

[July 17, 1937]

THE CONGRESSIONAL FRONT
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FHCA. Get out the baby's alphabet blocks again. Dust off your memory processes. Put them in good condition. You may have to throw some of the intriguing alphabetical combinations out of the window and take on new ones. If the crevices of the cerebrum rebel at the thought, blame it to Senator Harry Flood Byrd of Virginia. That esteemed legislator believes government should be streamlined and simplified. He believes there are too many agencies, too much duplication, too much expense. As Chairman of a Senate Committee, he engaged the Brookings Institution of Washington which is an endowed non-profit corporation devoted to the science of government, to make an investigation. It did. It was a long, careful, detailed investigation. It recommended that the Home Owners Loan Corporation, the Federal Home Loan Bank Board and the Federal Housing Administration be rolled into one agency to be known as the Federal Home Credit Administration. Broadly speaking, the Home Owners Loan Corporation is now collecting and liquidating loans made to a million home owners; the Federal Home Loan Bank Board is a financing and re-discount agency that stands in about the same relation to Building and Loan Associations that the Federal Reserve Board does to banks; the Federal Housing Administration made and is now collecting delinquent modernization loans (They are no longer being made since Title One of the Federal Housing Act lapsed) and is now carrying on insurance of real estate mortgages and insurance of Building and Loan Associations. If Senator Byrd prevails, you will have to discard HOLC, FHLB and FHA and begin fixing in memory FHCA.

MONEY, POPULATION, AND A BIT OF HISTORY. In 1879, when we were emerging from the depression that began with Black Friday in 1873, our population was 48 million and there was in circulation \$16.92 for every man, woman and child in the nation. In 1914, we were standing on the sidelines watching the nations of Europe lunge for each other's throats. Our population had increased to 99 million and the per capita circulation to \$34.93. In 1917, when we entered the European fracas, population increased to 103 million, and per capita circulation of money to \$40.23. In 1920, we were seeking to get back to "normalcy." Population was estimated at 107 Million. If all money in circulation had been equally divided, each man, woman and child would have received \$53.21. On April 30, 1937 according to Treasury reports our population was estimated at 129 million and the money in circulation at \$49.74 per person. Despite all that, we still have unemployment, we still have a shadow of the depression over us. Would this prove that it's not the amount of money in circulation but rather the speed with which that money turns over that brings depression or prosperity.

WAGE AND HOUR BILL. On May 24, 1937, the late lamented Rep. Connery of Mass. introduced HR 7200 dealing with minimum wages and maximum hours. The bill contained blank spaces on hours and wages which were to be filled in after a joint committee of House and Senate had held hearings on the bill and determined this matter. The bill was 48 pages in length. It contained a new high in legal language. For instance, under the section labeled "Definitions" it recited that "the singular includes the plural and the plural includes the singular;" it also contained a paragraph reciting that "'To a substantial extent' means not casually, sporadically, or accidentally but as a settled or recurrent characteristic of the matter or occupation described, or of a portion thereof, which need not be a large or preponderant portion thereof". How do you like that for the King's English. It is alleged that two young Harvard lawyers wrote the bill. Donald R. Richberg, one time General Counsel of the NRA and NRA chieftain had written and submitted a bill to the President which was much simpler in form. His bill was rejected. When hearings were held, Mr. Richberg came before the Joint Committee on Labor and testified. The Committee liked his style and agreed that the bill should be simple. When the hearings were over, the Committee convened behind closed doors to work out the final draft. Mr. Richberg seems to have prevailed over the Harvard lads because the bill as re-introduced follows the advice of Mr. Richberg. Rather singular, wouldn't you say? And does that include the plural?

WE ARE SUCH A YOUNG COUNTRY. On the walls of the chamber of the House of Representatives is a large fresco painting showing Lord Cornwallis the British General in 1781 meeting with George Washington and his officers to arrange for the peace that clinched our independence. Directly behind General Washington in that fresco is a negro boy who was Washington's servant. That boy became the father of children and the grandfather of grandchildren. Sixty three years ago, one of those grandchildren came to Washington on a milk wagon. He was then but 12 years of age. He missed the milk wagon for the return ride to Mount Vernon and had to find a job that he might eat. He obtained a shoe box and began shining shoes. His humble trade brought him up to the Capitol Building. There he shined shoes of the Members of Congress and the Senate. Later he was appointed as janitor of the Ways and Means Committee of the House. For sixty years he has been employee of the House. He watched great men come and go. In his service with that committee he saw such distinguished chairmen of the Ways and Means Committee as William Wilson of W. Va., Nelson Dingley of Maine, Sereno B. Payne of N.Y., Underwood of Ala., Fordney of Michigan, Kitchen of N.C., Hawley of Ore., and others come and go. He is

now old and tired and his aged feet begin to ache. Yet his smile and greeting is just as cherry as ever. But he needs a rest. This week, the House appointed an assistant to do the work that this gentle old negro might rest. His pay will go on as a life pension. He was eulogized in the House and the membership of that body stood up as he sat in the gallery and gave him a grand ovation. His name is Harry Parker, grandson of the boy who was Washington's body guard a 150 years ago. From Washington to Roosevelt, from grandfather to grandson - we're not so old.

UNINTENDED PROPHECY. Hatton W. Sumners of Texas is a baldish man with a kindly face and twinkling eye. He has been in Congress for 24 years. Of him, President Taft once remarked that he was the best constitutional lawyer in Congress. He is Chairman of the Judiciary Committee of the House of Representatives. When the President's Court proposal came to Congress in February of this year, it was referred to that Committee for action. Had this proposal to reorganize the Court been an ordinary matter, the Judiciary Committee would have held hearings in the bill, and either reported it out or pigeonholed it and let it die. But it was no ordinary matter. It was explosive and far reaching. From time to time, newspapermen sought to obtain an opinion from Chairman Sumners as to what his committee intended to do. He gave no opinion. Other members of the committee were interviewed. They said nothing. Time marched on. It appeared that the Judiciary Committee and its chairman would maintain silence until the Senate had disposed of the Court issue one way or another and then act. Late in the afternoon of July 13, Hatton Sumners took the floor to make a speech. He was given an hour to speak. Word got around that he might talk on the Court issue. Strangely enough, without so much as a quorum call, the House membership in large part was on hand to listen. They were inordinately quiet. In his shrill whimsical way, Hatton Sumners began to talk. He talked of "horse sense". He talked of the need for "commonsense." He admonished the House of its responsibility in a critical hour. He talked of God. He indicated that the Almighty had a strange and mysterious way of intervening in human affairs. It was a great speech. As he finished the membership stood and gave him a great ovation. That was about four o'clock in the afternoon. Sixteen hours later, came the sad announcement of the death of Senator Joe Robinson, the Majority Leader. With it came confusion on the Court issue. With it came a complete overthrow of the parliamentary strategy set on foot by Senator Robinson to recess the Senate from day to day instead of adjourn so that opponents of the Court measure could speak but twice on the subject. With it came the loss of an administration vote. With it may come the disposition of the Court Plan and the adjournment of Congress. Was it unintended prophecy by Judge Sumners?

DEBATE OF THE CENTURY. For a time, it appeared as if the debate of the century on the proposal to enlarge the Supreme Court, would be interlined with choice personalities. The weather is hot, even though the Senate chamber is aircooled. Tempers seemed short and Senators appeared irritable. A substantial number were on the floor all the time. The galleries were constantly full and made a splendid audience. The first strategy of the Senate Majority Leader to prevent interruption of any Senator making a speech except to ask a question, nettled many Senators because a certain informality had always been exercised. What better stage setting then for such tilts as occurred between Senator Minton of Indiana and Senator Burke of Nebraska. Minton "If anybody has set up a despotism in this country, it is the 5 to 4 decisions that prevail in the Supreme Court...What are the rights of citizens? Who knows until Roberts makes up his mind? (Laughter)" Burke "The Senator declines to yield?" Minton "I will yield later on. The Senator's questions are quite involved and it takes a great deal of my time to get them straightened out." Burke "This would be a very simple question - one that the Senator could understand." Minton "If the Senator should propound it, I doubt if anyone could understand it." Guffey of Pa., Hatch of N.M., Logan of Ky., Wheeler of Montana all contributed their share of tartness and personal allusions. Then came McCarran of Nevada, one time member of the Supreme Court of that state to make a masterly effort. Then came O'Mahoney of Wyoming with a solid contribution. Then came Bailey of North Carolina, one time editor of a religious magazine and lawyer. He is soft spoken and regarded as one of the really profound lawyers of the Senate. The debate had steered from the waters of personality to where it should be - a high plane.