

Backstage in Washington

WASHINGTON, D. C.



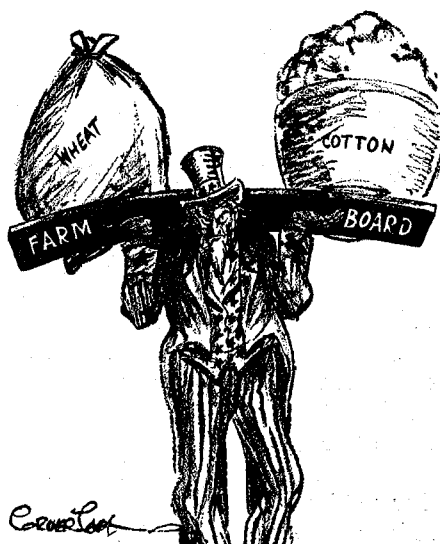
WE DO NOT wonder that the Washington correspondents have at last organized a definite movement in protest against the "wall of silence, deceit and evasion" which according to

Editor and Publisher, the present Administration has erected about its handling of public questions. We doubt very much whether any lasting benefits will result from this effort to set up a sort of Supreme Court to pass on difficulties which arise between officials and correspondents, but we regard it as a healthy movement. Nor, so far as we can discover, is it animated solely by selfishness on the part of the press men, although some may be inspired by this motive. The leaders, however—and this is true of all the worth-while correspondents—regard themselves, rightfully, I think, as agents of the public. Although they may suffer from a deliberate program of withholding, suppressing and coloring official acts, the public suffers much more. It is, recent events have disclosed, when the press cannot get at the facts that dishonesty, as in the Harding Administration, and bungling, as in the Hoover Administration, flourishes.

IT IS, I may suggest, the great increase in official silence and hypocrisy which justifies, in fact necessitates, such columns as this, such anonymous books as the two which are now grieving the Administration and such plain speaking as the Scripps-Howard newspapers, the St. Louis *Post-Dispatch* and the Baltimore *Sun* indulge in upon occasion. If the people are to know what the government is doing and planning, to support worthy movements and oppose bad or stupid ones, they must first have the facts. For fifteen years or more there has been a definite and fairly successful effort on the part of public officials to conceal the facts. President Hoover is by no means the first to inaugurate this system, although it has been perfected under him. It was started by Woodrow Wilson, continued by Harding, extended by Coolidge and, as I say, perfected under Mr. Hoover. If the complaints have become more bitter of late, it is, perhaps, because the correspondents had been led to expect something quite different by the President, who, so his enemies say, "was made

by the publicity his newspaper friends gave him."

I do know that Mr. Hoover, while a member of the Wilson, Harding and Coolidge families, was the unfailing source of news for a small group of correspondents. Whenever an important question had been discussed at Cabinet meeting of a Tuesday morning or Friday afternoon, half a dozen prominent correspondents trailed Mr. Hoover to his office or to the front porch of his house on S Street, and they rarely came away empty-handed. It is the remembrance of his former willingness to tell on other Presidents and Administrations that gives



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THE PEDDLER

piquancy, if nothing else, to his present attitude of censorship and criticism of the press.

Mr. Hoover, we learn, is at his wits' end with respect to the treatment which the press, Republican and Democratic and independent, accords him. He writhes under the suspicion that they are definitely down on him and determined to undo him. No matter how fine his plans and pronouncements, he moans, they are dealt with unfairly and ungenerously, and his underlying program for hastening the millennium, as he views it, does not get across. Even though he invites influential editors to the White House and to the Rapidan, he recently complained, he makes no headway with them or their editorial pages. It may be that Mr. Hoover has just and righteous grounds for such complaint; we simply offer these observations as indicative of the distress felt by him and by the correspondents.

Where the blame lies, we do not pre-

tend to say, although we think it rests upon the Administration. Certain it is that no previous group of officials in peace-time ever held so many secrets in their bosoms. Oddly, the departments closest to the White House have been the most secretive and sensitive in their relations with the press—the State Department, the Treasury, the Department of Justice and the Farm Board.

From the State Department, for instance, comes one of the most remarkable statements anent American interference in foreign affairs in many years, yet it must be written and publicized without a word as to its source. If, as a result, the public comes to the conclusion that Secretary Stimson's rollicking dash through Europe, his grouse-hunting with Ramsay MacDonald, his motorboating with Benito Mussolini, his bestowal of a gift upon Dr. Curtius's grandchild, has really induced Europe to forget its historic feuds—well, so much the better for the Administration, but so much the worse for the public and the cause of international peace.

FROM the Treasury there issues a statement denouncing the Farm Board's program of voluntary or involuntary reduction of crop acreage, and a definite indication that Messrs. Hoover and Mellon are disgusted with the outcome of this "experiment noble in motive." It was, from the economic and political viewpoint, one of the most important pronouncements on a great domestic problem since Mr. Hoover took office. But it must not be attributed to any one even remotely connected with the Administration lest, although it appease Big Business, it offend Republican voters in the farming regions. It is to the great credit of the Associated Press, in our opinion, that, as we hear, it refused to send this inspired but anonymous story along its wires.

The Farm Board and the Department of Justice are tombs, Chairman Stone refusing to divulge details of his financial and commodity operations even though such things are, or should be, matters of public record, and Attorney General Mitchell shunning all suggestions that he enunciate his policy on prohibition, the anti-trust laws or gangsters. We think it delightful, though ironic, that to all queries Mr. Mitchell and his associates reply: "See Dodge."

Arthur Dodge is the paid publicity man of the department, and, having a lively sense of humor, he smilingly admits, when questioned, that his name is "Dodge."

A. F. C.



"DE-LIGHTED!"

This was long before the word became a trade mark of T. R., but he must have been delighted to guard the captured river thieves in Dakota—just as he was delighted to be a deputy sheriff in his ranching days. In many of T. R.'s early photographs appears a delightfully stilted air of posing. He was never camera-shy

▷▷ Roosevelt: A Biography ◁◁

II—The Picturesque Gentleman Cowhand

After the tragic death of Alice Lee, Roosevelt hiked to the Bad Lands to forget and there lived a picturesque, sometimes almost turbulent life, with fist fights and rumors of impending duels. But politics kept calling and finally he left the West, as will be told in next week's installment, to resume the political career which led him finally to the Presidency.

By HENRY F. PRINGLE

found it, in the jagged prairies of the waste country. He told Bill Sewall, a Maine guide whom he had known for years and whom he attempted to transform into a Western cow hand, that his future was a matter of no concern. He might do a little writing; he made it plain that life stretched on as barren as the dusty prairie. Sewall disagreed. He pointed out that Roosevelt had an infant daughter "to live for."

"Her aunt can take care of her better than I can," was the answer.

There were, however, qualities in Roosevelt which halted introspection soon after it had started. He could surrender momentarily to depression, but it could not prevail against an innate robustness, against his adolescence. Again, I am conscious of the presumption which lies in charting the human mind. Let Roosevelt's contradictions speak for themselves. It must have been in the summer or fall of 1884, in one chapter of a book published the following year, that Roosevelt voiced

his true philosophy: "Black Care rarely sits behind a rider whose pace is fast enough." He must have written this within a few months of that other utterance, in the memorial to Alice Lee: "And when my heart's dearest died, the light went from my life forever." In December, 1886, he was married again.

Roosevelt could erect barriers against thoughts, and memories, too, that troubled him. Not primarily an optimistic person, he none the less tinted the past with rose color.

"Ah," remarked James Bryce, one day, when Roosevelt's name had come into a conversation with Owen Wister, "but Roosevelt wouldn't always look at a thing, you know."



IN HUNTING COSTUME, 1884
Obviously a posed photograph

It was wiser not to look at things in late 1884 as he faced a life remote from the one he had known. It was better to soften retrospection with a note of the whimsical, to live for the moment, to purchase the gaudiest of cowboy outfits, to mount his horse and take down his gun.

"My cattle are looking well," he wrote to Lodge, "and in fact the Statesman (?) of

UNDOUBTEDLY Isaac Hunt was right; Roosevelt "hiked away to the wilderness to get away from the world . . . went out there a broken-hearted man." Cattle ranching had been no more than a potentially interesting avocation when, in 1883, he made arrangements to buy a herd. He intended, probably, to make visits once or twice a year, but there is nothing to indicate that he planned to live in the Dakota Bad Lands. Even after the tragedy of February, 1884, and the bitter disappointment of the Chicago convention, Roosevelt went West for only one reason: he had nothing else to do. A neighbor asked whether he intended to make ranching his business.

"No," he answered. "For the present I am out here because I cannot get up any enthusiasm for the Republican candidate, and it seems to me that punching cattle is the best way to avoid campaigning."

He sought peace, and never quite