

THE CONGRESSIONAL FRONT
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WASHINGTON IS STILL WITH US.

It is now more than 143 years that George Washington retired from the Presidency and returned to his Virginia estates to watch the infant nation grow and develop strength. Yet he is still with us. His spirit and wisdom ever hover over this Republic. An examination of the Congressional Record, and particularly that portion which records the debates on highly controversial questions, will evidence that Washington is more frequently and more freely quoted on public questions than any other man who stamped his personality upon this nation. Where foreign affairs and international relationships are involved, Washington's farewell Address is still a source of comfort, inspiration and wisdom. One other simple fact records Washington's presence. This week, the 17,000,000 visitor ascended the monument erected to his memory. A number of people equal to 13% of our population has visited this shrine. It is amazing testimony. Appropriately enough, the 17th millionth visitor was a bride from Chicago on her honeymoon with a fine young husband - two Americans launching life's greatest adventure even as Washington launched the world's greatest nation.

ENLISTMENT DISPARITIES.

Just why more young men per capita should enlist from one state rather than from another is one of those unaccountable things which defies any convincing explanation. It may be the climate. It may be economic conditions. It may be tradition. It may be the nature of the people. But whatever it is, it is a curious fact. Recent enlistment figures indicates that for the period from January to June 1940, 45 young men out of every 10,000 of population in the State of North Carolina enlisted in the Army. In Illinois however, the figure was but 12 per 10,000 of population. It may be ascribed to geographical position but how would you then account for Kentucky which produced 42 per 10,000 of population. It might be industrial activity but how would one then account for the 26 per 10,000 that enlisted from the industrial state of Pennsylvania as against the 8 per 10,000 who enlisted from Michigan. It might be the presence of a large military post as in the case of Texas which produced 40 enlistments per 10,000 people but that fails to account for a state like Tennessee which produced 37. Senators and Representatives from states with high enlistment figures are quite aware of the fact and have repeatedly insisted that quota figures be written into the pending conscription bill so that a few states will not produce all the troops that may be called.

THE ANCIENT CUSTOM OF COMBAT.

Despite the vaneer of restraint which human kind has acquired by the civilizing process of many thousands of years, it still reverts to type occasionally and throws off that restraint by seeking to settle individual controversies by means of combat. The less elegant word would be by fist-fighting. Perhaps it's a mistaken sense of valor or personal prowess which comes to the fore but in any event it still happens. And it happens now and then among the otherwise sedate lawmakers. In the course of the debate on the conscription bill about 11: o'clock at night, a member of Congress from Ohio, having made a speech on the subject, returned to his seat beside a member from Kentucky. The Kentucky member arose and remarked that he "did not want to sit beside a traitor to my country." Traitor is rather a harsh and ungentlemanly word. A fist moved forward and met a resilient nose. Another fist moved forward and met another resilient nose. Fists flew freely. Then the sergeant-at-arms, whose duty it is to preserve order and decorum moved to the scene and ended the encounter. Congressional history records a number of physical encounters, the worst of which was probably the assault of one Senator upon another in the Senate chamber with a cane. Thus does statesmanship become explosive.

WORDS OF DESTINY.

Do you remember that bit of poetry which goes, "A knot can choke a felon into clay, A not can save him, spelled without a k!" How aptly it illustrates that a word, a phrase, a clause, a sentence, can embrace the destiny and welfare of men and nations. So often, the lawmakers write declarations of policy into legislation. Sometimes this is done to aid the courts in interpreting the intention of the Congress. Sometimes it is done to clarify national policy. Sometimes it is done to give strength to a law. But consider this paragraph in the bill now pending before Congress: "The Congress further declares that in a free society the obligations and privileges of military training and service should be shared generally in accordance with a fair and just system of selective compulsory military training and service." Ponder and read it several times. Reflect on it. That's a solemn declaration of policy by the Congress, if it should be approved. It does not mean for a year or five years but for all time. It does not limit that policy to periods of war or emergency but to peacetime as well. It sets a precedent for other Congresses to follow. It means what it says. It says that from now on, whether in peace or war, selective compulsory military training shall be a part of the American system. That's something!

ALIENS FOR SOLDIERS.

The conscription bill as written provides that every male citizen and every male alien residing in the U. S. or its possessions who has declared his intention to become a citizen between the ages of 21 and 45 shall be liable for training and service ... An amendment was offered to strike out the words "who has declared his intention to become a citizen" The provision then read that every male citizen and male alien would be liable for military training and service. The amendment failed of adoption but raised a most interesting question. Suppose that aliens were liable for military training service. If he is still an alien, he actually owes allegiance to another country. Yet, he could not enter the army without taking the oath of allegiance to the United States. How could he owe allegiance to two different countries at one and the same time. Would the simple act of entering the army and taking the oath operate to cancel his allegiance to a foreign land? If so, present laws relating to naturalization would have to be amended. If not, to what extent could an alien, owing allegiance to a foreign nation be entrusted with military knowledge and secrets of our country without inviting disaster. While the proposal to conscript aliens has much apparent appeal, it is fraught with difficulty and danger.