THE CONGRESSIONAL FRONT
By Congressman Everett M. Dirksen
16th Ill. District

MADAME CHIANG FAI SHEK.
The galleries were filled. Five thousand requests for tickets were de-
nied. Every member was on the floor. There was eager expectancy. A
distinguished visitor was soon to appear. Movie and press cameras were
located in the galleries. Special bright lights were on. The House
chamber seemed like the world's stage. The Speaker gavelled for order
and then announced a committee of four to escort the visitor to the
Speaker's rostrum. There was a brief recess as the committee retired.
The hard walls echoed the incessant hub-bub of conversation and noise.
The Speaker suddenly rapped for order. The Committee of four walked
down the center aisle accompanied by the distinguished guest. Necks
craned to see her. She seemed so small. Then an ovation—a sustained
salvo of applause. It subsided. She shook hands with the Speaker. She
faced that audience of Congressmen and visitors. There was deafening
applause. It continued a long time. Each person appraised her. The
tight-fitting oriental dress, with long skirt, the high collar, shimmer-
ing hair, the lovely olive face a thrusting personality, a countenance
whor was deeply written the trials and tribulations of her country, a
face with courage and determination. "Members of the House of Repre-
sentatives," began the Speaker; "I have the honor and the privilege of
presenting Madame Chiang Kai Shok." Deafening applause. With perfect
poise, she acknowledged the introduction with a slight bow and a smile.
It was the wistful smile that mirrored the anguish of a nation despoiled
and partially destroyed by 7 years of conflict. "Mr. Speaker..." she
began. The bright lights were disturbing. The Speaker ordered them
tingued. "Members of the House of Representatives." Excellent
articulation. A firm voice. Words so precisely rounded. Members wore
enthralled. Occasionally she used a tense gesture for emphasis. Her
compliments to America and American troops were so gracious. As she
spoke of under-rating Japanese strength, her body tensed and the voice
was filled with emotion. At the end of her address, a slow bow to the
Speaker. Suddenly, thunderous applause. She smiled and bowed to the
membership, left the rostrum and was escorted from the Chamber.
Madame Chiang had come and conquered.

WAR AND THE WANT-AD COLUMNS.
The armed services, the defense plants, and government positions have
siphoned men and women from business and industry, leaving an acute
shortage which stores, shops, factories, and other enterprises seek to
fill by want-ads. In a single Sunday edition in the nation's capital
more than 700 want-ads have appeared under "Help Wanted." It includes
clerks, salesmen, optometrists, elevator operators, janitors, telephone
operators, bus and street car operators, milliners, domestics, mechanics,
credit men, accountants, pressers, stock boys, checkers, and what not.
Even the British Purchasing Mission finds it necessary to
advertise for clerks, typists, stenographers, and other necessary help.
Such is the impact of war.

ABSENTEEISM AND PROHIBITION.
"Absenteeism" has become a common word recently. It refers to absence
from work in defense plants, thereby slowing down production. Several
bills have been introduced in Congress to deal with this condition,
notably that of Representative Johnson of Texas which would provide
that in the case of absentees who are of draft age, their unjustified
absence from work would be cause for having their names certified to a
draft board. Now comes Congressman Joseph Raleigh Bryson of South Car-
olina with a bill to prohibit the manufacture, transportation, and sale
of intoxicants for the duration on the ground that intoxicating bever-
ages contribute to absenteeism.

GREATNESS IN HUMILITY.
Steve Vasilakos is gone. He was a humble peanut vendor and a great man.
For a quarter of a century, Steve Vasilakos sold peanuts from a pushcart
at the White House corner. Clerks and statesmen, White House dignita-
ties, and visiting soldiers bought peanuts from his cart, visited with
him, and discovered in this humble person, a great spirit with two sons
in the Greek Army. His ambition to become an American citizen was re-
alized two years ago. From his meager funds, he bought bonds generously,
aided people in distress, and became a national fixture. Last week,
he passed on. Only a peanut vendor but a great man.

MARS AND THE STORK.
In December 1938 and also in 1939, reports from 5 large cities showed
400 births for the month. In December 1942, the same cities showed 720
births. War inspires or hastens marriages, increases births. It's a
strange relationship between the God of War and the Stork. This phe-
omenon has been true for generations.