[March 18, 1939]

THE CONGRESSIONAL FRONT
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DIVIDING THE WORLDS WHEAT BUSINESS

In May of 1933, representatives of the United States, Canada, Australis, and the Argentine, met at Geneva Switzerland at the instance of the Economic Committee of the League of Nations for the purpose of considering the problem of world wheat surpluses and the effect of such surpluses on world wheat prices. Two months later, a rather loose and tentative agreement was reached under which the countries participating in the conference would attempt to adjust their wheat production to world demand for wheat in the hope of improving prices. Very little was accomplished except to enlist the interest of other nations. Subsequent meetings were held and 17 countries ultimately sat around the conference table in the hope of finding a solution for this difficult problem. The 10th meeting of the International Wheat Advisory Committee was held in January of this year at Geneva and it was agreed by the participating nations to attempt an international wheat conference for the purpose of working out an agreement under which the wheat business of the world would be apportioned between export and import countries. In so many words, it is hoped that an agreement can be reached to divide the worlds wheat business and give each export nation a quota of so many bushels to be sold in the world market. Having sold that amount of wheat, the countries which join in this bargain could thereafter sell no more wheat in the world market for that year. It is a kind of international regimentation.

THE GAS TAX HAS A BIRTHDAY

The gasoline tax is observing it's 20th birthday anniversary. It was born in the winter of 1919 when the Oregon legislature first enacted this law to tax 1¢ per gallon on gasoline for highway purposes. Ten years later, this type of tax had been adopted by every state in the Union and by the Federal Government. The tax began with 1¢ per gallon but by 1932, two states had increased it to 7¢ per gallon. A survey of this tax on it's 20th birthday shows that 1 state taxes 2¢ per gallon, 10 states have a 3¢ tax, 18 states have a 4¢ tax, 10 states have a 5¢ tax, 5 states a 6¢ tax, 1 state a 6½¢ tax, and 3 states a 7¢ tax. In 1937, the gas tax yielded $762.000,000 to the states and $200,000,000 to the Federal Government. Add to this the gas taxes imposed by cities and counties and the gas tax will aggregate more than a billion dollars. It is what the motorists pay for the privilege of using hard surfaced highways. This tax is so easily levied and so productive of results that some states have dipped into the gas tax fund for money with which to carry on other functions of the state such as relief. Congress has therefore written into the Federal Aid Road Act a provision whereby states which divert gas tax money to other purposes than the construction and maintenance of highways are penalized by withholding a portion of the Federal funds to which they might be entitled

SPORTSMEN VS CONGRESS

As the Agricultural Appropriation Act goes to the floor of Congress, the annual struggle between sportsmen and Congress will be re-enacted. It comes about in this way: In 1932, Congress levied a 10% tax on sporting arms and ammunition which produces about $3,000,000 per year. In 1937, Congress also enacted the Pittman Robinson Act which authorized the appropriation of an amount equal to this tax to be distributed among the states for the purchase, and maintenance of outdoor facilities, shooting grounds, refuges, etc., to promote wild life restoration, conservation and recreation. The sportsmen believed that since the 6,000,000 hunters who take out hunting licneses every year and the 1,000,000 who buy Federal Duck Stamps paid this tax, it should be expended to provide more and better shooting and sport. Congress however did not agree with this position and only appropriated $1,000,000 of the $3,000,000 for this purpose. So the annual battle to determine how much of this money shall be provided for outdoor purposes will soon come to pass as Congress considers appropriations for the Bureau of Biological Survey for the next fiscal year.

NOTHING IS ETERNAL SAVE CHANGE

Oldsters can remember when all heat and industrial energy came from coal. Electricity was made, factory wheels driven, railroad freight and passengers were transported, gas produced, and heat derived from coal. The coal industry reached it's peak in 1923 when 705,000 miners made a livelihood from mining coal. It's a different story now. In 1937, the number had dropped to 484,000 and even these managed to obtain only part time employment each year. Many factors are responsible. Chemists and engineers made it possible to get greater efficiency out of a pound of coal. The result was that the amount of coal required by railroads dropped about 35,000,000 tons annually, the amount of coal needed to produce electricity dropped about 60,000,000 tons each year, the amount needed to produce iron and steel dropped about 8,000,000 tons each year. Then came the increased use of fuel oil to displace 35,000,000 tons per year and the increased use of natural gas which accounted for another 35,000,000 tons. Finally, the developement of hydro electric power with government and private funds took another 18,000,000 tons from the miners market. The penalty can be seen in the loss of jobs for 216,000 miners. This is the tragic story of coal. Through the Coal Act of 1937 and the Bituminous Coal Commission, the Federal Government is seeking to stabilize the coal industry by means of minimum prices but it requires more than that. If coal is to be regulated, then other forms of fuel and power such as natural gas, electricity and fuel oil must also be regulated to place coal on a competitive basis with these sources of power.