How accurately do newspaper columnists report happenings in Washington? Most of them report with substantial accuracy. Now and then, a story appears which digresses from truth and stirs the ire of public officials. Recently, a widely syndicated column carried "the inside story of how the career boys (in the State Department) nearly put over a $100,000,000 credit to Fascist Spain..." The story was suggested to the attention of the Secretary of State and stirred him to make the following statement: "The ... article is wholly inaccurate, is a complete misrepresentation; all the earmarks and every other phase that is visible would indicate it to be a deliberate misrepresentation. It is very disagreeable when we are all so hopelessly overwhelmed with emergency matters to have an article out of whole cloth thrown into our faces and sent out over the nation with the representation that it is based on actual knowledge."

THE LAST DAY OF THE 76th CONGRESS.

Under the Constitution, the 77th Congress which was elected in November 1940, came into official session on January 3rd. Had the preceding Congress failed to adjourn before that time, it would by operation of law have come to an end at midnight on January 2nd. However, the 76th Congress adjourned sine die at 1:30 p.m. on January 2nd. The last day was given over to speeches, felicitations, and announcements. A paragraph from a one-minute speech by Representative Cox of Georgia is rather curious. Here it is. "I grant you that pursuing the course outlined by the President may probably lead us into war and that war would probably bankrupt the nation and possibly mean our coming out in some form of totalitarian state, but I get comfort out of the thought that in the building of a great Army, we are creating a stabilizing influence that will bring us through as a free people and that we will survive as a Democracy....The President could have said a great deal more and all of which I would have approved." Read that quoted language again!

THE LAW OF DIMINISHING RETURNS.

Long ago, economists gave expression to what is known as the Law of Diminishing Returns. In effect, it simply means that a policy or course of conduct when carried too far defeats its own purpose and begins to diminish in effect. Now where is this truism better exemplified than in the recent experience in Virginia. In early 1940, when Congress increased the federal tax on alcoholic beverages by 75¢ per gallon, the State of Virginia, where liquor is sold thro a system of state-owned stores increased the state tax by 10%. This tax has been in effect since July 1, 1940. What was the effect of this double-header tax. A look at the record for the four months ending Oct. 31, 1940 shows that the sale of liquor in Virginia in that period decreased by 78,356 bottles or 139,000 gallons. An investigation by the Virginia Alcoholic Beverage Commission also indicates that this decrease in consumption from state-stores does not mean that people have become more temperate but that they have returned to the bootleg fraternity for their liquor. Thus, while the dollar volume of liquor sales in Virginia increased, the state lost $27,000 in revenue for the first four months of this added tax. Here is but another example of the old truism that taxes beyond a certain point become an incentive for evasion.
INAUGURATION.

Ten days hence, Franklin D. Roosevelt will be whisked to Capitol Hill in an automobile to receive the oath of office for the third time, deliver his inaugural address to the throng that will be assembled in the Capitol plaza and then ride down Pennsylvania Avenue, flanked by infantry, cavalry, artillery, truck corps, machine gun units, and other colorful contingents while planes zoom overhead. It will be a glamorous display. It was not always thus. George Washington's first inaugural in New York City on April 30, 1789 was a very quiet affair and not until his second inaugural did he permit himself a coach drawn by six white horses. John Adams was quietly inaugurated in the chamber of the House of Representatives in Philadelphia. Jefferson was the first President to be inducted into office in Washington, D.C. With a friend or two, he sauntered from his boarding house on Capitol Hill for the occasion and then returned to his hostelry for a 2:00 o'clock luncheon. On his second inaugural, Jefferson's coach got stuck in the mud somewhere between Monticello and Washington and he made his way up Pennsylvania Avenue on horseback. Monroe was the first outgoing President to ride with John Quincy Adams as the incoming President. Adams however was so fed up with Presidential pressure that when Jackson was inaugurated, Adams failed to appear and rode along the Potomac on horseback in solitary splendor. But the inaugural on Jan. 20, 1941 will be a massive, colorful affair.