

[Jan 19, 1935]

THE CONGRESSIONAL FRONT
By Congressman Everett M. Dirksen
16th District.

SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES FOR WEEK. Not until Monday of last week were the Committee assignments of all parties completed and the House organized in working order. Committee meetings began on Wednesday the 16th with the exception of the Appropriations Committee which has been completing the regular appropriation bills. Two of these have passed the House, one providing regular appropriations for the Independent establishments and the other for the District of Columbia. There are 30 governmental agencies such as the Federal Trade Commission, the Veterans Administration, the Tariff Commission and others which do not come under the supervision of any Cabinet officer. Hence a separate appropriation bill for such agencies is necessary. As for the District of Columbia Bill the following facts may be of interest: Washington (which is the same as the District of Columbia) has a half million population. The transient population may equal as much as 100,000 daily. It is operated by three Commissioners appointed by the President and has a police, fire, health, traffic, and other departments. It has no City Council and must look to Congress for laws, ordinances, rules and regulations. People have no vote here. They pay taxes however but cannot spend their own money without authority from Congress. Since Uncle Sam has a predominant interest here, the affairs of the District of Columbia consume much Congressional time.

ODD BILLS. There are many such. Witness the following: In 1865, a detachment of Union soldiers, came on a quantity of chewing tobacco in Wilmington, North Carolina, confiscated it, had it sent to a warehouse in New York City, where it was sold by order of the Treasury Department. It belonged to one Reuben Ragland and consisted of 316 drums of Ragland Twist and 225 boxes of Navy Cut Plug valued at \$28,588.58. Owner Ragland was at the time a soldier in the Confederate Army, was pardoned under a general amnesty proclamation by President Andrew Johnson. Ragland has long since departed this life but now come his heirs and ask for repayment of the \$28,588.58 together with interest at the rate of 6% from April 22, 1865, the day the tobacco was sold. Bill for reimbursement was introduced by Congressman Burch of Virginia. Offhand, looks like the interest might be in excess of \$200,000.

CHAIN STORE TAXES. West Virginia legislature passed a bill taxing chain stores. The more stores, the higher the tax. Some expert decided that the bill included gasoline filling stations as drawn, pounced on 1003 Standard Oil filling stations in the state, collected \$240,000 in taxes. Standard Oil started suit for repayment of this money on the ground that the law did not apply to filling stations. West Virginia Courts upheld the law. The case went to the 9 learned men in black robes who sit on the U. S. Supreme Bench who on January 14th, decided that the state had authority to tax filling stations, upheld the law, said that Standard was not only out it's \$240,000 but made it possible for West Virginia to continue collections from chain filling stations.

HOW ARE YOUR EYES. Vistors to Washington, approaching the stately Capitol from the west have often stated that the dome of the Capitol is not in the centre of the building. A Senate Committee studied the matter, decided it was an optical illusion, could be changed by replacing the present landscaping, trees, and the dull granite steps with trimmed trees, and glistening white marble steps, asked for 3½ million with which to effect the change.

WASHINGTON CRIME. Recent survey shows 81 murders, 36 manslaughter charges, 239 assaults with intent to kill, 961 robberies, 2638 burglaries, 3169 auto thefts, 1056 grand larceny charges, 695 embezzlements and forgeries in the Nation's Capitol for 1934. For cities in the 500,000 class, Washington ranks second in murder, first in burglary, second in grand larceny, second in auto thefts. If true, murder rate here is 40% greater than Chicago on a basis of population. Which reminds me that a friend of the former Governor of Maine, now a Member of Congress, came to visit the Governor, had his overcoat stolen two hours after he landed in the Capital.

BONUS. 26 bills have been introduced, calling for payment of the Soldiers Bonus. (Better term is Adjusted Service Compensation.) The Patman Bill calls for immediate payment with Treasury notes (a species of inflation), the Vinson Bill provides for immediate payment by a method which would call for a bond issue. Irrespective of the name of the bill, the House temper is such now that a Bonus Bill will be passed by an overwhelmingly majority. Quick action is promised by leaders.

TREE BELT. Remember the drouth of last summer. To combat future drouths, a tree belt will be planted, extending from Canada to Mexico. Experts disagree on it's efficacy but work is progressing. Theory is that trees not only precipitate moisture from the westerly winds but stabilize climate and rainfall. It's a 7year program, calling for 10 million dollars each year. Four million trees will be planted next spring in 23 designated areas in W. D., Neb., S. D., Kan. Okla., Texas, in strips 10 rods wide, 5 miles long, each strip containing 139,000 trees.

OLD AGE PENSIONS. President Roosevelt's message on Old Age Security is translated into legislative terms in the so-called Wagner and Lewis Bills (the former being Senate Bill 1130, the latter House Bill 4142) and titled, "To alleviate the hazards of old age, unemployment, illness, and dependency, to establish a Social Insurance Board in the Department of Labor, to raise revenue, and for other purposes." The Bill calls for (1) Old Age Pensions (2) Unemployment Insurance (3) Mothers' assistance (4) Maternal and Child Health (5) Crippled Children (6) Child Welfare (7) Public Health. For all these purposes, it calls for an appropriation for the fiscal year ending June 30, 1936 of 98½ million dollars, and 217½ millions for each year thereafter. Various items in these bills will be discussed in this column from time to time. Just now, let me state the provisions applying to aged folks, now 65 or over. The salient provisions are that (1) Old Age Pensions shall be administered by the various states, under legislation enacted by the various state legislatures. (2) States may limit pensions to those who are citizens of the U. S. (3) State shall not require a longer period of residence than five years during the 10 years preceding the applications for pension (4) Property of the applicant up to \$5000 may be exempted (5) The income of a person applying for a pension, up to what shall be necessary and reasonable to live in decency and health may be exempted (6) States which now pension the aged at 70 may continue at that age until January 1, 1940 after which time, the pensionable age shall be reduced to 65 (7) No pensions shall be paid to the aged who are in institutions for the care of such folks (8) The Federal Government will pay not to exceed \$15 to the state for each person pensioned in accordance with the requirements in the Bill (9) The state pension system shall be supervised by a designated state department (10) That share of the pension which is paid by the Federal Government shall continue a lien on the estate of such pensioned person and shall be enforced and the money so paid, refunded to the Federal Treasury. These in a nutshell are the provisions which apply to those aged who are immediately oligible for pensions. Other features will be discussed in the next letter.

TID BITS. Since the Wagner-Costigan Anti-Lynching Bill was introduced in the 73rd Congress, it is reported that lynchings have dropped from 28 in 1933 to 16 in 1934. 9 governors, 27 mayors, 58 churchman and 200 various organizations have petitioned Congress for it's passage. Lo! the poor oyster. Starfish, reefers, and screw borers have been preying upon and destroying millions of oysters and Congress has been asked for a half million dollars to exterminate these oyster-enemies.