

2/8/41

CONGRESSIONAL FRONT
By Congressman Everett M. Dirksen
Sixteenth District.

A resolution by Senator Lodge of Massachusetts to abolish the electoral college and elect the President and Vice President by popular vote has been introduced recently. A reason assigned in behalf of this resolution is that the electoral system whereby the entire electoral vote of a state goes to the candidate receiving the highest popular vote, makes a national campaign something of a gamble in many states. A case in point is the election of 1894 in which Grover Cleveland received a majority of only 1,149 votes in the State of New York and received the state's entire thirty-six electoral votes. A second reason is that under the present system a candidate can secure less than a majority of the popular vote and still be elected. This is true in the case of Hayes in 1876, Garfield in 1880, Cleveland in 1884, Cleveland in 1892, Wilson in 1912 and Wilson in 1916. All of them received less than a majority of the popular vote and yet were elected as President. The third reason assigned is that the present system is discriminatory. In the election of 1936 the State of Nevada with three electoral votes had one such electoral vote for each 14,616 votes cast. In New York on the other hand there was but one electoral vote for each 112,478 votes cast. In the case of Illinois it would take under this system 8.32 votes to equal the force of one vote in Nevada. The Lodge resolution calls for an amendment to the Constitution.

IRONY.

About Christmas time last year, Captain Joseph A. Gainard came to Washington to receive the Navy Cross from the hands of the Secretary of the Navy for heroic service in piloting the vessel City of Flint through submarine-infested and mine-strewn waters with a contingent of refugee passengers. He is the same Captain Gainard, who, two years ago, put down a mutiny on his ship The Algic in the harbor of Montevideo, brought the mutineers back in irons and saw them tried and convicted in a Federal Court. Today, Captain Gainard is without a ship. Private owners of merchant ships cannot afford to give him a vessel. The reason is that as the maritime industry now stands, he would have to take a crew furnished him by some of the organizations in the marine industry who are clearly infested with Communists and saboteurs and that means some hardened troublemakers who would not let him complete the voyage. As the Captain stated when in the Capital to receive the Navy Cross, "There's a Soviet aboard every United States merchant ship." Here is a danger spot in our auxiliary defense arm, the Merchant Marine, which has not been corrected. It is an acute situation which must be met now or which may occasion serious trouble later.

ONIONS

It has not yet been contended that onions are an element of national defense but you may be interested in knowing that we produce 50,000 carloads of onions per year of which several thousand cars are consumed in the form of green onions. One would scarcely believe that any bug or virus with a healthy respect for its own life would ever attack so fortified a vegetable as an onion. Yet the onion growers have appeared recently before Congress and asked for funds with which to carry on a crusade against pink mildew, pink root, thrips, dry rot and other fungus diseases. The Chinese have developed an onion which through thousands of years of breeding is resistant to all diseases but the trouble is that it is a variety which does not globe. One of the problems today is to cross breed the American globe and the Chinese onion in order to get quantity and disease-resistant quality. This will be one more job for the Government agricultural experts.

LORD HALIFAX AND LORD SACKVILLE.

Lord Halifax, the new British Ambassador paid a visit to the Chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee of the Senate and the Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the House at the time the celebrated lease-lend bill was pending and his visit occasioned some reference in Congress to the impropriety of such a visit at this time. Our history reveals a similar incident when Lord Sackville, the British Ambassador to this country in 1888 undertook an interest in some of the domestic affairs of this country and even went so far as to interfere in the Presidential election. President Cleveland assailed Lord Sackville's conduct in the course of his message to Congress on December 3, 1888 and referred to it as "unpardonable conduct". In fact, Grover Cleveland went so far as to insist that he be withdrawn from this country and would not deal with him so long as he was here. Lord Sackville was finally compelled to ask for his passports and so the incident was closed.