The Congressional Front
By Congressman Everett M. Dirksen
16th District.

Call for a Few Lawyers.

While the King and Queen were sojourning at the White House, Congress-
man Sweeney of Ohio sent His Majesty a telegram reminding him that
Britain owes the U. S. five billions on the war debt and asking him
whether he proposed to do anything about it. Thereupon the question
was raised whether the Congressman had not violated the Logan Act
which made him subject to fine and imprisonment. What is the Logan
Act, you ask? Well, it's been on the books for about 140 years.
President John Adams had sent a 3-man Commission to France in 1798
to attempt a settlement of French and American claims. The Commiss-
ion failed in its purpose, so a Quaker named Logan armed himself
with letters of introduction from Thomas Jefferson and other notables
of the day and set out for France to see what he could do about the
matter. When Logan returned, he was not only coldly received but
regarded as a meddler in official governmental affairs and as a re-
result, the Logan Act was passed forbidding citizens to seek to influence
the conduct of foreign affairs without official permission from the
government. The penalty is a $5,000 fine and three years in prison.
Congressman Sweeney is not greatly disturbed about the matter.

Roving Amendments to the Constitution

One would believe that after 150 years under the Constitution with
the thousands of interpretations which have been made by the courts
that every possible controversy has been covered in some way or other.
Yet, look at this situation. Fifteen years ago, Congress passed a
resolution providing that the Constitution should be amended to out-
law Child Labor. As provided in the Constitution, this resolution
was submitted to the 48 states for ratification. To make it valid
as an amendment, requires that 36 states, either through their legis-
latures or through conventions specially called for the purpose, must
ratify that resolution. Now, this resolution is still roving about
in the legislative halls of the states. Some states ratified it and
later withdrew that ratification. Other states voted to approve it
and then later ratified it. But in these 15 years, the amendment
has failed to command ratification by three-fourths of the states.
This raises an interesting question: How long can this proposal con-
tinue to bounce around among the legislatures? Recently the Supreme
Court ruled that the amendment is still pending before the legisla-
tures and indicated that it is for Congress to say how long it may
reasonably be left open for ratification. The Constitution is silent
on this point. It provides the process for amending the Constitution
but devises no method for calling an amendment back. And all this
after 150 years under that celebrated document.

Rich States, Poor States, Beggar, Thief

The State of Mississippi pays an average old-age pension of $7.22.
Half of this, or $3.61, is paid by Uncle Sam. On the ground that
Mississippi and some other states are "poor states" a group of Con-
gressmen from such states devised an amendment to the Social Security
Bill, which provided that the Federal Government put up $4 for every
dollar put up by the states in paying pensions. Under such a provision, the Mississippi legislature could raise its pension to $5 and receive $20 from Uncle Sam, making a total of $25. The top limit would be $40. This amendment was calculated to cost anywhere from one-half to a billion dollars per year and had great appeal for the members from the "poor states" because they sensed an opportunity to make the rich states pay the bill. You see, these pensions are paid out of general appropriations and the money comes from general revenues and taxes. That would mean that the states paying the most taxes would foot the bill for those which pay but a small amount to the revenue of the government. The contest between rich and poor states is growing but in this instance the amendment was defeated by 174 to 97. The bill must still go through the Senate and it will be interesting to see what Senators from "poor states" will do.

WHO OWNS THE SOUTH POLE

In 1820, an American named Palmer first discovered Antarctica. In 1840, Captain Wilkes of the U. S. Navy made another exploration into that cold and forbidding area. Palmer Land is only 575 nautical miles from the tip of South America and may or may not come within the scope of the Monroe Doctrine under which we have discouraged foreign colonization on this continent. But in recent years, other nations have been sending expeditions down there to investigate the resources of that area. It is reported that the waters are rich in whales. A seam of coal which is estimated as sufficient to supply our coal needs for 100 years crops out at the surface within 300 miles of the South Pole. It is believed, also, that oil underlies the thick ice-cap at the Pole. If this be true, who owns this area and what rights do we have down there? We don't know and so the State Department and the Department of Interior are asking for $340,000 to send a survey expedition into that area to preserve and announce our rights to the world. Thus does the world shrink.

UNCLE SAM TAKES TO THE STAGE

The Federal Theatre Project has expended twelve or thirteen millions of dollars in staging plays to provide work for unemployed actors and actresses. The whole project has been continuously under fire and by a vote of 192 to 56, Congress decided to abandon this field of endeavor. We submit just a few titles of plays that have been produced from 1935 to 1939: A New Deal for Mary; The Mayor and the Manicure; A New Kind of Love; Up in Mabel's Room; A Boudoir Diplomat; Correspondent Unknown; Cheating Husbands; Companionate Maggie; Did Adam Sin; Go Easy, Mabel; Just a Love Nest; Lend Me Your Husband; Love 'Em and Leave 'Em; Mary's Other Husband; Mother Goose Goes to Town. Do you believe these have a cultural value and that millions of public funds should be spent for their production?

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