

GOOD EVENING:-

I think I might turn the tables on Lowell Thomas tonight. This is the first time in five years that I have been away from the Antarctic at this season, and each New Year I have listened to the cheerful voice of Lowell wish my companions and me a Happy New Year. *LOWELL I wish you ALL THE BEST RN 1940.*

I told Lowell, when he asked me to substitute for him this evening, that I could hardly give the news from an Australian slant. I am Australian, of course, but I've lived in so many places on this globe that I feel equally at home almost anywhere -- perhaps more at home among the Eskimo. People who travel a good deal in the Polar regions seem to get that way. I suppose you might say they become -- Polarized. However, I've lived so long here, and have so many friends in the United States, ~~the~~ that I feel I can see most things from the point of view of an American.

BUDGET

In Washington today, the chief subject of congressional discussion was - the budget. Senators and Congressmen of both parties held meetings and discussed the course of action they'd take. Republicans of the Senate had a session, took a vote, and decided to support a proposal that problems of the budget be considered jointly by both Houses. The idea is to make a study of the Budget, President Roosevelt presented to Congress yesterday - look into it from various angles, and thrash the matter out thoroughly. This - as a preliminary to the formal action which Congress will take.

The Republicans also decided to do the same thing with respect to the defense program in the budget, the huge expenditures which the President proposes for the Army and Navy.

Still another item in the budget got Republican attention today - the President's suggestion that Congress levy a special tax for national defense, a defense tax to the amount of four hundred and sixty million dollars. The Republican meeting today voted - No. The G.O.P. Senators decided to oppose any new taxes at the present session of Congress.

All of this is pretty much along the line of proposals made by Democratic Senator Harrison of Mississippi. He came out with the suggestion of a joint congressional study of the budget and of the national defense expenditures. Senator Harrison, moreover, suggests that Congress might work out a budget of its own and compare it with the presidential program of national finance. This, however, is getting a rather cold reception from Democratic leaders for the Administration. And ~~Senator~~ the Senator from Mississippi is said to be doubtful about the special national defense taxation, which the President proposes. He comes forward with an idea of his own - a reduction of taxes. He thinks that in income tax levies, Congress might cut down the surtax on incomes in the higher brackets. He thinks that this would encourage investment, put more life into business, and thereby increase the total amount of taxes paid to the Government.

BATTLESHIPS

The word from Washington is that the Navy may increase the size of the two forty-five thousand ton battleships that are now being constructed. According to present plans, those two sea giants will be the most powerful in the world. Recently, however, there has been talk in Congress of building super monsters of as much as sixty or eighty thousand tons. Today we hear that engineering experts of the Navy have informed Congress that it will be possible to increase the size of the 2 forty-five thousand toners. The work on them thus far has been preliminary. The actual steel construction is to start within sixty days. So now the Navy ~~is~~ is considering the advisability of increasing the tonnage of those mighty fortresses of the sea. They will be called Battleships IOWA and NEW JERSEY.

WARNING

The United States has issued a warning to the British Government - concerning American ships which the British may seize and search for contraband. Secretary of State Hull, ~~the~~ expresses the American viewpoint to British Ambassador Lord Lothian, as follows:- The United States Neutrality Law forbids American vessels to enter the war zones. But what about the British Navy taking ships of the United States into the war zones for examination - taking them to British ports, for example? Suppose that while forced into the war zone, they should be attacked, and sunk or damaged? If any such thing should happen, the United States will hold Great Britain strictly accountable for any injury sustained, and will demand compensation. So the Secretary of State has informed the British Ambassador.

HORE-BELISHA

From London comes news of an important resignation. Minister of War Leslie Hore-Belisha has given up his post, leaves the war-time Cabinet. There had been no advance word of this - it was entirely unexpected. Hore-Belisha, upon resigning, was offered another Cabinet place by Prime Minister Chamberlain, but he declined.

The new Minister of War in London is Oliver Stanley. He has been President of the Board of Trade.

Still another resignation - Lord McMillan steps out as the head of the Ministry of Information. That Ministry, which controls war-time news and censorship in Britain, has been under fire for a long time - loud complaints by British newspapers of the way affairs of public information were handled.

ITALY

Another nation goes on ration cards in Europe - Italy. Mussolini's realm is neutral, but is feeling the pinch, so Rome announces officially that ration cards are being distributed, and on January Fifteenth food rationing will begin. This will apply to what Rome describes as - "certain products, the consumption of which should be limited."

As a compensation for this irksome restriction, the ban on coffee will be lifted - in part at least. When the war broke out, the Mussolini Government stopped its sale of coffee entirely, and that has been a particular annoyance to the Italians. They are great coffee drinkers. The reason for the ban was a disagreement between Italy and Brazil. They couldn't come to terms on a coffee contract. Now, however, some sort of coffee deal has been made, and Rome announces that after February First, coffee will be sold in what is described as "limited quantities."

GERMANY

Germany is making threatening gestures toward the Scandinavian countries, because of war equipment which Great Britain and France are sending to Finland - material that is being routed across Sweden and Norway. A violent Nazi press campaign is charging that the Allies, in supporting Finland, are really out to establish war bases on the Scandinavian peninsula - planning to strike at Germany via Scandinavia.

Tonight, an official spokesman in Berlin issued a denunciation of the shipment of Allied munitions through Scandinavian territory. He calls it - simply intolerable. More and more, the Hitler Government is using pressure to stop the help that Finland is getting to fight Hitler's Ally, Stalin.

SOVIET SINKING

Stockholm sent a protest to Moscow today, a complaint about the torpedoing of a Swedish steamship in the Gulf of Bothnia. That Gulf lies between Sweden and Finland, and it's a main sea route for supplies sent to aid the Finns in their struggle against the Red army. The mouth of the Gulf of Bothnia is dominated by the Aaland Islands, which the Finns control. It might be difficult for Soviet ships on the surface to get through the barrier of the Aalands, but the islands are not much of a barrier for submarines.

Earlier today, came word of a submarine attack on the Swedish steamer which presumably was engaged in carrying war materials to Finland. It's only too obvious that the Soviet undersea fleet might strike at the line of supply across the Gulf of Bothnia. And now - the Swedes protest, which makes a general protest against Soviet submarine activity in the Gulf.

FINLAND

War reports from Finland announce the capture of the town of Salla, and that would seem to be something of a final blow to the Soviets in their attempt to cut the small republic in two. Salla was one of the first important points which the Red army captured in its drive to cut across the ~~waxi~~ waistline of Finland, and the town has been a prime objective for the Finns in their counter-attack which hurled back the Soviet invasion.

There are reports that Finnish forces have pushed across the Soviet border at one place after another. At a number of points they are said to be in Russian territory for a distance of from ten to fifteen miles. And insistent reports continue - that the Murmansk railway, the only Soviet line of transport in the north, has been cut in several places,

ADD FINLAND

When Lowell Thomas asked me to take his place this evening he suggested that I might be able to explain a thing or two about the campaign in Finland -- because of the experience I have had in the Arctic regions. I've done enough traveling, hunting and shooting in sub-zero weather to appreciate the trouble the Soviet Russians are having. I'm not surprised at the Red Army failures, once they made the mistake of plunging into trackless Northern Finland in the season of blizzards and bitter cold.

The advantage is all with the defense. I've been around in Finland a good deal, know the Finns. They are ~~ix~~ intelligent Arctic farmers, woodsmen and hunters -- skillful, resourceful and stubborn. They will fight to the last man to defend their arctic lands. It would be difficult for any opposing force to defeat them. In temperatures of forty and fifty below zero invading troops must advance all bundled up in heavy clothes to keep from freezing to death, so heavily muffled that it would take them several minutes to uncover and get into action. For example they have to keep the muzzles of their guns covered --

because if snow gets into the muzzle of a rifle, ice will form, ice so hard that the first shot would probably split the barrel. The defenders, lying in wait would be ready for action, and might win the fight before the advancing force could uncover for battle.

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War in the Arctic would have all sorts of curious tricks. The Finns know them well. But, many Russians come from far below the Arctic Circle. The triggers of guns would have to be covered with some non-conducting material, like tape. You can't shoot straight with mittened fingers. The trigger finger must be free and active, but covered. In temperatures forty and fifty below zero, the bare finger upon touching the trigger would instantly freeze to it. Bare skin will freeze to any kind of metal.

I saw an amusing incident of this when I using a metal airplane, in the Arctic. One morning in bitter cold a dog dashed to the plane -- a half wild Eskimo husky. In his excitement he sniffed ~~xx~~ at the metal, stuck his nose against it -- and instantly his nose froze to the plane. It stuck so fast that for a moment the dog couldn't get away -- he was most amazed. When he did get away he left part of the skin of his nose on the metal side of the plane.

WEATHER

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I have some dispatches about the weather in various parts of the country, and this reminds me of something Lowell told me before he left on his vacation up North. He said that he had made a promise to Admiral Byrd, when the Byrd Expedition started out for the Antarctic. He had told Dick Byrd that every now and then he'd have a bit of news in this broadcast for the special ~~benefit~~ benefit of the South Polar expedition, something to interest them as they listened in, away down South. I think I'll fulfill that duty this evening by calling the attention of Byrd and his men to the weather reports in the United States.

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They're sailing somewhere to the South of New Zealand, nearing the Antarctic ice-pack. The temperature down there should be pleasant and mild, somewhere around forty. It is never really cold in the Antarctic at this time of ~~ix~~ year. On the ice-pack in summer ~~it~~ it often feels really warm -- and, sheltered from the ~~and~~ wind, we often indulge in ^{sun-bathing.} ~~the~~ ~~the~~ ~~the~~ ~~the~~ ~~the~~ In the last four summers in the South I have never seen the thermometer lower than five below freezing. So Byrd and his men, approaching the Antarctic, may be interested to hear that it has been four below zero in Chicago, five below zero in Kansas City, eight below in

St. Louis, and twenty below at Bismarck, North Dakota.

The whole Mississippi Valley in the grip of icy cold. At

Cincinnati the temperature fell below zero for the first time

in four years. River traffic is at a standstill. And today

the Ohio River was frozen over for the first time ~~XXXX~~ since

Nineteen Eighteen. It's enough to make a man shiver and wish

8/2 he were in the Antarctic with the ~~Byrd~~ Byrd Expedition!