts New Pension Measures

By Joseph W. La Bine

EDITOR'S NOTE—*When opinions are expressed in these columns they are those of the news analyst and not necessarily of the newspaper.*

Congress

As the U. S. becomes a nation of older men and women (caused by declining birth rate) federal-state support of the indigent aged is no longer a political football but has emerged as an acute problem recognized by Democrats and Republicans alike. The present social security setup was a New Deal inspiration, but 1937's recession proved even this revolutionary step was insufficient. This month almost every congressman converging on Washington carries a new plan in his portfolio, foreshadowing the most heated battle to confront the seventy-sixth congress.

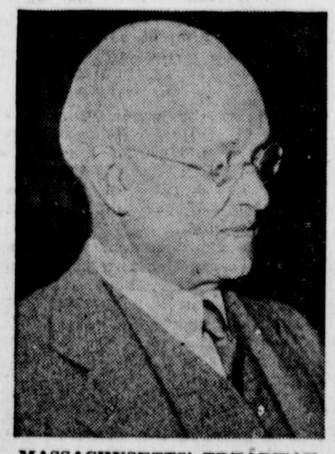
Many Republicans would like to forget that 40 of their 81 new members were elected this year on promises to support the Townsend measure or bring the pension issue to a vote. But one who refuses to forget, and who will undoubtedly fire the opening gun in next month's pension argument, is Massachusetts' Rep. Allen T. Treadway. Ranking minority member of the house ways and means committee, he will embarrass his political partisans by offering a resolution for hearings on Townsendism.

When pension arguments are sifted down, Washington observers expect Townsendism to drop from the picture, to be followed by a clear-cut Democrat-vs.-Republican debate on how social security shall be amended. In this argument the most surprising feature may be Republican support of a $30-a-month federal old age contribution, featuring a 60-year age limit as against the present limit of 65 years. If states could equal the $30 federal contribution, pensioneers would then receive $60 a month.

Where the federal government could raise $30 a month, or where states could raise even less, is a moot problem. There are currently 1,656,700 persons on pension rolls, costing the U. S. about $238,500,000 for the fiscal year. States pay $250,129,000. This gives each of the 1,656,700 indigent an average of $19. If all eligible persons were added to the rolls, the number would swell to more than 3,000,000. Since the U. S. is already using social security payroll taxes as fast as they come in, and since most states are unable to raise their $15 monthly share for each pension, any plans to increase payments must be preceded by plans for financing the system.

While Republicans are attempting to iron out their pension program, the administration prepares to offer congress a sweeping plan for revising the present old age insurance system. Probable recommendations:

(1) Monthly payments to widows and dependent children of workers covered by social security, plus $200



MASSACHUSETTS' TREADWAY
Promises will not be forgotten.

funeral expenses to families of "covered" workers who die before 65.

(2) Payments to wives and dependent children of men who have retired at 65, but whose monthly income under social security is insufficient.

(3) Starting old age payments January 1, 1940, instead of January 1, 1942.

(4) Immediate inclusion in social security of 2,600,000 seamen, bank employees, charitable and religious workers; inclusion in 1941 of 6,000,000 farm and domestic workers.

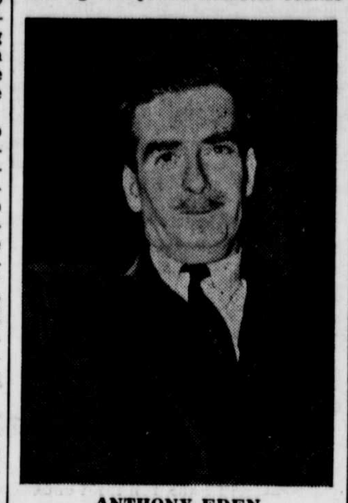
(5) Provision for payments of $10 more each month to married men than to single men.

Europe

The long-cherished hope that Great Britain would eventually discover the futility of Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain's dictator "appeasement" policy is at last bearing fruit. Faced with a new series of crises, Mr. Chamberlain is presumably being forced to reverse his stand or resign. Most significant was the dinner at Lord Stanley Baldwin's home, attended by King George VI and a group of right-wing Labor leaders, all strenuous opponents of the Chamberlain government.

Even as the king broke bread with this crew, another anti-Chamberlain leader was en route to the U. S. where he leveled veiled criticism at the man whose cabinet he left in anger. Anthony Eden, one-time foreign minister, told the National Association of Manufacturers that democracies must resist "false complacency" in viewing international perils, that "the survival of democracy must depend on the faith which it inspires . . . the results which it can achieve."

Within a few days the long-awaited results of Mr. Chamberlain's Munich "peace" treaty became despairingly apparent on three fronts, making the prime minister realize



ANTHONY EDEN
Mr. Chamberlain's successor?

he must either turn about-face (if it is not too late) or resign to be followed by Lord Baldwin or Mr. Eden:

Memel. Detached from German East Prussia by the Versailles treaty, later ceded to Lithuania, this 943-square-mile territory on the Baltic is being absorbed back into the Reich without consultation with—or protest from—the four guarantors of the Memel statute (Britain, France, Italy and Japan). Using "Sudeten" methods, Germany first provoked Memelites to cry for autonomy. Following a victorious plebiscite came the cry for "anschluss" (union) with the Reich. Although Hitler announced after the Munich treaty that he had no more European territorial claims, no one doubts his agents are behind the Memel coup.

Ukraine. While world attention has been focused on the Franco-Italian crisis *(see below)* Hitler has quietly but effectively begun agitation for his projected Ukraine republic, to be carved out of Poland and Russia. A Nazi-inspired autonomy move in the Polish Ukraine, the first step, is being correlated with activity of German agents in the Russian Ukraine. The latter step is especially well timed, since meager reports out of Moscow indicate the Soviet republic is weakened by internal strife. Not content to stop there, Hitler has opened negotiations with Persia and Afghanistan for German exploitation of oil and wheat lands. In the Balkans, Jugoslavia has practically renounced the little entente to follow pro-Nazi Premier Milan Stoyadinovich.

France. No observer believes the recent French-German treaty is worth anything, because the Reich has actually increased anti-French activity since it was signed. France has alliances with Poland and Russia, both of which have been ignored in Germany's Ukrainian drive. France dominates the little entente, which Hitler has defeated in Jugoslavia and is undermining in other Balkan countries. And—most important—France resents Germany's support of Italian demands for Tunisia, Corsica, Nice and Savoy. Current opinion holds that France will surprise Germany and Italy with a strong and unexpected resistance to these territorial demands. In the end, however, Italy may get partial control over the Suez canal and a share in French Somaliland, offering an outlet to the sea from Ethiopia.

International

Any shift in world military power is invariably followed by economic changes. One of these is world trade, in which Great Britain finds her position threatened by aggressive Germany. Taking a thoroughly revolutionary position, England has now broadened her government trade insurance plan to safeguard exports of materials ordinarily refused as poor risks. Beginning January 1, the export credits department may incur liabilities up to $375,000,000 instead of the present $250,000,000. To cover special risk items, another $50,000,000 has been set aside. The latter policy, incidentally, will facilitate shipment of war goods to China.

If this aggressive British position has caused Germany any worry, Berlin can rejoice in a $17,000,000 barter deal with Mexico, under which she will buy oil in exchange for manufactured items. In this case, Germany's gain is Britain's loss, since London has almost completely severed diplomatic and trade relations with Mexico over expropriation of British-owned oil lands.

Asia

The possibility of a major Far Eastern crisis involving Japan, China and Russia becomes more imminent each week. Far from denying it, Japan has taken new hitches in her economic belt and settled down for a struggle which may begin shortly after January 1. Having made supplementary army-navy appropriations of $1,634,400,000, Japan faces a probable Russ-Chinese alliance forcing her to desperate measures to protect what gains she has already made in Manchuria and China.

Having penetrated deep into the vast Shansi province, Jap troops are confronted with guerrilla attacks which in 10 days cost 6,000 lives. Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek, who is already getting supplies from Russia, promises the guerrilla warfare will continue. That Japanese are at a disadvantage fighting so far from their base of operations is evidenced by Chinese recapture of several key towns near Canton.

Two clashes with Russia form the basis for a new war scare. The first concerns Japanese fishing concessions in Russian waters. Though Russia refuses to renew the concessions, which lapse January 1, Tokyo threatens to continue fishing even though an armed patrol is needed. The second dispute centers on Sakhalin island, where the Japs charge Russia is seeking to expel Nipponese oil workers. For her part, Moscow is demanding Japanese payment for the Russian interest in the Chinese eastern railroad, seized when Japan took Manchuria.

Meanwhile Japan has substantiated the belief held by observers for many months, that China's "open door"—guaranteed by the nine-power treaty—is about to be closed. Seeking to liberate Japan and China from dependency on foreign markets, finance and raw materials, Tokyo has virtually dictated what Great Britain and the U. S. can henceforth expect in the way of trading privileges. Shrugging its shoulders over still another treaty broken in 1938, the U. S. state department has called home Nelson T. Johnson, ambassador to China, to see what can be done about it. Since Ambassador Joseph P. Kennedy has also been called home from London, it is thought the U. S. may solicit British support for a unified protest against Japan's economic activity in China. Probable result: nothing.

JOBS WANTED

MAYOR—Secretary of the Interior Harold L. Ickes, may retire from office to run for Democratic nomination as Chicago's mayor.

PRESIDENT — John Nance Garner, vice president of the U. S., is being boomed for the presidency by his boyhood friends at Detroit, Texas. One claim to fame: the mud-chinked log cabin where Garner was born.

SECRETARY—Anthony Eden, who retired as British foreign secretary in opposition to Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain, may return to the cabinet next month as dominions secretary.

LEADER—Massachusetts' Rep. Joseph Martin will be elected house Republican leader on the first ballot next month, since 109 of the 169 G. O. P. partisans have assured him their support.

Pan-America

Before they left to attend the eighth Pan-American conference at Lima, U. S. delegates spoke optimistically of efforts to unite the Western hemisphere into a solid bloc opposing European or Asiatic aggressors. But the picture looked vastly different from below the equator. At Lima they found representatives of 20 other American nations who exhibited justified coolness toward the "colossus of the north" whose President has taken the lead in what they think might be another attempt at "Yankee imperialism." U. S. delegates discovered that South American nations have their cultural centers in Rome, Paris and Madrid; that despite any U. S. ambitions to the contrary, Pan America will insist on maintaining its trade relations with Europe.

Thus, although Secretary of State Cordell Hull received a warm reception, he could not expect much to come from the conference. South American nations are generally agreed that totalitarian propaganda must be stopped, but they neglect to consider that Nazi trade and propaganda travel together, that countries accepting one must also take the other. This is the principle weakness of a proposal introduced by the Venezuelan delegation, which calls for co-operative action against military aggression but fails to consider methods of blocking political aggression.

A prerequisite to hemispherical defense plans is hemispherical cordiality, which occupies an important place on Mr. Hull's list. Stumbling blocks here are Mexico's communistic policy of expropriating U. S. oil and farm lands, and Argentina's desire for more trade and better relations with Italy and Germany. At best, Pan-American endorsement of President Roosevelt's New world defense plan will be in principle only, though the conference is undoubtedly giving German, Italian and Japanese interests considerable worry. Their agents are busily at work among delegates.

Bruckart's Washington Digest

Legislation Against Chain Stores Will Come Up Again

Danger to Independent Store Operator Will Be Theme of Discussion; Question of General National Policy Needs Thought; Sane Regulation Is Possible.

By WILLIAM BRUCKART
WNU Service, National Press Bldg., Washington, D. C.

WASHINGTON. — The politician who is a demagogue—the fellow who has nothing on the ball and gets into politics on his gift for gab—always must have a bogie man, a hobgoblin. There must always be an immediate threat, like the sword of Damocles, hanging over the heads of the dear pee-pul. If the political demagogue doesn't have that sort of thing, he is utterly lost, because usually he can not talk about fundamental issues.

The favorite bogie man of fellows like former Sen. Tom Heflin was "Wall Street." Day after day, ole Tom would drag Wall Street onto the floor of the senate and shake the gizzard out of it. There were others like Tom and there were other hobgoblins. The chain stores, for a number of years, were the meat and drink of the demagogue and many an otherwise punk got elected to office because he could talk for 10 hours about the evils of the chain stores. We always have had our trust busters, the baiters of corporations. One bogie dies and another takes its place and the thing goes on until presently one of the old and and almost forgotten bogie boys is brought to life again.

As pre-session plans take shape, it appears that the country is going to be told again about the evils of the chain stores. There is going to be an attempt to legislate them out of existence. Many a shout will ring out on the floors of the senate and house about the danger to the independent store operator, the man at home. The bill, whatever form it takes or whatever it proposes to do, will serve as a vehicle for a shouting mob of representatives and senators. As usual, they will offer no new argument, but they will send copies of their speeches back home and make a great howdy-do over themselves.

Should Give Thought to General National Policy

Because of this prospect and the existence of several other things like it, there ought to be some thought given to the question of a general national policy. In other words, I am of the opinion that the congress and the several state legislatures ought to keep their feet on the ground instead of jumping off the deep end when there is no boat in which to ride. I see no profit in cutting off my nose just to spite my face. There is just as little sense to that as selling out to the "vested interests."

There is something to the argument in favor of regulation of great chains of stores. It can be truthfully said that they exert a lot of pressure on the independent. They deny this, of course, and answer that there is no pressure. Their statement may be true insofar as it may mean that the chain store has made no calculated plan to drive the independent out of existence. Yet, their very bigness is, of itself, a pressure because they can buy in larger quantities and obtain lower cost prices than the individual who buys a few cases of canned goods at a time. When they buy at lower prices, they can sell at lower prices and the independent finds himself hard put to meet the competition.

That sort of thing happens in every community where chain stores are in operation. It will continue to happen, because there is not a man nor a woman who will say honestly that he or she will pay a higher price simply because the store at home is owned by somebody who is a local citizen. I am old fashioned about it. I will go to a chain store many, many times, because I save money. It is my money that I am spending and I am going to get the most for it that I can. The fellow who owns a local store is in business to make a profit and I am willing that he shall have a profit, provided he can give me the same value for what I spend as does some other store. If the independent runs his store in a slipshod way, fails to manage his affairs efficiently and thus has to have higher prices, I see no reason why I should be the goat. To me, the situation is exactly the same as if both competing stores were home-owned and one of them gave better values.

Sane Regulation of Chain Stores Can Be Accomplished

If the chain stores are abusing their power, a power they have solely because they are big, the congress and the several states surely ought to take notice. There can be sane regulation of them. They can be made to correct any abuses, but I can not find any legitimate excuse for destroying them. I am in the role of a consumer, and every legislator ought to consider that his constituents are consumers and that they must be given consideration.

I have been told by men in the government whom I believe have a general understanding of the problem that destruction of chain stores will raise retail prices of the things they sell by as much as 20 per cent. Who is going to pay that? You and I and everyone who buys for consumption. If I can get my cigarettes at two-for-a-quarter, I am not going to pay 15 cents. So, if congress or the state legislatures find it necessary to protect the independent, that policy should be adopted. But the extreme position of taxing them out of existence or destroying them some other way is utterly silly. It is, as I said earlier, rather like cutting off my nose to spite my face—and I have a beak of which no one could be very proud!

This chain store bogie man is just another of the many that are used by politicians to build up themselves. Once before, in these columns, I expressed the hope that some time I would like to see an honest politician. I think it would be refreshing to all of us.

I heard lately, too, of a movement against those people who sell direct to the consumers. There are certain types of them that ought to be locked up. Most of them, however, have a legitimate product and they are making that product to sell to consumers. The movement that is now said to be spreading has evolved into what is called the "Green River ordinance," a municipal law which is designed to prevent any house-to-house canvassers.

Problem of Separating Crooks From Honest People

Now, there may be sound reasons for a city council to bar anybody from selling direct. At the moment, I do not know of any. Yet, according to the reports received by the federal trade commission, there was a small town out in Wyoming which actually convicted some boys from the neighboring farms and sentenced them to jail because they violated the city law, by selling direct to the householders in the town. That town ought to have a very red face, it seems to me.

I said that there were certain types of canvassers ought to be barred. I refer to the racketeers who scour the country in crews, selling this or that or the other; who are here today and gone tomorrow, and who many times leave a wake of dishonest dealings, insults and sometimes plain thievery. Of course, there ought to be punishment of that type. But why punish the honest ones by placing them in the same category as the crooks. The problem becomes one of separating the crooks from the legitimate people, but your demagogue will not do that, whether that demagogue be a member of congress, a member of the state legislature or a member of the city council. He would not be able to bleat so long if he attempted to analyze the real situation.

This "Green River ordinance" hysteria is being promoted by some outfit which, it appears from the federal trade commission information, goes from town to town and operates campaigns for passage of such a law. Those fellows make money out of their campaigns. The local merchants pay the bill. For the life of me, I can not see where they are any better than the agents of the direct sellers whom they are seeking to prohibit, because the agents make a profit. I must correct that last statement. The agents of the direct sellers are different. Usually, especially the legitimate agents, live in towns in their territory and pay their taxes and buy their human needs there. The promoters run the campaign, take their profit and scoot.

All Factors in Situation Need Careful Consideration

I suppose that some of the things I have said in this analysis of a national problem will make me as popular as a skunk with some local merchants. I believe, however, that there are two sides to the argument and that there must be moderation in dealing with the hobgoblins that are built up for selfish reasons, either political selfishness or for monetary gain.

Hence, I argue that the country and its legislative bodies must look at all factors involved in the situation. Hysteria and demagoguery go hand in hand, with the demagogue leading and capitalizing on the circumstances he has created. If it can be shown where the brush salesman or the salesman for the floor sweeper or the home remedy salesmen are wielding a bad influence upon the life of the nation, prohibit them as is done many places with the saloon. If it can be shown that the vast majority of the people get no benefits from chain stores and that the chain stores damage the national life, get rid of them or regulate them closely. My thought continues to be, however, that there must be moderation in legislation.

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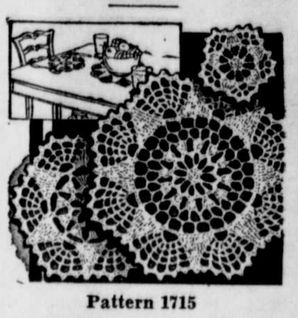

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