

Treaties and Senators

By Merlo Pusey

From his column in The Washington Post

SOMETHING has happened to the brave new era in treaty-making that Cordell Hull launched so hopefully a few years ago. As Secretary of State when the United States was confronted by the great issue of participation in a world organization to keep the peace, he made a practice of taking the Senate into his confidence in the shaping of foreign policy. Now that practice appears to have been dropped. Senator Elbert D. Thomas expresses fear that a new breach between the State Department and the Senate is growing.

Mr. Hull's policy stemmed, of course, from the bitter experience of the Wilson Administration after World War I. The essence of that experience was that the best conceivable treaty negotiated by our diplomatic branch is useless unless it can be ratified by the Senate. So the State Department refused to take a chance on sponsoring a new peace system that might meet with hostility in the Senate, as the League of Nations had done. It carefully laid the ground work for acceptance of an international peace plan by fully exploring the problem with groups of Senators representing the Foreign Relations Committee.

That practice paid rich dividends when the United Nations Charter

came before the Senate last year. Its ratification was approved by a vote of 89 to 2. Of course, the changed attitude of the Senate cannot be attributed entirely to the more enlightened technique of the State Department. World War II had taught us a costly and impressive new lesson. But the better relations between the department and the Senate were a substantial factor in the victory, and it seems incredible that that fact should be so soon lost to sight.

Senator Thomas, who stands high on the list of Foreign Relations Committee members as well as being chairman of Military Affairs, says that he and his colleagues now have only fragmentary, second-hand reports on what is taking place at the peace conference in Paris. The Saturday seminars on the progress of world affairs are no longer held. The advisory group on peace settlements and international organization has broken up. State Department officials seldom attend Foreign Relations Committee meetings. The old barrier of misunderstanding for want of personal contact and exchange of information is beginning to rise again.

It is true that Senators Connally and Vandenberg have been active on the diplomatic firing line as advisors

to Secretary Byrnes. That is a net gain of very decided importance. It is natural, moreover, that they should be chosen for these assignments, for Mr. Connally is chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee and Mr. Vandenberg is its most active Republican member. But two Senators are not the Foreign Relations Committee, much less the Senate itself.

What is disturbing is the breaking of the routine, systematic contact between the committee and the State Department. That development seems especially short-sighted in a period when peace treaties that will have to come before the Senate are being negotiated. Senator Thomas has thoughtfully reminded the department that one third of the Senate plus one can still defeat a treaty. To ignore this ever-present reality in the process of formulating foreign policy is to slip back toward potential catastrophe.

The larger problem, of course, is not related to any special treaty or situation but to the general formula-

tion of foreign policy. No sound policy can be built on fickle relationships between the units of government responsible for it. Indeed, a policy in the State Department of "cottoning" up to the Senate only when it has a treaty to put over might create more resentment than good will. The only suitable arrangement is a permanent liaison that will mean a constant flow of pertinent information from diplomatic channels to the Foreign Relations Committee. Routine consultations and discussions would also give the members of the committee a chance to keep the department informed as to trends of thinking in the legislative branch.

The process by which our foreign policy is made and put into effect is admittedly complicated and cumbersome. But that is true of many democratic methods of procedure. The means of securing urgently needed cooperation between the Department of State and the Senate have been used successfully—and then carelessly discarded.

The curfew tolls the knell of parting day;
A line of cars winds slowly o'er the lea;
A pedestrian plods his absent-minded way
And leaves the world quite unexpectedly.

—*Inside the Circle*

• Mike lay on the sidewalk in a drunken stupor. The minister came along, picked Mike up and cautioned him that he couldn't expect to drink up all the brewery could make. Mike looked at the brewery all lighted up and said: "Anyway, I got them working nights."

—*Townsend National Weekly*

• "In a partisan Republican speech everything good is said about the Republicans and everything bad about the Democrats. But in a non-partisan Republican speech, not anything bad is said about the Republicans and nothing good about the Democrats."

—*National Canvas Goods Manufacturer's Review*

Dabbling in the Dardanelles

By Melvin K. Whiteleather

From his column in The Philadelphia Evening Bulletin

THE chief new factor in the question of the Straits is the United States.

And this symbolizes the new world balance of power as the war that Hitler would have liked to have won, has left it.

Since Peter the Great in the Eighteenth Century, Russia has sparred with various combinations of European nations over the Dardanelles and the Bosphorus. Now Russia finds opposing her a country so far removed from the Straits that to Russians it seems fantastic.

It probably isn't emphasized in the Russia of today, but it was the Bolshevik revolution that prevented Russia from getting possession of the Straits after almost two centuries of effort. Constantinople, now Istanbul, was promised to Russia in 1915 and with the city would go the eastern end of the Straits and, by implication, the western end, too.

The Great Peter organized a Black Sea fleet and stirred up interest in the necessity for the country to try to outsmart nature which had willed that, although the land was vast almost beyond measure, and although it sprawled over a large part of the globe, it did not have year 'round ports commensurate with the inherent capacity of the country.

From his time on, the weight of

the country was thrown southward. Industry and mining were coaxed along in the Black Sea area and so was agriculture. The Black Sea promised usable ports and today, two of the Soviet Union's three major ports with outlets to the world, are on the Black Sea.

Russian interest in the Straits therefore was natural from an economic viewpoint. It was equally vital from the viewpoint of a great power trying to assert itself in the world. Beyond these, the city of Constantinople, lodged at the inner entrance to the Bosphorus, had religious significance. Here was the mother church of the Eastern Orthodox faith and the Russians wanted that shrine.

But in the great game of power politics, it was to the interest of Britain and of France to keep the fleets of the Czars bottled up in the Black Sea. They did not want a Russian fleet in the Mediterranean, and they were successful in keeping it out right up to the first World War. They were joined in this by Austria, and, of course, the Ottoman Empire did not want to yield its territory to Russia.

In 1841, a Convention was drawn up which closed the Straits to warships. But the Russian Black Sea fleet continued to grow and this was one of the principle factors in