

THE STATE OF THE UNION

THE LONE STAR SPIRIT STILL LIVES

By J. TRAVELSTEAD

Del Rio, Texas

THAT the spirit of the Lone Star Republic of Texas is not dead is becoming increasingly evident. More Texans are inclined to believe that Texas would have been more powerful and in better shape in nearly every respect if she had never joined the American Union.

Had Texas not joined the Union she would more than likely have kept out of the Civil War, and would not have been burdened with the enormous debt and waste caused by it. Since much of the land across the Rio Grande is still virgin soil and millions of square miles almost uninhabited, there are reasons to believe that the Republic would have annexed a great deal more territory that is rich in minerals and oil and also excellent farming land.

Following the Civil War there should have been twenty-five years of unparalleled prosperity. Plenty of cheap labor would have been available, and since the world was short of cotton, Texas would have become a great export nation of this commodity. And in recent years, as everybody knows, the largest oil fields in America have been discovered in Texas.

Texas would have been powerful and wealthy enough in 1918 to have kept out of the war to save the Democratic party. Again the Republic would have become a great export nation. There are two ports that are being developed—Houston and Galveston.

There would have been no need for a tariff, as the Republic would have been an export nation and could have lived isolated from the remainder of the world, since the State is a great livestock center, has important oil fields, millions of acres of rich land that is sparsely inhabited, and it produces nearly all kinds of foodstuff in addition to her cotton crop.

The Republic would have been a compact nation, and though no new territory had been added, would still contain more square miles than Germany. Some of the counties in West Texas are larger than many of the smaller Eastern States.

Texas is agriculturally independent. There were 30,774 bales of cotton produced in 1848, and by 1860 this had increased to 421,463. In the year 1932 the total production was 4,445,000 bales, while the total for the United States was 13,001,508. Texas' banner cotton year was in 1931 when 5,320,000 bales were produced. Only an inappreciable percentage of this is consumed within the boundaries of the State. During the World War the price went to 40 cents a pound. If Texas had not been in the war this alone would have made her a rich empire. There are 254 counties in Texas and all of them produce cotton except 16; however, the bulk of the commodity is produced in a few counties. Twenty-five counties furnished 38.2% of the cotton in 1932.

In the same year Texas produced 312,478,000 barrels of oil, 42 gallons to the barrel. The remainder of the United States furnished 448,896,000 barrels.

In 1932 the total cash on Texas farm

products was \$288,068,000. This was exceeded by only one other State—California—with her \$375,525,000 cash income of farm crops.

Ninety per cent of the mohair goats in the United States are pastured on the Edwards Plateau, made up of a few West Texas counties. Efforts to get automobile manufacturers to use more mohair in upholsteryings occupy much of the time of the goat men of Texas. Texas furnishes 10% of the cattle of the United States, the figures for 1932 showing that the State raised 6,602,000 of the 65,129,000 head. There are over 7,000,000 sheep in Texas, and other livestock is a major industry in a large part of the State.

And now we come to the one mineral that keeps Texas politicians awake at night—"scandals in Sulphur." Eighty-five per cent of the world's sulphur supply is produced in four or five South Texas counties. The matter of how much taxes the sulphur interests can pay causes big fights in the legislature. Several men have run for the legislature on the platform of assessing more taxes against sulphur to be used in maintaining the public school system—an institution that has almost collapsed the last few years. Part of the cigarette tax is used for schools, but the enormous bond issues that the boosters and promoters saddled on the State in the middle twenties consume more money than the downtrodden taxpayer can furnish. There are also potash, salt, iron, gold, asphalt and other minerals in the State.

But with all of this vast production and natural resources, Texas ranks thirty-sixth to thirty-eighth educationally among the States.

The Republic had high educational aspirations. On January 26, 1839, President Mirabeau Lamar appropriated three

leagues of land (13,285 acres) to found a primary school or academy, and 50 leagues (221,420 acres) were set aside as an endowment for two colleges or universities.

The Constitution did not allow the President to succeed himself. He served three years. The first Congress convened at Columbia on October 3, 1836. It was made up of fourteen senators and twenty-nine representatives, and the President was assisted by secretaries of state, treasury, war, navy, attorney-general and post-master-general. Many European nations recognized the young Republic, the first being France, which recognition occurred on September 25, 1839.

Recently George B. Terrell, an old-line Texas Democrat, made his last stand in the House in Washington. "I would rather return to Texas," he told his colleagues, "and live under our Lone Star flag as an independent republic than to become a step-child of a Soviet Union, which we are fast approaching."

Alone, Texas could have solved the problem of human bondage in her territory, as well as some modern problems, without war and without the surrender of personal rights. The two C's, cotton and cattle, just about sum up the work-a-day history of Texas prior to the coming of oil. In the eastern half of the State, there was cotton; in the western half, cattle, and later sheep and goats. In the cotton-growing area slavery flourished; in the cattle country there was a type of peonage.

The problem of whether the slave or the peon, or neither, would survive in Texas would have been settled in an economic revolution, not in civil strife.

Granting that Texas might not have done away with slavery if left to her own devices, it is conceivable that the condition of her farm and ranch workers today

would have been better had the institution of slavery survived. In the livestock territory the ranch workers still are indentured under the system of the *avanse*. In the cotton country, where the Negro in recent years has been hard-pressed by Mexican invasion, much the same system of *avanse* is practised. In many cases both the laborers and the farmers, especially the "po' white trash," still are at the mercy of "supply merchants." These merchants make advances to both the farmer and his "hands" throughout the growing season. When harvest time comes the merchant collects, with a good fat interest rate added to the principal. Many of these debtors know of no remedy at law for usury; and some of them believe that one can be imprisoned for debt.

A few years ago a Texas sheriff was sent to Federal prison because cotton pickers, sold out of his jail at \$2 a head, were taken to cotton farms and worked under guard of a horseman armed with a shotgun. When the erstwhile sheriff returned home from prison, the town band met him at the railway station and he was re-elected sheriff.

If Sam Houston and Andrew Jackson, who considered the annexation of Texas as her "manifest destiny," could look upon the scene today, they might wonder at the ill-advised phraseology which they used. And when the NRA and the AAA came to Texas, the aforementioned band might well have played "The World Turned Upside Down." The last vestige of State's rights and personal liberty was challenged. Under the NRA, the minimum wage became the maximum; and the fixed prices of commodities and services worked a hardship on the consumers. Under the AAA, the tenant farmers, after years of struggle with landlords and supply merchants, were driven from the soil.

They took to the highways in their motorized "covered-wagons," to become seasonal laborers. In April, May and June, they may be found in Louisiana, Arkansas and Missouri, picking strawberries; in July, in the wheat belt; in August, September and October, back in Texas to pick cotton. In short, they are worse off now than they have ever been.

Texans cannot point with pride to the military and fiscal history of the Republic. Most of the navy was tied up once in New Orleans, held as security for a debt. If the several forces which constituted the army had ever been caught together, the army, too, probably would have been impounded. Texan currency fell to low levels. The Republic tried to borrow to meet its obligations. A Paris banking house agreed to a \$5,000,000 loan, but negotiations fell through, probably because M. de Saligny, the French chargé d'affaires in Texas, and an Austin inn-keeper, had a difficulty about the killing of a pig. It seems that the inn-keeper's pigs intruded in the stables of M. de Saligny's horses and ate up the corn. One of M. de Saligny's servants killed one of the pigs. The inn-keeper whipped the servant. Saligny filed a complaint against the inn-keeper and the latter ordered the chargé d'affaires out of his hostelry. Saligny asked the Secretary of State for redress and failing to get it, he left the country. He told his kinsman, M. Humann, French Minister of Finance, about the episode and the loan fell through.

But it can always be said, to the credit of the Republic of Texas, that she did not attempt to make her notes legal tender. Twenty years later, after annexation and secession and re-annexation to a group of States, the Southern Confederacy tried to make their notes legal tender, and to com-

pel their circulation under penalties of the law. To be sure, Texas as a confederate State was party to a procedure which she would not have countenanced as a republic.

And today Texas, as a member of the sisterhood, is a party to a financial policy which probably will go down in history as one of the major follies of modern times. We have the spectacle of a wealthy and powerful nation repudiating its obligations. The financial débâcle which started in Michigan spread to Texas with the all-consuming features of a prairie fire. On March 2, 1933—exactly 97 years after the Texas Declaration of Independence—the Governor of Texas issued a proclamation ordering the banks of Texas to be closed. Heads of several sound institutions refused to close their doors, but that spark of independence was snuffed March 5, 1933, when the presidential proclamation was issued.



LORDS OF THE DOCKS

BY WALTER WILSON

San Francisco

As a result of militant efforts to stage a come-back, the decrepit International Longshoremen's Association, once a powerful union, has taken a prominent place in the news of the day. We read of longshoremen's strikes in all the ports, from Corpus Christi to Canada, from Seattle to Monterey, and there have been stirrings on the Great Lakes. To total the casualties in these recent dockmen's strikes would give an appallingly long list of dead and wounded. Their come-back is proving to be no push-over.

The best known of these recent struggles was the strike of longshoremen in San Francisco, which began May 9 of this

year, and has just been ended by arbitration. Longshoremen in several other Pacific coast ports also went out in support of their fellow-dockers. And for a time there was serious talk among cargo handlers in New York and vicinity about going on strike with the Californians. This was serious business and the mere thought of a walk-out in the world's greatest port made first-page news across the country.

The longshoremen are also taking a bow in the theatre and in literature. One of the outstanding successes of the past New York theatrical season was "Steve-dore", a play at the Civic Repertory Theatre, dealing with labor and race relations on the New Orleans waterfront. The play has also been published in book form. THE AMERICAN MERCURY, in its August issue, carried a story of longshore life, "Death Comes to the Dockwolloper," by Grant Leenhouts.

There seems to be no reasonable explanation for the long neglect of the problems of these militant and colorful workers who are in a position of almost unlimited power in American—and, in fact, in the world's—industrial life. It is doubtful if there is another industry employing even twice the number of workers (there are around 100,000 longshoremen) which is so important. The longshoremen's union is the fortress of Gibraltar which controls the entrance to the Mediterranean of American foreign and, to a larger extent than is realized, internal trade.

Loaded to the decks with cargoes more wonderful than gold from Ophir or cedars from Lebanon, ships leave Shanghai, Singapore, Liverpool, Rio de Janeiro. . . . But before these ships from far-flung ports of the globe reach United States' importers, they must all converge and sail through a narrow strait which is mined and