

Government Agency Answers Questions

Information Service Asked by Many for Aid.

Washington.—Established by the national emergency council in March to assist Washington visitors to thread the maze of federal agencies and emergency units, the United States Information Service now answers questions from far and near. Whereas previously, inquirers resorted to the trial and error method, addressing queries to a particular department, they now have at hand an information "central" in close touch with every department, bureau, commission or other federal agency, says the New York Times.

Directed by Miss Harriet M. Root, a graduate of Wellesley, a dozen expert research workers, all women, answer the queries which come in by personal call, by telephone and by letter. Not infrequently one day's mail will bring in 400 letters—each carrying one or more questions. On a busy day, as many as 200 persons have called at Miss Root's office seeking general information, or assistance in contacting some federal agency.

The queries cover an encyclopedic range. A New Jersey woman, for example, having what she believed to be ambergris in her possession, asked where she could find out whether it was genuine. Her question was referred to the bureau of fisheries. Requests for information on diving rods and buried treasures go to the bureau of mines. A lawyer in New York asked for a list of all federal corporations since the establishment of the United States government—a request that necessitated considerable research. Another letter called for "anything

you can find on capital and labor." In due course, a reply furnished references to government publications on the subject.

"Does a bullet from a high-powered rifle actually change its course when entering water? If it does, why? And in what direction?" Inquired another correspondent. Here, obviously, was an opportunity for government ballistic experts, to whom the query was forwarded. From a small town came a request for a check on the source of certain statements carried in an article in a local newspaper. And a woman with potatoes to sell sought the help of the service in finding the best market for them.

Personal questions are numerous. The widow of a naval man who was lost when a ship went down in the war wanted guidance in preparing

a claim for compensation from the government. Another inquirer sought directions on how to obtain a medal for a child who had saved a playmate from drowning. A father asked how he should go about finding for his son a billet in the merchant marine. And whenever former Secretary of War Newton D. Baker comes to town, the information service invariably receives one or more calls for his Washington address.

Requests for information on federal activities reflect the increased interest in public affairs, particularly in the work of the New Deal agencies. The national emergency council publishes a daily manual, covering changes in the federal setup, and also charts showing graphically the present federal organization. Both the manual and the charts are in great demand. Universities and schools and faculty members send many requests. A California college plans to use the NEC manual as a textbook; a professor in a midwestern university ordered 300 copies of the chart of the federal government.

U. S. Navy Aircraft Is Second to None

Planes Equal or Superior to Any Other Nation.

Washington.—America's "fleet that flies" is equipped with planes and motors equal or superior to those of any other nation in the world, and still further advances are now in sight, Rear Admiral Ernest J. King, chief of the bureau of aeronautics, declares in his annual report to Claude A. Swanson, secretary of the navy.

"The bureau . . . is upheld in this opinion," the document adds,

"by the reports of various committees of congress which have during the past year inquired exhaustively into the subject. Every effort has been made to expend the funds at the bureau's disposal in such manner that the efficiency, reliability and usefulness of the aircraft and equipment furnished the operating forces would be the maximum possible."

The most progressive step taken by the government in the development of naval aviation during the fiscal year 1934, Admiral King said, was passage of the Vinson-Trammell act authorizing aircraft construction commensurate with the strength of the "treaty navy."

"The 1,000 plane program prescribed in 1926 (as a result of the Morrow airplane board's recommendations) did not provide for ships authorized and constructed subsequent to that year," Admiral King says, "with the result that new ships had to be provided with aircraft by curtailment of other activities for which provision had been made, so that the ratio of aircraft to ship strength constantly decreased. The Vinson-Trammell act removes this restriction and a tentative program providing an orderly expansion of the naval air arm over a period of five to seven years has been prepared by the bureau of aeronautics and submitted to the Navy department for consideration and approval."

"Constant effort is being made to improve the characteristics of naval aircraft, particularly in regard to speed, range and striking power," the report adds, "Increased employment of long-range patrol bombing squadrons is expected. Future plans involve service tests for larger seaplanes of this type with great range, bomb loads and speed. It is desired to increase the striking power of carrier-based scouting planes by including arrangements for dropping heavy bombs in diving attack. The development of such an airplane is now under way."

Admiral King points out that the speed range of the navy's latest type planes has undergone marked improvement during the last year.

hips and flares gently to the knees. Two rather large velvet-covered buttons fasten it at the waistline. The scarf collar can be worn in numerous ways. The one-piece dress is made in two-piece effect with a tailored shirtwaist of plaid silver lame. Sparkling jeweled buttons add a finishing touch. The hat is black net with a braided black velvet edge.

Cow Taken From Well

Estacada, Ore.—A cow that fell into a well 22 feet deep and holding 8 feet of water was rescued by use of wrecking car equipment borrowed from a local garage.

SEEN and HEARD around the National Capital

By CARTER FIELD

Washington.—The most important pending political question in Washington, in the judgment of at least three important figures, is whether Comptroller of the Currency J. F. T. O'Connor takes the \$20,000 job as federal agent at the Federal Reserve bank at San Francisco, which Secretary of the Treasury Morgenthau has kept dangling before him for the last month.

The three men who think so are members of the Federal Reserve board, who made that simple statement to the writer, Mr. Morgenthau, and, though, this, of course, is an assumption based on the human tendency not to underestimate one's importance in the scheme of things, Mr. O'Connor himself.

If O'Connor takes the job, thus permitting the naming of a new comptroller who will be utterly subservient to Morgenthau, absolute domination of the reserve board and controller's office—which means absolute domination of the banks of the country—will pass into Morgenthau's hands.

If he sticks, there will be a fight, in which O'Connor will have some powerful support on Capitol Hill among the conservatives, especially those who like the original plan for an independent reserve board, which would run the banks without regard to politics or political tendencies.

The present battle, of course, is not with regard to "political" tendencies in the ordinary sense of the word. It has nothing to do with patronage, or whether those involved are members of this party or that. "Political" in this sense merely means control of the banking system by an administration, which would like to have the banks of the country spring into action whenever the administration wanted a particular line pursued.

Japan's Bad Luck

Japan seems to have had bad luck in retaining the services of its diplomats who acquire an appreciation and understanding of Americans. The tragic death of its former Ambassador Hanihara, who died, according to friends, of a broken heart, is a case in point. When he was a young secretary at his embassy in Washington, Hanihara was a great friend of Richard V. Cudahan, then correspondent of the New York Times. Samuel G. Blythe, a great friend of Cudahan, mentioned him in a Saturday Evening Post article, but slyly called him "O'Houlahan."

Whereupon Hanihara, who was visiting with his wife down in Texas, sent a postcard to Dick with send their regards to the O'Houlahans. It was Hanihara's desperate effort to convince Secretary of State Hughes of the seriousness of the immigration restrictions that cut short his political career. Hughes transmitted Hanihara's note to congress to prove that he was not understating the case. Members of a congressional committee, with quite normal disregard of consequences, made it public. Since then he has been Japan's forgotten man. And he died in his early fifties.

Another Japanese diplomat who had learned to understand Americans, Sadao Saburi, feared that he had let his foreign office down in a subsequent assignment to China. He killed himself in his early forties. These Japanese take their mistakes, or their misfortunes, very seriously. Indeed, though it is difficult to understand their feeling that their honor is so compromised by failure.

May Cut Dollar Again

Further devaluation of the gold value of the dollar to the full one-half authorized by congress is being seriously considered by the administration. At the moment it seems very likely, reluctant as the President is to take a step which the gold bloc countries of Europe insist would force them to further gold devaluation of their currencies. If it is decided to take the step, it may come before congress gets down to consideration of related subjects, though it may be delayed so as to be a trading point in soldier bonus compromises.

Administration leaders now believe that they can obtain a bonus compromise, which will cost the government \$1,200,000,000. Raising the price of gold to \$41.34 an ounce from the present \$35 would yield the government a profit of approximately \$1,000,000,000. The size of this amount is due to large purchases of gold in addition to nationalization of domestic gold at the old price of \$20.67. So that, if the administration is right in its hopes for a bonus compromise, only \$200,000,000 additional would be needed. And obviously devaluation would shave actual payments on the bonus by nearly 17 per cent.

Japan's attitude on gold plays a part of the considerations. It has been holding gold at approximately \$35 an ounce, thus depreciating its currency so far as to play havoc with American exports to South America and other markets.

Another element, which has played an important part in the situation leading up to this further devaluation of the dollar being given

serious consideration, is the fact that the government has not been able to buy anything like the quantity of silver it had hoped. Despite skillful maneuvering, such as the government's suddenly withdrawing its bid for silver on the London market, as though it had abandoned its campaign, and then rushing in with purchases next day seeking to take advantage of the temporary lowering of price, the silver purchases have been very disappointing.

Need Further Inflation

For naturally the government, pleased over the tremendous profit made in devaluing gold, had been hoping to buy all the silver it wanted at low prices, and repeat the profit. Unfortunately for this hope, China's protests that the American government was ruining her with the silver buying policy, and this government's reply that it was sorry but would have to keep on, served official notice on the world of this government's intention to buy a lot of silver. So holders of the white metal held on, hoping for higher prices.

Entirely aside from this, however, President Roosevelt is convinced that a little further inflation is necessary. He had thought to obtain it by silver purchases. Also to make a big profit out of silver. The conferences now going on look to at least deferring this program, and getting both the inflation and the profit by further devaluing gold.

Several knotty problems are involved. Not the least is the situation of the gold bloc countries. They have informed the President that if there is any further marking down of the gold value of the dollar, every one of them will be forced to devalue. Italy, France and Belgium, of course, devalued drastically. Italy 75 per cent, France 80 per cent and Belgium slightly more, when they returned to gold after the war. Holland and Switzerland are practically alone in having maintained the gold value of their currencies unchanged since before the war.

Cheaper Electricity

Electric rates are going to be forced down all over the United States, if President Roosevelt can do it, despite all the recent talk about a "truce" between the President and the utilities. And there is no doubt whatever in the President's mind that he can do it.

This idea of a rapprochement between these two bitter enemies, dating back to the prevention campaign, in which the utilities, frightened by many of the actions of Roosevelt as governor of New York, fought his nomination, has been considerably exaggerated.

Reporters mistook the President's smile of triumph for a smile of compromise and good feeling. It was good humor, all right, but there was only the good feeling that a victor feels when his adversary has both shoulders on the ground.

What had happened was simple. The President had scared the electric companies to death with his suggestion, made in his Southern speech, of new TVA's all over the country. Immediately various utility magnates began to run to the White House.

Then, when the President was questioned about it, he threw out what appeared at first glance a new and rather benevolent theory about the fixing of rates. The yardstick to determine return on investment, or rather on the investment on which a return should be permitted, was to be "prudent investment" rather than reproduction value. As was explained at the time, reproduction value presented too many difficulties. And applied only—so far as the utilities were concerned—when their properties had enhanced rather than diminished in value.

But actually a more accurate interpretation of the President's mind would be had if instead of "prudent investment" were substituted "prudent investment, or reproduction value, whichever is lower."

For the President and his advisers have no idea whatever of allowing a capitalization on which a fair return can be made if that capitalization is in excess of what the plant could be reproduced for, no matter how "prudent" the original investment may have been.

Fixing the Scale

Actually, the scale of electric rates will be determined pretty much by what an outfit similar to TVA could enter the field and provide service for. If such rates should prove so low that fair returns cannot be earned on a "prudent investment" it will be just too bad for the prudent investors.

For in such a situation, argue the New Dealers, obviously there has been a stupid dissipation of the aforesaid prudent investment, and why should the public be expected to pay for that?

The President meantime has been trying with some success to drive a wedge in between the holding companies and the operating companies. Some of the operating company officials, quick to sense which way the Presidential wind was blowing, were eager to win favor for themselves by arguing that the management charges the holding companies imposed on them were far too high, and that they could make lower rates if these charges were lightened. In short, if they could throw off the yoke of the holding companies.

BRISBANE THIS WEEK

A Pretty Good Christmas Germs Travel High We Are Coughing Better Prairie Dogs, Catacombs

It was a satisfactory Christmas, the best since the depression began. The nation at least knows that the depression is here and that attending to it, instead of talking about things "just around the corner," is the program.

The government knows that money was made to be spent in emergencies and that helping the people is cheaper than revolution. The government is spending and helping.

Colonel Lindbergh proves, after transatlantic flights, that bacteria can travel across the ocean by air. The winds of the North Atlantic carry microscopic germs of life through the upper air. Disease germs might travel, thus, across either ocean.

That interests anybody planning to make war more interesting by adding disease germs to poison gas and high explosives.

Scientists already believe that, since life cannot be created on the earth, except supernaturally, life began on this planet probably with germs that had traveled millions, perhaps billions, of miles through space at absolute zero. They started life on the earth when it had sufficiently cooled off, and may have been brought in the wake of flying meteors.

Heat destroys microscopic life, cold does not.

Cheerful optimists, telling you that conditions are getting better, remind you of Meyer Hecht's benevolent friend who told each tuberculosis patient, "You are coughing better this morning."

We all are "coughing" a little better. It has been the best, most freely spending Christmas season since the depression began. Merchants testify to that. The season of grand opera opened in New York with every seat sold and a demand for seats nonexistent.

Mr. Hull, able secretary of state, wants freer trade with foreign countries. Those that shut their markets to the outside world are like "animals which burrow in the ground," says Mr. Hull. That might be true, without proving that protection is unwise.

Animals burrowing in the ground—prairie dogs, etc.—would regret it if they came to the surface and sat around inviting coyotes to eat them. Early Christians burrowing in the catacombs were better off than they would have been on the surface, thrown to the lions.

It is better for this country to burrow under protection than to be thrown to the lions of free competition of labor and manufacturing.

Occasionally you hear what Mr. Field called "a sour note" in the hopeful chorus of "Happy Days Are Here Again." Senator Dickinson of Iowa—Republican, of course—says NRA plans have collapsed. He finds that "monopoly" is being encouraged, private initiative is being depressed and the small business man driven to the wall—"The rich are becoming richer and the poor poorer."

That will be news for some of the rich—they had not heard it. You may hear many of them say now. "If I can get together and keep enough to take care of my family, that is all I ask," and they mean it.

Projects thus far proposed by congressmen and executives in Washington would cost Uncle Sam, in addition to money already spent, \$30,000,000,000, and would double the national debt. If the money were wisely created, wisely spent, the country would be better off, with many employed in useful work. But if it is found necessary to inflate with interest-bearing bonds, instead of simply printing the money and later retiring it as bonds would be retired, the \$30,000,000,000 would cost the country \$60,000,000,000.

Is it really necessary to force on taxpayers that extra load of \$30,000,000,000 for interest, when interest bonds are just so much "inflation money," in no respect different from greenbacks?

Mr. Irene du Pont, munitions manufacturer, who knows about war, since he produces "the goods," tells the munitions committee "the only way to wage a war is to have an absolute monarch at the head of the government"; also "we shall have a h—l of a time in case of war."

No question about the last statement.

Mr. Baruch, entering wholeheartedly into the President's campaign to prevent profits for munitions makers in wartime, wisely urges preparation, says the country should buy and store thousands of tons of tin for use in the event of war. "I think we ought to buy tin just as we would invest in a battleship, and keep it in storage."

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Heroes Are Made

By JACK BLOODHART
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WNU Service.

WHEN the authorities at the university finally rebelled at Tommy Nash's never ending intrusions of what Tommy considered foolish and tiresome rules, they expelled him. That such an action would make of him a national hero they did not know, and it was likewise an unknown quantity to Thomas A. Nash, Sr.

"You," he said frostily to Tommy, "are no good. You waste my money, and yours on chorus girls and night clubs. You have no sense, no guts, no . . ."

"That," said Tommy, "is not only untrue, it is—"

"Say no more about it. And now, young man, you may get out. I'm through with you. You get no more of my money, not one cent, until you've proved you deserved it. That's all. Good day, sir."

"But . . ." said Tommy, "Out!" Thomas A. roared.

Without further attempt at arguing the matter, Tommy rose from his chair, bowed, and stalked haughtily from the office.

A suitcase in each hand, Tommy Nash stood surveying the lettered sign of the old frame house. "Mrs. O'Regan's" it read. "Rooms for Rent."

Mrs. O'Regan eyed him suspiciously. She was a lady of ample proportions and a wicked eye. "Five dollars a week," she said. And as an afterthought, "in advance."

Tommy hastily calculated that to relinquish five dollars would leave him three dollars and seventy-five cents, and the contents of one of the suitcases with which to forget his troubles. He directed Mrs. O'Regan to lead on.

She conducted Tommy to an uninviting room at the far end of the first floor hall. Tommy's face must have betrayed him, for Mrs. O'Regan said, in a very nasty voice, "Don't you like it?"

Tommy hastily admitted that he was charmed with the room, and to prove it, parted with five dollars.

Before she left Mrs. O'Regan said: "I do not allow any drinking, gambling or playing the radio after midnight. Also no women in single men's rooms."

"Perhaps," Tommy said, half to himself, "I have made a mistake and am in the Martha Washington." Then he hastily drew himself to his full height and thundered, "Madam, I am a gentleman and scholar, and such lascivious pursuits as you just mentioned find no place in my scheme of living."

Startled, Mrs. O'Regan shot him a bewildered look and scurried off down the hall.

Tommy turned into his room, opened one of the suitcases, and from it took several bottles of beer, which he placed in a neat row on the dresser. Also from the suitcase he produced a flat bottle of colorless liquid which might have been alcohol. It was alcohol.

By nine o'clock that evening Tommy was pleasantly drunk. He opened the door of his room, intending good will toward all men. The hall was vacant and dimly lighted. Tommy whistled a bar or two of a popular lament, and floated back into his room.

"What now?" he wondered. Then he noticed the empty beer bottles. "I," he said aloud, "shall arrange them art—artist—artistically in the hall."

He picked up two of the bottles and placed them on their sides in the middle of the hall. Weaving heavily back into the room, he turned and surveyed his work.

"That is mos' beautiful. Mos' art—artist—pretty. I mush put more there."

He retrieved two more bottles and was about to resume his labors when the sound of running steps reached him. He gravely put down the bottles and started to investigate when a racing figure hit one of the bottles in the hall and crashed to the floor.

"You," said the thoroughly annoyed Tommy to the recumbent figure, "have spoiled my arrangement of theese bottles. You shall pay for that." So saying he lifted one of the bottles and brought it down gently but firmly on the other's head. With a sigh the man lost consciousness.

Amazed and momentarily stupefied at what he had done, Tommy jumped to his feet, tossed the two dead soldiers back into his room, and was going in himself when a hall stopped him.

"Hey, youse!"

Tommy halted, by now nearly sober. That was an amazing faculty of his which his father had failed to appreciate when cataloging Tommy's faults.

Tommy saw, with a shock, that the hall had come from the lungs of a burly policeman.

"Oh, oh," thought Tommy. The policeman came puffing up, examined the man on the floor and handcuffed him. Tommy watched dazedly.

River Disappears; Baffles Experts

Engineers Search for Stream Without Success.

Bonneville, Ore.—A turbulent river which flowed out of a mountain at the south abutment of the famous legendary bridge of the Gods west of Cascade Locks, Ore., disappeared in 1918 and army engineers say they cannot find it.

The engineers searched for months for the stream, sufficient in volume to supply the city of Portland, but announced they were baffled and would give up the search temporarily.

The army experts must find the missing water eventually, because they have to make the mountain behave. They cannot have the huge rock, which Indians claim once formed a natural bridge across the wide Columbia river, sliding around the landscape as it has in the past.

The mountain threatens to cause trouble for the Union Pacific railway trackbed through the Columbia gorge. The federal government is building a new bed for the railway between Bonneville and Cascade locks to replace the present line, which will be covered by water when the Bonneville power dam is completed and the Columbia river is backed up for fifty miles.

The mountain slowly is sliding toward the Columbia river on a bed of solid rock. The migratory grounds, known as Ruckel slide, is saturated with water, crumbling and unreliable.

The missing stream used to flow from eight bores into the mountainside made by the Union Pacific, to preserve its tracks from being swept away. Before the tunnels were built it cost the railroad \$50,000 a year to keep its line in repair over a mile and one-half stretch.

In 1918 the flow of water ceased. The railroad tracks, however, were not affected further. Engineers theorized that the flow was halted by a disturbance within the earth, which caused the interior of the mountain to buckle. They believed the stream found a new subterranean passage into the Columbia.

Geologists assert that an entire

MODISH SUIT BY CHERIE NICHOLAS



There is nothing that can outclass a suit of rich velvet if you want to look "dressed up" without looking too dressed up. The smart cocktail suit pictured is of soft quality-kind black Lyons velvet. The coat fits sleekly through the

Albania's Royal Family in National Dress



Here are Achmed Zogu, king of Albania (center), and his family in the picturesque national dress. Left to right: Princess Ruhie; Princess Senie; Prince Husen, nephew to the king; mother of Prince Essad; the king's mother, Sadie; Achmed Zogu, the king; Princess Adlie; Myzejen and Madjide, both princesses. All the princesses are sisters of the king, who is not married and lives at his castle in Tirana with his mother and his six sisters.