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THE CONGRESSIONAL FRONT.
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SIC TRANSIT GLORIA

A Maryland farmer plowing corn on the sandy expanses of the lower Patuxent River or a Maryland farmer hoeing tobacco in that same area might well look out from under a broad-brimmed straw hat on a warm day at the vessels riding anchor just a brief distance from shore and say "Sic transit gloria". Truly, it is a fleeting glory as he contemplates the Mount Vernon, the Monticello, the America, and the George Washington, all of which were German war vessels during World War and which were siezed by the U. S. in 1917. The Mount Vernon was once the Kronprinzessin Cecile. The Mount Vernon was once the Kaiser Wilhelm II. The George Washington once bore President Wilson to the peace conference. Many dough-boys came back on the America which was once the Vaterland. Their glory is done as they await the blow torch which will cut them into scrap metal if they are sold by the U. S. Maritime Commission. Ghosts of one war, their metal will be converted to use for other instrumentalities of war and so they will pass into memory.

THAT THEY MIGHT REMAIN DEAD.

That sounds like a paradoxical title. When something is dead, it might seem a bit singular that a hope is expressed that it remain dead. But wait until we explain. The President has two ways to veto a bill passed by Congress. The first is to send it back with an express veto in which he states his reasons for disapproving the bill. The second is by means of the so-called "pocket-veto". It gets it's name from the fact that the President can fail or neglect to send a bill back within 10 days after it has been presented to him for approval provided an adjournment of Congress before the 10 day period is up makes it impossible for him to send it back. In that case, the bill does not become law. Now a very interesting question arises. Do the words "adjournment of Congress" as stated in the Constitution mean sine die adjournment at the end of a two year period or does it also include the adjournment of a session of Congress? If it should not include the latter meaning, the effect would be that there are some 600 pocket vetoes of bills in the last 150 years which might be challenged in the Supreme Court and that by legal action some of those bills which have been heretofore regarded as dead, might be brought to life. Accordingly, Congress passed a resolution to the effect that the bills which have been pocket-vetoes at the end of a session of Congress which was not sine die adjournment of the whole Congress period should remain dead. Oddly enough, when that resolution was presented to the President, he vetoed it. It was then re-presented to Congress for action on the veto but the necessary two thirds vote to over-ride the veto was not obtained. Hence the President killed a bill to keep certain pocket-vetoes bills dead and Congress failed to ward off the death stab. Now it's a question of whether these measures are dead or not.

INVENTION MAY GIVE THE DEPRESSION A KICK IN THE PANTS.

Little has been heard recently of the activities of the so-called Temporary National Economic Committee of the Senate which has been investigating monpoly and monopolistic practices. This is in part due to the fact that Congress has been preoccupied with national defense problems. The Committee has however issued a number of reports and recommendations including one which calls for a revision of the patent laws of the country so that monpoly which results from close control of certain patent rights might be broken. It might be pointed out that in the year 1790, only 3 patents were issued by the U. S. Patent Office. In 1939, 49,080 patents were issued. Each year since the founding of the Republic has seen an increase in patents. It is testimony to our resourcefulness and ingenuity. In our collective ingenuity is bound up a certain economic hope that something will be found and developed to break the lingering depression. Forty years ago, the automobile did

job. Later came the radio and electrical devices. We now look forward to such items as the mechanical cotton picker, air conditioning, plastics, artificial fibres, synthetic rubber, prefabricated houses, television, gasoline produced from coal, motor fuel from farm products or steep-flight aircraft such as autogiros or helicopters to do the job.

WIRE TAPPING IS NOW LEGAL IN SOME CASES.

Back in Prohibition days when it was so difficult to get evidence with which to convict those who were violating the liquor laws, it became quite common to tap telephone wires and listen in on conversations in order to procure evidence. Wire-tapping seemed rather abhorrent to the American sense of sportsmanship but the Supreme Court sustained the practice in 1928 and said it was only a form of eaves-dropping and not in violation of the 4th amendment to the Constitution which relates to search and seizure. In 1934, when Congress passed the Federal Communication's Act, it included a provision which prohibited the intercepting of messages by radio, telephone or telegraph. When a case of wire tapping went to the high court, that tribunal ruled that the admission of evidence obtained by wire tapping should be barred. There the matter rested. But now comes a period of world conflict and Fifth Column activities and it was deemed essential to permit wire tapping and the introduction of such evidence in cases where sabotage, treason and conspiracy might interfere with national defense. Congress therefore lifted the ban on wire tapping and on evidence so gained in such cases and it will now be possible to prosecute cases involving the national defense by means of evidence tapped from a telephone conversation.

THAT WORD "AMORTIZE".

On August 10, 1940, War Secretary Stimson appeared before the Ways and Means Committee of the House of Representatives and said: "In June Congress made \$400,000,000 available to the Army for planes, engines and accessories but today, seven weeks later, we have been able to sign contracts for the construction of but 33 planes of the 4000 and more for which these appropriations have been made." How come, you might well ask. Well, let's look at that word "amortize" about which we hear so much. To build, weapons, planes, engines and other war materiel will require new plants and new machinery. These in turn will require the investment of hundreds of millions of dollars of private capital. Suppose, the money is invested, the plants are built for special war and defense purposes and the world situation becomes such that these plants will not be needed? If they are useful only for the manufacture of military equipment, they would then represent a dead loss to the private investors and stockholders whose money was used for that purpose. Now you might well suggest that the Federal Government should permit such industries to charge off these plants over a short period of time when they make their return to the Treasury for income taxes. That is both sensible and logical. But there's the rub. The Revenue Act now in effect would prevent such plants from charging off more than 10% of the investment in a single year. If, after three or four years, these plants were no longer used, the balance of the investment would be lost. Permitting the accumulation of a sinking fund over a period of years to charge off this investment is referred to as "amortizing the debt or investment." It is said that lack of a satisfactory amortization provision in the present law has slowed down the defense program and Congress is now giving it attention.