THE CONGRESSIONAL FRONT
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With the close of the first session of the 76th Congress, the Congressional Front follows it's usual custom of suspending until the reconvening of Congress of the 3rd day of January 1940. This marks the 8th session of the Front. From small beginnings, it has expanded in use until it has reached all sections of Illinois and has been generously used in a number of other states. We have noted with gratitude and humility that during the last session, many items in the Front have been used editorially or as the foundation for editorial matter. To editors and publishers we express our profound thanks for the generous way in which they have accorded space to this column. To the readers, we express the hope that it may have proved informative and interesting and taken them into those intriguing bypaths which are not always explored by the columnists and writers. To all, we say hail and farewell until January.

APPRAISAL

Perhaps it would not be amiss in this final issue of the Congressional Front to essay a brief appraisal of the Congress which just closed. In the ten days which have elapsed since adjournment, there has already been opportunity to evaluate the work done and the things left undone. Columnists have written copiously on the subject, attempting to explain the change of heart during the present session and to interpret the reasons why certain measures were defeated and why Congress refused to even consider other measures such as the Spend-Lend and Housing Bills. Was this action taken for political reasons? Does Congress distrust the President? Did it seek to thwart the President irrespective of the merit of such legislation? Have minority groups lost their influence? Was this action taken in anticipation of the campaign of 1940? These and many other questions have been asked in seeking to divine the reason for the sudden assertiveness and independence of the legislative branch of the government but perhaps it indicates an effort to find too much mystery where none exists. Instead of dispelling the fog, an effort should be made to dispel the mystery by suggesting that Congress is after all but a cross-section of the people of this country, possessed of the same impulses, same apprehensions, same doubts, same fears, and reacts individually and collectively as any other normal and reasonable group would do.

NEUTRALITY

Consider it's rebuff of the President on neutrality and his effort to secure repeal of the provision in existing law which embargoes the shipment of arms and munitions. The world is a light with the hysteria of war and conquest. The President's speeches and statements have given some hint of his sympathies in the conflict of world ideas. Generally speaking, the Congress was somewhat alarmed at the prospect that a mistaken word or act, no matter with what high faith it might be said or done, might lead us into conflict again. A majority felt that since Congress was the war-making agency of this nation, that power should not be surrendered and that if there was a tendency on the part of the Chief Executive to meddle in the power politics of the world, his hands should be tied. The membership was not so naive as to believe that peace could be assured or war averted by simple legislative enactment. It did believe however that by eliminating the frictions which lead to war, it was
following a course which gave the greatest assurances of continual peace. That and little more was the mystery behind the refusal to repeal the arms embargo in the event of war.

HOUSING

The abrupt and summary way in which Congress refused to consider the Housing Bill at this session must not be interpreted as opposition to a housing program as much nor as a petty effort to throw the President's program overboard. In fact it is reasonably certain that Congress would give approval to a housing program which is sound and effective and which would make some definite contribution toward solving the problem of unemployment in the construction industry. The last few years have witnessed a variety of housing activities, ranging from the unsuccessful subsistence homestead projects such as the one at Arthurdale, West Virginia, to the large scale housing and slum-clearance efforts carried on in many large cities of the country. Finally, all direct housing activities were centered in the United States Housing Authority and it was given 800 millions with which to make loans to public housing bodies in the various states and 26 millions with which to make annual contributions. When the housing bill came on for action, Congress took a look at the record and noted that while the available funds had been committed and earmarked, very little tangible work had been done and very few jobs provided. On the basis of the record, it of course did not consider this measure. The reason is simple enough. Since 1933, we have been following the formula of John Maynard Keynes, the English economist, who stated that low interest rates, elimination of tax inequalities, and a public works program was the key to recovery. The theory was to continue public spending until private spending caught up. Pursuant to that theory, about 20 billion dollars has been expended in one form or another and the national debt has increased until it is estimated at 44½ billions by June 30, 1940. In the face of this expenditure, the Administrator of the WPA appeared before the Appropriations Committee of Congress with tables and data to show that in April of 1939 there were more persons and households on relief than there were in April of 1933. In view of such astronomical spending and such meagre inroads upon the problem of unemployment and relief, what could be more normal and devoid of mystery than that there should be a re-examination of the theory under which those expenditures were made, before another 2½ billions of lending power was authorized. Congress has been generous with the public purse in order to find a solution for the vexing problems of relief and unemployment. It shared the President's hope that private spending would catch on and that venture capital would flow into the arteries of trade and industry. In strict fact, the volume of investment in new enterprises in 1938 was substantially below that of 1937 and only 10% of such investment in the peak days of 1929. So, without mystery, without politics, without animus or spleen, Members of Congress individually and collectively have become convinced that the country should take its bearings and see if it is off the course or travelling in the wrong direction, before venturing much further in the same direction. We believe that such a course represents nothing more than prudent navigation of the Ship of State.