WHERE DO WE STOP? Once more the nations of the world are mad with the hysterics of anticipated war. Once more the armament race is under way. Once more, nations will seek to outdo each other in the matter of military, naval, and aerial establishments. For 60 countries, the cost of national defense expenditures as indicated by their 1937 budgets will be nearly fourteen thousand million dollars. Ninety per cent of that will be spent by the seven loading nations U.S., Great Britain, France, Germany, Italy, Russia and Japan. Such figures stagger us no more. We're immune to billions. But here is another way of putting it that may be more impressive. In the U.S., an equivalent of 18% of the 1936 cash revenues of government will go to national defense in 1937; in Great Britain it will be 46% of cash revenues; in France 29% in Germany 73%; in Italy 27%; in Japan 60% in Russia 26%. Where will such madness stop?

THE IDES OF MARCH. If you’ve ever read Shakespeare’s “Julius Caesar” you will remember that the fortune teller or soothsayer told Caesar to beware the Ides of March. As we remember, the Ides are a bracket of days around the 15th of the Month. When that time arrived, Caesar arose in the morning, presumably shaved himself, ate a hearty breakfast of bacon and eggs and then amusingly observed, “The Ides of March have come.” To which the old star gazer replied, “But not gone.” We remember our own Ides of March because the 15th is the day to reckon with your Uncle Sam’s income tax. And having learned to our own innate glee that there is no tax to pay, we dance a Sailor’s Hornpipe, joyfully sing “Muldoon Was A Solid Man” and dismiss the matter until next year when Uncle Sam again sends us one of his complicated tax blanks. Perhaps a few figures may divert us of our glee. For the fiscal year 1936 (ending June 30, 1936) 4,473,426 persons filed income tax returns as required by law. Of this number, 3,992,627 reported incomes of less than $5000. Of this number, 3,992,627, there were 2,399,833 who had enough exemptions and deductions so they did not need to pay a tax. The remaining 1,592,794 paid an average tax of $28. Now, if so many millions do not pay income tax, the query is, where does Uncle Sam get the money with which to do business and pay the increasing costs of government? The answer is “Everybody.” The budget for 1938 exclusive of relief money and exclusive of requirements for new legislation such as crop insurance, housing, farm tenancy legislation and the like calls for more than six billions. Estimated receipts will be 7½ billion. Three and a third billion of this comes from income taxes and three quarters of a billion from Social Security taxes. It’s in the 2½ billion from tobacco, liquor, sales taxes and others that the Federal Government reaches into the pockets of the citizens. They are added to the cost of things you buy but you don’t see them. That’s why they are called “hidden taxes.” Because of hidden taxes, it is difficult to make people tax conscious.

THE BORAH PROPOSAL. Senator Borah has offered a Resolution to repeal the 14th article of amendment to the Constitution and the adoption of a revised amendment which would leave out the second sentence of the Section of the present amendment. That sentence reads as follows: “But when the right to vote at any election for President and Vice President of the United States, Representatives in Congress, the executive and judicial officers of a state, or the members of the legislature thereof, is denied to any of the male inhabitants of such State, being 21 years of age, and citizens of the United States, or in any way abridged except for participation in rebellion or other crime, the basis of representation therein shall be reduced in the proportion which the number of such male citizens bears to the whole number of male citizens twenty one years of age in such State.” Each state is entitled to one member of Congress for each 279,712 persons or major fraction of that number. To find the number of members therefore to which each state is entitled, divide the population by the above number. Accordingly, Illinois has 27, Idaho (Senator Borah’s home state) 6, South Carolina has 6 and so on. Now suppose a State, either by law, or by intimidation should prevent some of its citizens over 21 from voting as sometimes obtains in southern states where negroes are deprived of the right to vote. The above section of the Constitution provides that the basis of representation shall be reduced. If the negroes who were prevented from voting was substantial, very likely some states would have fewer members of Congress. Here’s an example. By the 1930 census, Idaho had a population of 437,662. In the first Congressional district of Idaho, with a population of 189,576, a total vote of 68,192 was cast in 1934. In the first district of South Carolina with a population of 260,439, only 4,563 votes were cast. In the second district of South Carolina with a population of 335,888, only 3,567 votes were cast. The other districts were in approximately the same proportion. What has happened is that only a very small proportion of the eligible voters actually voted. Why? If negroes are not actually prevented from voting, certainly they are not encouraged to do so. Hence the small total vote. But, southern states have never had their representation in Congress reduced as a result. If this provision were repealed, it would virtually hand the whole question of representation over to the states and make permanent, the disfranchisement of negroes in those states. Growth of negro strength and political consciousness in northern and grand border states causes many of them to feel that someday, this provision in the 14th amendment can be enforced and therefore they do not want it eliminated. They therefore voted upon the Borah proposal.
ONE HUNDRED YEARS AGO. Does history repeat itself as the expression goes or does it merely run in parallels with new sets of facts to fit the problems. No matter what the answer, it may be interesting to observe that 100 years ago when Martin Van Buren was in the White House, Congress was memorialized to enter into reciprocal trade with Canada and France (2) Wall Street was alarmed about the Administration's fiscal policy (3) a New York Judge urged a safety campaign after a pedestrian had been run down by a carriage drawn by horses (4) Spain was torn by civil war and her financial condition was desperate (5) England refused to interfere in the Spanish Civil War. (6) a Mr. Mason of London after successfully crossing the English Channel in a balloon was proposing a trans-atlantic flight (7) England was having an epidemic of influenza. Compare with today. (1) Recently Congress extended the authority of the President to enter into reciprocal trade agreements (2) Financiers are a bit alarmed about the possibilities of inflation (3) Safety campaigns are on everywhere to reduce motor car fatalities (4) Spain is torn by civil strife (5) England uncertain about interfering in Spanish domestic troubles (6) Trans-Atlantic flights on regular schedules now authorized by Congress (7) Influenza unusually wide-spread this winter. (What do you make of this Sherlock?)

SILK PURSES AND SOWS EARS. It occurs to us that one William Shakespeare once delivered himself of the poetic opinion that you could not make a silk purse out of a sow's ear but we're not so sure. Recently, Dr. Reed, head of the Bureau of Dairy Industry appeared before a Committee of Congress and told of a substance called lanatol. Lanatol is a substance made from casein. Every farmer knows and can tell you about casein. Now it seems they've discovered a way to treat casein with acids and other substances to produce lanatol. Lanatol is then spun into fibre that is in some respects like rayon or wool. From the lanatol fibre so obtained, it is possible to weave articles of clothing and apparel. We therefore submit that if the crumbly substance derived from milk and known as casein can be treated to make lanatol and lanatol can be transformed into yarn and this yarn can be woven into purses and other gadgets, who knows but one day we shall prove that Bill Shakespeare was only being poetic rather than accurate.

WOOD BURNING ENGINES. Do you remember the old sketches which showed the early locomotives of this country as wood-burning engines which had to stop along the way now and then and take on a fresh supply of wood? And do you remember the pictures of the early steamboats which burned wood? As we remember, it was one of these old steamers which stopped along the Mississippi River during the Civil War to take on an extra supply of wood for which the skipper wanted to pay in Confederate Money; and when asked what the price of the wood would be, received the answer "Cord for Cord." Now, wouldn't it be a bit funny if automobiles should come back to the wood burning stage. The very suggestion provokes a laugh. But don't laugh too soon. It is definitely known that in Germany, several thousand motorcars and tractors are now in operation which burn wood instead of gasoline. Here's how it works. The engine contains a cylinder with a screw top and fan device at the bottom. You throw wood blocks into the cylinder. They are ignited. The fan serves to blow the gases which come from the burning wood into a carburetor and from there into the motor cylinders. The wood produces a monoxide gas. These wood burning motors develop about the same horsepower as hydro-carbon gasoline engines and are extremely cheap to operate. Incentive for perfecting a wood burning motor for German use is the high price of gasoline. Sounds crazy but it's true and who knows what will come next.

AGRICULTURAL ODDITIES. Borax (borax to your grocer) when properly applied around the base of apple trees is definitely known to check dry rot. If any apple growers are interested, the Bureau of Plant Industry, Department of Agriculture will tell you about it. Experiments are still made with golden rod in thousands of varieties in the hope of producing rubber therefrom. When Thomas Edison passed away, he handed out many thousands of golden rod species which he had collected from all over the world and with which he experimented to produce rubber. Pine trees contain a substance known as lignin from which it is hoped rubber might be produced in commercial quantities at reasonable prices.