



KEEPING TRACK OF OUR GOLD AND SILVER

BY ROBERT T. PATTERSON

ANYONE who tried to get within a shooting range of the Treasury's vast hoards of gold at Fort Knox, or near the silver at West Point, would quickly realize how well guarded they are. But protecting the gold and silver bullion isn't much of a problem compared with taking a satisfactory inventory of it. It's estimated that it would take two or three years to assay and weigh it all.

The Bureau of the Mint is charged with the safekeeping of over \$22 billion in gold and more than \$2 billion in silver bullion, besides about \$300 million in coins not in circulation. This immense accumulation of precious metals is held at the Mints in Philadelphia, San Francisco, and Denver, the United States Assay Offices in New York and Seattle, as well as in the great bullion depositories at Fort Knox and West Point.

For the three Mints and the two Assay Offices an annual settlement of accounts is required by law, under detailed procedures established by

the Director of the Mint. Each year he selects a committee from the various Mint institutions and from his office in Washington. The committee members are experienced in handling bullion, and no one of them assists in the inventory of the particular Mint institution where he is employed.

At the Mints and the Assay Offices, the amount of coin and gold and silver bullion varies from day to day as quantities are received, processed, or withdrawn. For that reason the committee has to verify what are called "exposed values" — that is, it determines whether the amount of metals not stored away under "joint seal" is correct. It examines, also, the joint seals on all compartments where gold and silver are stored to make sure that they haven't been tampered with. Then it seals away any bullion not needed for current operations.

The seal placed upon the compartment is signed and witnessed jointly by a representative of the particular

Mint institution that is being examined and a representative of the Director of the Mint. This "joint sealing" makes weighing and recounting unnecessary at future settlements.

As a further precaution, observers from the Office of the Comptroller General sometimes take part in verifications at each of the Mints and Assay Offices.

At Fort Knox and West Point, keeping track of the nation's treasure is simpler, for none of the gold and silver there is in process of refinement, assay, coinage, or withdrawal. It is there simply for storage, and the amounts in the storage compartments can be totaled easily enough.

As soon as a shipment of bullion is received, it is weighed and placed in a compartment. A representative of the officer in charge and a representative of the Director of the Mint witness the process of weighing and storage, and together they sign the joint seal after the double-doored compartment has been closed upon the new addition to the Treasury's hoard.

More than 97 per cent of all the gold and silver bullion at Fort Knox and West Point and at the five Mints is held under joint seal. Altogether, the Bureau of the Mint

holds nearly two-thirds of the world's monetary gold and 85 per cent of its monetary silver.

A SPECIAL check of all the Treasury's assets — including its gold and silver — was made in 1953 by a committee appointed by Secretary of the Treasury Humphrey and his predecessor, John Snyder. With such a vast quantity of gold and silver, it had to be a spot check — a random sampling.

The committee counted and weighed ten per cent of all the gold bars, assaying some of them to prove their gold content. There were no discrepancies. Statisticians, who deal in samplings and probabilities, would say the method was adequate and the result satisfactory.

There hadn't been any real doubt that all the gold was there, but it was sound accounting practice to test here and there to see whether bullion recorded on the Treasury's books was in the vaults where it was supposed to be.

The gold at Fort Knox isn't lying idle even though it grows musty under the joint seals that testify mutely to its safety. It is security for our paper money and it's nice to know that the gold is there to back up our old greenbacks.



STEW

As Camel Drivers Make It

BY RODNEY GILBERT

ONE bitter cold night a few months ago, my wife asked me what kind of a dinner I'd like. I said that I wasn't ravenously hungry, but that the weather called for something filling and substantial; and with that I stepped out to sniff the gale.

It was blowing hard from the northwest. The thermometer said that it was just below zero. The stars sparkled appropriately; and the coons, "booping" to one another dolefully from hill to hill, made me think of the yipping of wolves on other cold nights on the other side of the world. I wasn't long getting back into the house, and I then remarked that, if it weren't for the big trees all around me, I'd think that I was out in the Mongol grasslands on a winter night.

"Now I know what we'll have for dinner," said my wife. "We'll have camel drivers' stew."

There are books available now from which one can learn how to prepare, after a fashion, almost any dish that is served in a good Chinese restaurant, or in a prosperous Chinese household. But camel drivers' stew is one dish that is not to be found in the books, is not prepared in the best Chinese households and is not to be encountered in Chinese restaurants. It is nevertheless the one dish on which many thousands of the hardiest of all Chinese live through about seven months of the year — seven months of sub-zero weather during which they are almost never under a roof. And, what is more, I can guarantee that if any reader of

