

# SEEN and HEARD around the NATIONAL CAPITAL

By Carter Field

Washington.—A careful listener could have heard long sighs of relief over the collapse of the senatorial effort to write a more drastic neutrality law. The relief was most pronounced at the White House and State department, but it was evident in many other quarters, notably among senators representing states whose ports and the railroads leading to them thrive on foreign trade. And among Southern congressmen, who feared that in some way or other they would find cotton embargoed if the law were made too drastic.

All of which makes all the activities of Senator Gerald P. Nye so far this session just about a perfect batting average in futility. He tried to smear J. P. Morgan, and the elderly financier emerged with even Nye unable to hate him. He tried to make Woodrow Wilson both putty in the bankers' hands and a liar, and got thoroughly spanked. He tried to force a drastic neutrality law, and the committee on foreign relations, after long consideration, decided merely to extend the present law. Then he attempted an insurgent meeting, even threatening to block extension of the present law in order to force one more drastic, and that is petering out.

There is a great deal of hypocrisy being displayed on this whole neutrality business. Lots of senators would like to see the present law die, and nothing whatever put in its place. They know perfectly well, for example, that the present embargo on arms, ammunition and implements of war is just diverting business, which would give employment in New England and other arms and ammunition plants, to similar plants in England, Japan, Belgium and Czechoslovakia. Which is especially annoying because the shipments of these countries to Halle Selassie's army are being paid for in gold and silver. So there is no danger of either loss or of becoming involved through extension of credit.

### Avoid Quotation

But very few people indeed in political life or out of it are willing to talk that way for quotation. They know they would be denounced by the Nye crowd as being willing to take "blood money," at the best, or as being in the pay of the Du Ponts, at the worst. Meanwhile, of course, the very nation that the chairman of the foreign relations committee, Senator Key Pittman, says is likely to make war on the United States—that is Japan—is building up her munitions industry as a result of America's neutrality law.

But that is something else again. The relief over the collapse of Nye's attempt to make the present embargo more drastic, both for the present war in Africa and for any future war anywhere else—except of course in Latin America—is due more to other interests than to arms and ammunition. It extends to the oil industry, and to copper, to steel and to mules. In fact, conditions might arise which would make almost any given product important in the conduct of a war. Whereupon, to be neutral in the Nye sense of the term, it would be necessary for the United States to bar shipments of that commodity. In the opinion of some others, of course, such an embargo would be anything but a neutral act—depending upon whose ox is gored.

The greatest relief of all, perhaps, was in the office of James A. Farley. Not because of his job as postmaster general, but in his function as chairman of the Democratic National committee, conducting the campaign for the re-election of President Roosevelt.

For there is just no way of measuring the amount of grief that a really tough neutrality bill of the Nye pattern could cause in certain states whose electoral votes are very important.

### Still Puzzling

Passamaquoddy and the Florida ship canal are still puzzling everybody but President Roosevelt and Budget Director Bell. Best reports are that Mr. Bell is the only Dealer now satisfied with the President's action in deciding to give congress a chance to vote on whether more money should be spent on these two projects or not. Certainly Mr. Roosevelt has had plenty of grief since he sent them up to the Capitol.

The first big surprise came, of course, when the house appropriations committee decided to sidetrack the two big projects. The President had thought, of course, to get the projects into the regular congressional pork barrel. Then he would retain all the credit for having started them, and congress would be put into the position of approving them as sound.

There is more to this than just the idea of general congressional approval. For in every pork barrel

type of bill members have to vote, naturally, for many things they do not approve.

### Florida Ship Canal

Representative Green of Florida is leading the fight to restore the Florida ship canal. He has already put the blame for its defeat in the committee on the ship companies, which he says do not want to have their mail carrying fees reduced by having the mileage on trips to gulf ports reduced. The idea of transporting mail from New York to New Orleans by a boat that takes five days, when regular trains make the journey in two nights, seems a bit odd, but attacks on all corporations seem in fashion.

But the point arises: suppose congress sticks by the action of the house appropriations committee? Suppose the end of the session finds no appropriation for carrying on Quoddy and the Florida canal?

The President then faces disagreeable alternatives. He can accept the repudiation for his two projects, admitting right in the midst of his campaign for re-election, that both simply squandered the taxpayers' money on projects which are not going to be finished—and which his own party in congress did not think worth finishing. Or he can still divert WPA or PWA funds for carrying on the work.

In that case, however, he would lay himself open to violent criticism from another standpoint. It would lend force to the argument that congress had actually turned over all its powers to a dictator—that Roosevelt's action in permitting congress to pass on Quoddy and the Florida canal was much like that of a cat which lets a captured mouse run for a couple of feet before pouncing on it again.

### New Farm Bill

The statement of Senator David I. Walsh of Massachusetts that the only benefits claimed from the new farm bill are that it would continue the rain of checks to the farmers, and tend toward cutting the value of the dollar—or inflation—has started comparisons between the present administration's farm plan and, oddly enough, the Hoover foreign policy.

Both, it is contended, were "share the wealth" plans as surely as though the late Louisiana Kingfish had designed them. It is the differences that are interesting.

Despite all the clamor about the foreign loans which later went sour, all that the United States, as a whole, lost was goods—just farm products and manufactured articles. The trouble is that they were never paid for, in so many instances. But here is the comparison being made:

Who paid or pays the bill? In the AAA farm plan, everybody who eats and wears clothes, thus being obliged to pay processing taxes. This money was taken from all the citizens and given to one class, the farmers, on the accepted argument that the farmers were not getting their share in the ordinary processes of wealth distribution. In the new farm plan, taxes will be more widely distributed, but will continue to hit the same people, the burden continuing to fall more heavily on the poor.

Who paid the bill in the bad foreign loan case? The people who had money enough to buy the bonds, plus some who were hit because their banks and insurance companies invested in them. But by far the greater amount came from people with sizable fortunes.

Who got the money? In the farm bills, the farmers. In the bad foreign loan case, more than 90 per cent of it went to the farmers and the workers of this country. The wicked bankers one hears so much about skimmed a nice fat profit, far because of the amount, but actually very small in percentage. And of course a sizable fraction of that went to the treasury eventually in income taxes. And some of the "profits" went to bond salesmen, an occupation, by the way, that once used a lot of white collar workers.

### Where It Went

But the great bulk of it went to the men who grew the crops, the men who fabricated the goods for wages, the railroad workers who hauled the goods and crops to seaboard, the miners who dug the coal to provide the power, etc.

It was a very real distribution of wealth, which was what the AAA was, and the new so-called conservation plan is intended to be.

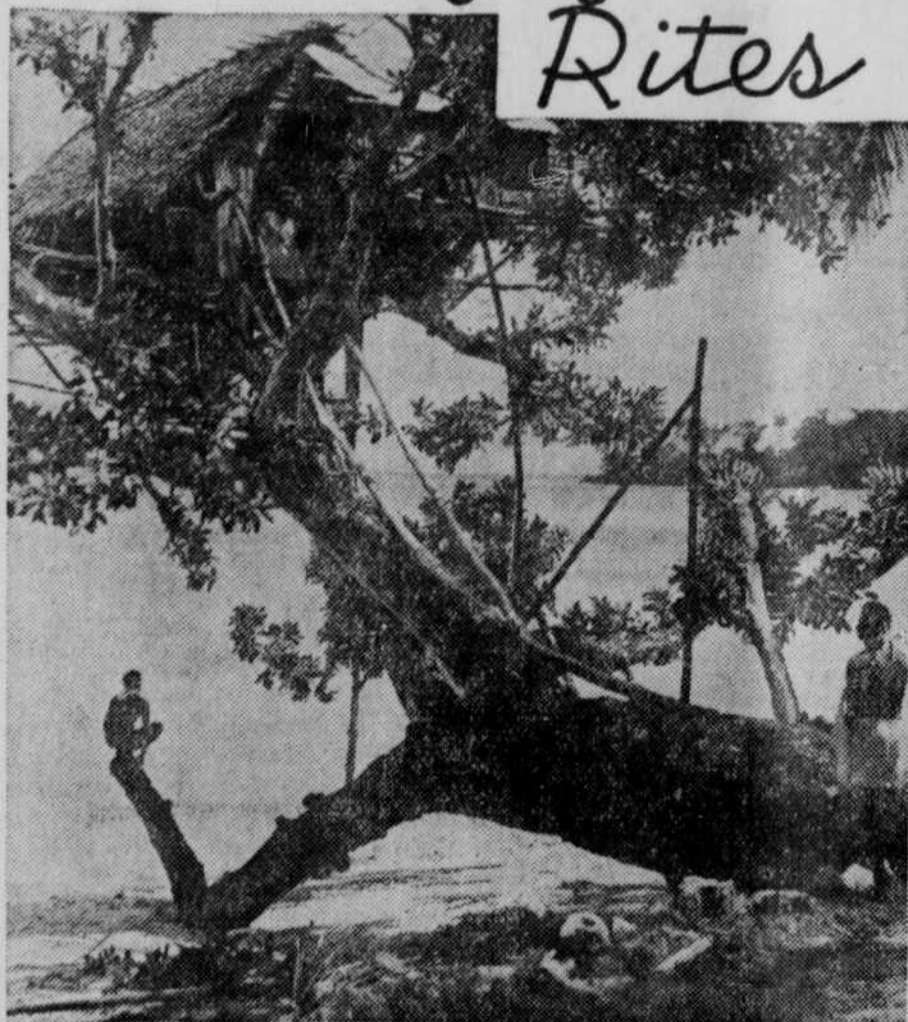
There are two important differences. In the farm plans the industrial workers of the country benefit only indirectly—as a result of the increased buying power of the farmers. Whereas in the foreign loan plan both workers and farmers benefited directly. One class of workers, those in transportation, benefited enormously by the foreign loan plan, but have been actually hurt a little by the farm plan due to sharp curtailment of production—hence less freight movement. Incidentally, the stock yards workers suffered even more from the farm plan, though it is promised that there will be nothing so drastic as that again.

The other big difference is in who pays the bills. A much larger proportion of the cost of the farm plan falls on very small income people.

Of course, no one ever called the sour foreign loan system a "plan." It was just a phase of the often derided brain trust circles, profit motive.

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# Ontong, Java, Rites



A South Sea Island Penthouse.

Prepared by National Geographic Society, Washington, D. C.—WNU Service.

CUSTOMS have changed little in some of the South Sea Islands despite frequent visits of white men. On the island of Ontong Java, a native's power is based upon his wealth. The wealthy native pays higher prices than his poor neighbors.

As a daughter becomes old enough for marriage, the parents bedeck her with colored dyes. First they smear the youthful body with coconut oil and then rub on the dyes, forming gay patterns. A string of shark's teeth then is placed on her head and ornaments of turtle shell suspended from the lobes of her ears.

Holes in the two alae (the outer portions of the nostrils) and the septum of her nose are made during babyhood. Small shell ornaments hang from the septum and feathers plucked from birds adorn the nostrils and hair. Around her neck is a necklace of human hair and her belt and bracelet are of white coconut leaves. Thus adorned, and with a bright yellow skirt covering the lower portion of her body, she parades with her father and senior relatives around the village. At this time the prospective husband knows it is time for him to go to his wife. That evening he visits her in her house. For a time the young wife stays with her parents. The groom visits his wife at her parents' house but he leaves his fishing paraphernalia at his father's house. He must provide her with a certain amount of raw food and she gives him cooked food and taro.

When priests were in power, the mother, at the birth of the first-born child, went to the house of one of them to preserve both herself and the child from evil influences. She was, and still is, assisted by her mother, mother-in-law and a midwife. The husband was present until the child was actually born, but then he had to leave the house and remain away for about a year. This custom is still followed.

### Two Days of Noise.

Shortly after the birth, the mother-in-law strikes a wooden pillow. This is the signal for everyone in the house to make a noise by beating on anything available. The din is kept up for 48 hours without ceasing. It is the expression of joy that a new life has been added to the community.

On this and the subsequent evening the relatives of the young mother and father assemble outside the house in semiformal dress—that is to say, oiled and adorned with sweet-smelling herbs and flowers. They sing the birth song; then march around the streets, singing at every corner. The first-born is always named for a dead priest, but subsequent children receive names of ancestors.

The young father, while he is excluded from his wife, has two holes cut in the alae of the nose, each about half an inch long. This is an extremely painful process, but most men are willing to submit to it because it is a sign that they are now fathers and therefore men of some standing.

Pieces of coconut shell are cut into rings about one inch across and one-fifth of an inch wide. A cut is made in the ring, and the two ends are forced apart by means of a small stick placed diametrically across. Four of the rings are fitted on each side of the nose and tied into place. The pieces of stick are then knocked out. The result is that the two ends of the ring bite into the flesh of the nose, and in two or three days a hole has been cut through the flesh.

The rings are left in for about ten days. They are then removed and the holes are stuffed with folded coconut leaves to prevent them from closing up. On special occasions ornaments of turtle shell are hung in the holes.

### Funeral Rites.

After marriage and birth the most important customs relate to

death. There are elaborate funeral rites and ceremonies, which are practically identical for both men and women.

As soon as the dying person's heart ceases to beat, the mother, wife's daughters, and other female relatives give way to long-drawn-out wails at the top of their voices. The wails never cease, except in pauses for breath, until the corpse is under ground. The louder the wails, the more the other relatives are pleased. Indeed, if the wailations are not loud enough, neighbors and villagers are noisily critical and foretell that the ghost of the dead man will be annoyed and send sickness.

Natives of Leuanua, Ontong Java, do not conceive of any causes of illness except the supernatural. All diseases and death are caused by the evil intervention of the spirits of those already dead.

The corpse is taken into the road in front of the house and washed. It is then returned inside, the hair is cut and the body is rubbed thoroughly with coconut oil. Turtle-shell ornaments are put in the ears and, if the dead person is a man, larger specimens of these ornaments are hung from the holes in the alae of the nose. In the case of a woman, a small ornament is hung from the hole in the septum. Garlands are hung around the neck and bound on the brow.

As soon as a person is seriously ill, all his relatives are summoned to be present for these preparations. Curious neighbors peep in to criticize arrangements that are not being carried out with due decorum. After such a visit the neighbors are careful each to take a mouthful of water from bottles hung for this purpose close to the door. They spit the water into their hands and throw it over themselves to remove the contagion which contact with the corpse has laid upon them.

The sons and daughters-in-law of the dead person, be it man or woman, collect dry coconut leaves and bind them into flares, which are carried to the house where the body lies. They then put on complete festive array, decorating themselves with tumeric and garlands of leaves. The women also wear their circlets of sharks' teeth.

### Ceremony of Mourning.

After the evening meal, which is taken at 7 p. m. or slightly later, the mourning ceremony begins. The corpse is laid on a new mat in the center of the house. At its feet, with their backs to it and their faces to the fire, sit the sons and daughters-in-law. It is the duty of the eldest of these to see that a flaming fire is kept burning all night, so that the whole place is brilliantly illuminated. The others sit motionless, with their fans before their faces, all through the night, without speaking.

The rest of the house is filled with the other relatives of the dead person. If he was a man of wealth and importance, as many of the villagers as can possibly squeeze in will do so and many others crowd around the doors. In a climate like that of Leuanua, which is only five degrees south of the Equator, a small house containing a corpse and a huge fire and packed with people and with all the normal ventilation blocked by others, the atmosphere soon becomes almost intolerable.

The relatives and friends—except the closer female relatives, who continue weeping aloud, frequently drowning the other voices—sing dirges all through the night. The latter embrace the corpse and at intervals rub it with oil. In the course of the wake the family of the dead man give tobacco to all and sundry. Almost everyone in the village will come to the wake held for a wealthy man, sure of getting a few free sticks of tobacco for a dirge.

With the dawn all save the immediate relatives depart. Preparations are then made for burial.

## Something About a New Broom—and a New House Dress!

PATTERN No. 1787-B



1787-B

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### Devil Dislikes Blue

In Mexico there's a superstition that painting the windows of a house blue will keep the devil away. Many home owners in the United States are adopting the custom—if not the superstition—and are selecting blue as a trim color for the exterior of their homes.



WNU-U

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## Giving of Civil Word Leaves One With a Greater Store

If a civil word or two will render a man happy, he must be a wretch, indeed, who will not give them to him. Such a disposition is like lighting another man's candle by one's own, which loses none of its brilliancy by what the other gains.—Penn.



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