COMMENCEMENT.

It's a rather singular word. To commence is to begin. Life is but a series of beginnings. Birth. Childhood. Grammar school. High School. College. Life. This is but preliminary to what we want to say. June will see 1,250,000 young Americans graduating from high schools and 177,000 graduating from colleges. Nearly 14 million. What an event!

SHALL IT BE REPEALED?

Exactly 4 minutes after the hour of noon on November 4, 1939, the President approved a piece of legislation passed by Congress which was to be known as the "Neutrality Act of 1939." It was passed to replace the Act of May 1, 1937. The preamble to the Act of 1939 which is now in effect begins in this fashion: "Whereas the United States, desiring to preserve its neutrality in wars between foreign states and desiring also to avoid involvement therein." Those words solemnly set forth the policy of this country. They constitute a declaration by Congress and approved by the President. The salient provisions of the Act are as follows: When it is found that a state of war exists between two or more nations, and our security peace and protection require it, the President shall issue a proclamation to that effect. Thereafter, no American vessel shall carry cargo or passengers to a country at war. Other vessels shall not carry cargo unless all American interest in such cargo has first been terminated. (This is the cash and carry provision.) Once the President has issued a proclamation, he may then define combat areas and no American citizen or vessel shall go through such areas. Citizens shall not travel on the vessels of states at war. After the President's proclamation, American merchant vessels shall not be armed except for purposes of discipline and no person in this country shall enter into financial transaction with nations at war.

This, in simple outline is the gist of the neutrality act. It is now proposed that this act be repealed. Secretaries Knox and Stimson have suggested it's repeal. Congress alone can repeal this act. If such a proposal is made, it would provoke a tremendous legislative battle.

WORLD CONFLICT FOR ENERGY.

The Reconstruction Finance Corporation has created a subsidiary organization known as Defense Supplies Corporation, which is devoting itself to the task of acquiring a reserve supply of materials which are regarded as critical and strategic. As a defense move, this agency is financing the purchase of 7 1/2 million barrels of high-test aviation gasoline. All of which leads us to observe that in it's simplest terms, world conflict today is a battle for energy. That would scarcely get a rise out of a lazy person. But look at the realities. Energy means power, force, vigor. Food sustains life and develops human energy. Japan's acquisition of Manchuria where the soybean thrives, is a thrust for food energy. The battle of the North Atlantic is in part a battle to prevent food-energy from being shut off. The longing eyes cast at the wheat fields of the Ukraine in Russia is an evaluation of the food-energy latent in those fields. The interest in South America lies in part in the food-energy stored up in it's vast herds of cattle, it's corn fields and wheat fields. Now look at the mechanical side. What are the concern-spots at the present moment. One might mention the Dutch East Indies, Rumania, Iraq, Iran, the Latin-American countries...
closest to the Panama Canal. What is there? You guessed it. Petroleum! Petroleum is energy for planes, naval vessels, tanks, armored cars and virtually every type of military and naval equipment. World's largest petroleum producers in order of volume are U.S., Russia, Venezuela, Iran, Dutch East Indies, Rumania, Mexico, Colombia, Iraq, Trinidad, Argentina. These are the spots where Nature deposited the most liquid energy. Here are the concern-spots.

BANK NOTES.

We really don't mean bank notes which can be cashed but notes or observations on banks and banking. In the last year, about 100 banks have disappeared. Some of them just sort of folded up their tents and silently moved away and others were merged with existing banks. We now have 10,215 fewer banks than we had in 1929. But the odd thing about it is the fewer banks we have, the more money they have on deposit. In 1929, the 25,110 banks had deposits close to $4 billion. Now, the 14,895 banks still doing business have $65 billions on deposit. While 10,215 banks have moved into oblivion in 12 years, deposits have increased $11 billion. But total loans and investments are still $4 billion less than in 1929. We were just about to draw a conclusion from all this but we'll let you do it.

CONTROL OF THE MARITIME INDUSTRY

If and when H. R. 4700 becomes law complete control over all phases of the Maritime industry will be in the hands of the U.S. Maritime Commission. This proposal employs a most ingenious technique. It recites that the facilities for loading, unloading and storing ship cargoes, the use of drydock facilities, for the repairing facilities and the provisioning of vessels with fuel or coal will depend for priority upon whether a vessel holds a warrant issued by the Maritime Commission. The issuance of a warrant will be contingent upon whether such vessel complies with the regulations of the Commission as to the type of trade in which such vessels shall be employed, the voyages which it shall undertake, the class of cargo or passengers to be carried, the rates to be charged and such other conditions as the Commission may impose. Reduced to plain language this means that a vessel can obtain a warrant for the use of necessary loading and unloading and fueling provisions only on compliance with Commission regulations so that the Commission will have power to control the routes on which vessels may travel, the kind of cargo they may carry and the rates which they may charge. This not only reposes complete control over all merchant ships in the Maritime industry but will make it possible for the Commission to compel a vessel to operate on a certain route which may carry it into a danger zone. A vessel is not compelled to obtain a warrant but if it fails to do so, it may have a very difficult time in loading and unloading cargo and in securing fuel. Thus by indirect regulation does the merchant fleet come under close control of the Government.