

[March 24, 1934]

THE CONGRESSIONAL FRONT
By Congressman Everett H. Dirksen

CAPITAL CURIOSA. Congressmen and Senators are receiving in the average about 100 thousand letters daily and many are weeks behind with their mail. From 1926 to 1933, the passenger service on air lines jumped from 5782 to 550,000; in the same period poundage of air mail increased from 433,649 to 7½ million pounds, and express merchandise shipped by air from 6467 pounds to 1,660,000 pounds. In 1927 we had 503 airports. Today we have 1203 with almost 20,000 miles of lighted airways for night flying. Illinois paid more than 137 million in Federal taxes last year while Texas paid but 48 million. Yet Texas has received nearly 50 million under the AAA crop reduction program while Illinois has thus far received but 1½ million. So great was the opposition that the Fletcher-Reyburn Securities Exchange Regulation Bill was substantially revised. Pending legislation on which some form of action will be had in this Congress include The Wagner Bill, Connery 30 hour week bill, Dill-Connery Old Age Pension Bill, the Tariff Agreement Bill, Security Exchange Bill, Sugar Bill, and probably some amendments to the Agricultural Adjustment Bill.

SILVER. By a two-third votes the first silver bill to come before the 73rd Congress was passed in the House this week. It provides that negotiations might be opened with other nations for the purchase of our surplus agricultural products and authorizes the U. S. to accept bullion silver therefor, at a price not to exceed 25% in excess of the world price for silver. It provides further that silver certificates shall be issued against the bullion so received and that payment to the exporters and producers shall be made in such silver certificates. It is hoped that this measure will stimulate such countries as India, China, Mexico and others to purchase our cotton and wheat because those countries are on a silver basis and could thus purchase to advantage, thus providing an outlet for surplus farm products and at the same time increasing the amount of available currency. A companion bill authorizing the Secretary of the Treasury to purchase not to exceed one and one half billion ounces of silver over a period of years, at the lowest obtainable market price. The Secretary of the Treasury is directed to continue purchases of silver at not to exceed 200 million ounces per year so long as the daily average market price of silver does not exceed by 3¢ per ounce, the prevailing daily market price for the preceding ninety days and he shall continue to make such silver purchases until the parity price of 371½ grains of fine silver equals that of 25.8 grains of fine gold. This silver shall be deposited in the Treasury and certificates of deposit shall be issued against the silver so deposited, which certificates of deposit for all practical purposes shall be regarded as legal tender. This latter bill has been held in abeyance and may not be considered unless by express direction of the President.

PHILIPPINES. In the 72nd Congress, a bill was passed providing for the ultimate independence of the Philippine Islands within ten years after the Island authorities had set up a representative, constitutional form of government and had accepted the proposal contained in the bill. The bill provoked a factional struggle between the different political parties in the Philippines, largely because the United States was retaining certain army and naval bases there. As a result the Philippine legislature refused to proceed to carry out the provisions of the bill which were conditions precedent to securing ultimate independence. Since they were permitted one year in which to exercise their right to proceed, the law that was passed lapsed. At the instance of the President, the objectionable features of the proposal were eliminated and the bill once more passed by the House. It might be interesting to observe that the Philippine Islands are larger than Mexico, that they have a population of 14 million, that they have nine thousand schools and colleges and have made remarkable progress while under the tutelage of the United States. Ten years hence, they will be enabled to become an independent country and have a minister or envoy to this and to other nations. Independence however entails a burden. No longer will pineapples, coconut oil, palm oil, blackstrap molasses and other items be entitled to enter the U. S. free from all tariffs and duties.

WESTERN LANDS. Uncle Sam still owns 173 millions acres of land in 11 western states. These lands are used primarily for grazing and more than 26,000 grazing permits are issued annually by the Forest Service of the Department of Agriculture for the grazing of 8 million head of live stock. But indiscriminate use of these lands for grazing purposes has resulted in depletion of forage and in soil erosion. It's the same story as the use of oil and forest lands. When the timber lands of the northwest were first opened, there was such a ruthless destruction of timber that only within the last few years have we begun to properly conserve these resources; when oil lands were first opened, exploitation was carried to a point where there was danger of exhaustion long before

the oil supplies of other nations would be exhausted. Now, there comes the problem of conserving the grazing lands and a bill will soon receive consideration in the House, providing for the organization of grazing districts, building of fences, and the imposition of fees for grazing privileges, which fees shall be used to rebuild and conserve the forage and vegetation and to prevent soil erosion.

PETITIONS. What happens to the voluminous petitions which find their way to Washington urging Congress to support his or defeat that? Perhaps it's a trade secret and shouldn't be told. Yet, sincere, earnest, energetic, citizens who assemble petitions at great trouble and expense have a right to know. If a petition is addressed to a Member of Congress and does not contain too many names, it is received, carefully noted, studied and ordinarily every signer receives an acknowledgement. But I refer particularly to massive petitions like the one presented to the Banking and Currency Committee today, bearing 97,000 names, asking Congress to pass the McLeod Bill providing for the taking over of the assets of closed banks, paying the depositors in cash, and having the RFC liquidate the assets over a period of years. This petition was about 24 inches thick. It was bound in red, white and blue ribbon. It was signed by citizens in seven or eight states. It was introduced before the committee with a brief statement, telling what it contained. It was filed and made a part of the record but the names will not be printed. This petition will be filed with the Committee records and probably the ribbons will never be untied. Later it will go forth with the waste paper. However, though it is never unbound and scanned by a single soul, it still serves its purpose. The very size of the petition and the number of names is a stimulus to the members. It is a forceful reminder that enough citizens to make a big city have indicated that they favor the enactment of this bill.

BITS ABOUT AGRICULTURE. 780,000 farmers have signed hog-corn agreements. 746,476 checks have been mailed to wheat farmers. These aggregate about 62 million dollars. Agreements are being negotiated with 364 canning factories to establish minimum prices for canning corn at a level of about \$10.00 per ton. The Secretary of Agriculture has tentatively approved a marketing agreement to limit certain grades and sizes of strawberries in order to raise the price. Hearings are being held to limit the amount of California apples to be marketed in any one year. Marketing agreements are now in the hands of 285 canners calling for an increase of \$6.50 per ton for shelled peas over the 1933 price. Marketing agreements have been effected to cover the production and canning of California asparagus. New licenses covering prices to be paid to producers of milk became effective on March 17th in five different milk areas.