

Chambers
1936

GOOD EVENING EVERYBODY:

If I ever came here to Cincinnati without a yarn with Dave Bowman, Ohio's foremost political orator, I mean oracle, my visit wouldn't be complete. He not only can talk faster than Floyd Gibbons, but he can, I believe, talk even faster than Floyd can think.

Well, a few minutes ago Political Oracle Bowman, who is one of the editors of the TIMES-STAL, came in to see me here at the Netherland Plaza, ~~studio~~ studio of W.L.W., and I said, "Dave, I see the Ohio Republicans have just picked Robert Taft as favorite son. What does that mean?"

To which ye oracle replied:- "He'd make a fine president," and then he went on lickety split:- "A favorite son is a rock to hide behind until you decide which way to jump. Harding is the only one who ever drew to that pair of deuces - and filled!"

TAXES.

~~As this is the end of February, we might in a general~~
~~symbolical sense call it, the first of the month, when the~~
~~bills come in.~~ *And* ~~Nothing can go out unless something comes in.~~

~~Meaning taxes.~~

Taxes! That's always an unpleasant word in politics, especially during an election year. Many dignitaries of the Administration would like to see the theme of taxation soft-pedalled and kept in a corner. They tried to persuade the President not to utter the unmentionable word. But today President Roosevelt spoke to Congress, and he enunciated the word right out loud:-- taxes.

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He told the lawmakers they'd have to get busy and provide the money to finance the expenditures that have been made into law. The figure mentioned by the voice from the White House is one Billion, one hundred and thirty-seven million dollars; *like* ~~It is~~ itemized ~~this way.~~

~~It will take~~ *Five* hundred million dollars to replace the triple A processing taxes which the Supreme Court threw out.

TAXES.

That money has already been guaranteed to the farmers. Then another five hundred million to finance the new farm program, the Soil Conservation bill which was passed the other day to take the place of the Triple A. Moreover, there is the bonus--- that hundred and twenty million dollars to redeem batches of those bonus baby bonds, as they are cashed in.

Where is the money coming from? What kind of taxes?

The inflation boys have a ready answer. They say don't tax, print. Inflationists declare they are going to put up a fight to have the bonus money paid with new cash off the presses.

The conservative elements are thinking in terms of income tax, ~~scaling up the rates all along the line especially on small incomes. The idea of hitting those small incomes gives the senate leaders the willies, but taxes will have to be of either the income sort or the excise variety levies on commodities.~~

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The lawmakers ^{have the willies. They} are in the bad position of a man who is given a choice of cutting off the dog's tail with either an axe or a pair of scissors, ^{— and of being} when he's afraid of the dog.

RAILROADS.

~~Here's a surprise--a decision handed down by nine~~
~~majestic men. ^{Now} Don't answer that, it's nothing new for the~~
~~Supreme Court to hand down a decision. It isn't the Supreme~~
~~Court. ^{this time today} It's the Interstate Commerce Commission, which consists~~
of nine members. They took a vote today, five to four, and put
through a decree which effects the dollars and cents of all who
travel on railroads. And that's everybody, to the number of
four hundred and fifty million fares. That's how many railroad
passengers there were last year--according to James Fitzgerald,
information man for the Eastern Railroads.

The I C C has cut the passenger rate. Right now we pay
three and six-tenths cents a mile. Slash that to two cents a
mile, commands the I C C. Pullman travel costs four cents a mile.
That's to be trimmed down to three cents. Meaning--that a two
hundred mile ride in a Pullman now costs eight dollars. It will
cost six dollars, after June second. ~~That's the date when the~~
~~passenger rate cut goes into effect.~~

RAILROADS.

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That isn't such hot news to a lot of folks in the West and the South. A year ago Western and Southern railroads tried an experiment--a rate reduction experiment. The Eastern roads did not follow suit. They said they'd been losing so much money for a long time that they couldn't afford to cut fares.

The I C C proceeded to watch the Western and Southern test. They noticed that on the cut fare railroad passenger travel took a jump. So now for months they've been holding hearings, gathering figures and plotting charts--to decide whether cut fares wouldn't be a good thing for all the railroads in the country. The idea being--if you make riding cheaper, you'll sell more rides.

Today's decision says--yes, we think that's the way it will work out. Hence the edict--lower passenger fares after June second. ~~The effect will be closely watched, with a check and cross-check of the figures.~~ Today's decision may dictate railroad price policy for a long time to come.

for a while
Anyway, it will cost less to ride, *the cushions.* ~~on the choo-choo train.~~

JAPAN.

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There's one entertaining feature about the news from Japan these days. Whatever you say the night before, turns out to be wrong the next day. Night before last I had the revolt in Tokyo suppressed. That was wrong. So last night I had a compromise agreement all fixed up between the Army chiefs and the young military fanatics who had raised the storm of assassinations and rebellion. Today that turned out to be wrong. So tonight we have something else again.

But don't ^{shoot the piano player. He's doing the best he can.} ~~blame the poor radio news man.~~ You can't look through a wall, and it's a high wall of censorship that surrounds the island empire.

What I said last night was wrong to this extent- the compromise surrender which Tokyo reported was, as I described it, ^{to} ~~only~~ the rebels didn't agree with it. They were offered the privilege of committing hari kari. Maybe that's what the young officers didn't like about the arrangement.

Tonight's news sounds just as odd, and maybe not any more correct. It relates ^{that} the army chiefs have called upon the insurgents to surrender-in the name of the Emperor.

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That's a sacred summons, so they instantly complied. They said: "Yes, we'll surrender," merely adding that they would hold their positions in the heart of Tokyo until satisfactory terms for their surrender had been negotiated. So theoretically they have submitted, the only question being, when and how? All of which has that quaint oriental flavor.

Other reports give us a proclamation by General Kashii, in command of the government troops. He declares that he is prepared to take "appropriate measures against the rebels." But what measures are appropriate, when a small army group has assassinated five heads of the government, including the premier, and is holding out in public buildings? We do ~~not~~ know what measure would be appropriate in a European capital. There would be a swift attack with rifle and cannon fire. But nothing like that has happened in Tokyo. Everything has been extraordinarily quiet, not a finger lifted against the insurgents-merely the most courteous of negotiations.

So the surmise becomes stronger and stronger that the

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Japanese war lords are in sympathy with the assassinating young hot heads, and are reluctant to deal harshly with them. This in turn expands the surmise-that the result of the terrorist stroke will be just what the terrorists want, a government more dedicated to military imperialism.

ETHIOPIA.

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There's one Italian word familiar to ^{all} the world, the expressive word-vendetta. Italian lore is studded with dark tales of the quest for vengeance, the life-long pursuit to wipe out an injury. Well, the word vendetta comes vividly to mind when we read a brief war dispatch today. Brief is right—that's the way Marshal Badoglio has been sending his reports from Ethiopia, terse, a few words.

Badoglio's dispatch today reads this way: "The troops of the the First Army Corps," he radios, "have conquered Amba Alaji. From eleven oclock this morning, the flag waves on the summit of the mountain which saw the historic sacrifice of Toselli and his men."

The phrase "Toselli and his men" gives the cue, it goes back to that historic defeat which the Italians suffered in Abyssinia forty years ago. Their army, pushing on, got as far as the mountain stronghold of Amba Alaji. There the reverses began. Hosts of the warrior Emperor Menelik, surged to the attack.

VENDETTA

The army retreated - only to be wiped out on the battlefield of Adowa. But meanwhile one detachment had been trapped at Amba Alaji. It was commanded by Tosselli. He asked for reinforcements but instead a message was sent to him saying - Retreat. He never got the message. He held a position in a gorge, through which he expected the reinforcements to arrive - the help that never came. He had eighteen hundred men against thirty thousand. Only a handful of his native Askari troops escaped.

VENDETTA.

~~The army retreated only to be wiped out on the battlefield of Adowa. But meanwhile, one attachment had been trapped at Amba Alaji, a small force under the command of an officer named Toselli. They fought to the end, among the ridges of the mountain stronghold, surrounded by the barbaric horde.~~

When the present trouble began, Mussolini made it a national point-to avenge those disasters of forty years ago, The first objective was the capture of Adowa, scene of great defeat. But that didn't complete the Fascist vendetta. They were out to avenge not merely the lost battle, but the entire losing campaign. So the ultimate goal of pride and sentiment was Amba Alaji-the furthestest point of that former ill-fated advance, where Toselli and his men fought to the end.

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so Today the national vendetta was complete, and all the Italians now intend to do is-conquer the rest of Ethiopia. P. S., The Ethiopians deny that Amba Alaji has been captured.

SCOTTI.

Tonight there are stories to tell-stories about Antonio Scotti. He is dead-at seventy-one. Scotti, the baritone, who for so many years trod the stage in the glory at New York's Metropolitan Opera House. He became a legend, specializing in dark and sinister operatic characters. He was surrounded by a wealth of anecdote, one of those people whose requiem might be-- tell a story about him. So let's tell about the furniture in La Tosca.

It goes back to the days, a few years ago, when Scotti and Jeritza played hair-raising drama in that sombre old thriller of music. I have the story from Carlo Edwards, long an Assistant Conductor at the Met. He relates that Scotti was always finicky and ~~particular~~ about the furniture on the stage in ~~the second act of~~ La Tosca. ~~That's where he put on his greatest burst of histrionics, as the villainous chief of police. So~~ Every time, before the second act, he would go on the stage and carefully arrange the chairs, table and couch-to suit ~~his own acting.~~ *and she* But Jeritza, the soprano, had her own notions ~~about that. She~~

would only have to wait.

For Scotti had one invariable custom. Just before strutting on the stage to sing, he would go to his dressing room and kiss his mother's picture. It was a superstition with him. Jeritza would wait until he had gone to pay his devotions to the maternal photograph, then she would rearrange the furniture to suit herself. At the time Scotti got back, the music would begin and there was nothing he could do. The furniture stayed as she had fixed it.

To his last moment, the great Scotti upheld his reputation as a man about whom stories are to be told. He died yesterday in Naples, but that was kept secret. Scotti wanted no headlines. It was his wish that the news of his passing should be broken in the humblest way - by a bought and paid for notice of a few lines in the obituary column of a Neapolitan newspaper. That appeared today - a last gesture of humility.

HEIDELBERG.

One old fellow says to the other--no, I won't go to your birthday party. One is six hundred and eighty-seven years old. The other, celebrating an anniversary--five hundred and fifty years old. They're universities, the one Oxford, the other Heidelberg. Oxford, I believe, is the third oldest university in the world. Heidelberg is a little more than a hundred years younger.

There will be big anniversary doings in that renowned old haunt of beer-drinking and student duelling. They'll sing "Old Heidelberg" with ringing echoes through the medieval town on the River Neckar ⁱⁿ and ^{which is} the historic castle, older than the university itself. Sister universities the world over have been invited to attend, including Oxford. But Oxford says "no." The Oxonians point out that under the Hitler regime forty-four professors have been expelled from Heidelberg, because they didn't gibe with Nazi ideas. Moreover--the ceremonies are timed to coincide with the Nazi blood-purge of 1934, that orgy of political killings, this seems a little sinister to the secluded

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scholars of Britain's ancient university. But Oxford has still another reason for declining. It's learned historians declare that according to musty records in the British Museum, it isn't the five hundred and fiftieth birthday of Heidelberg. It's only the five hundred and forty-ninth.

But, never mind--it's still old Heidelberg.

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MARRIAGE.

International romance certainly does take us over the international map today. Maybe that's to be expected, when the bride is a diplomat, and speaks 7 languages, including Russian. Helen Doherty is a fabulous heiress, adopted daughter of Henry L. Doherty, the multi-millionaire oil man. But she has also been assistant to Ruth Bryan Owen--American Minister to Denmark.

The itinerary of romance goes this way. In 1933 Helen Doherty went to Denmark, to her diplomatic job. Last August she sailed on a visit to entirely different latitudes, Central America, Nicaragua. Ever since then she has been a guest of the daughter of the Nicaraguan President. Today in the presidential residence at Managua, she was married to a bridegroom from Denmark. He is Theodore William Wessel, a Danish sportsman. She met him in Denmark, and he went all the way to Nicaragua to marry her.

This romance reminds us of that other golden American heiress, Barbara Hutton--wedded to a Danish nobleman. And the

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obvious remark is; "There is something romantic in the state of Denmark."

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Helen Doherty was in the headlines back in 1930-but that was a controversial affair. She made her debut in Washington, and it was fabulous. The guests brought by private trains and planes, with ten of the debutante's best friends receiving an automobile as a souvenir. Gossipy dame Rumor put the cost at anywhere from half a million to a million dollars. It was in the deep dark depression, and there was a lot of hostile talk about squandering hundreds of thousands. But the cold figures showed--twenty-five thousand dollars as the cost of the coming-out party. — no where a half million.

LEAP YEAR

There's fear and trembling in Aurora, Illinois.

Fear for tomorrow. The bachelors are pale and shaky, because tomorrow is February twenty-ninth. And that's the day when Aurora goes leap year in a big way. The town government will be taken over from Mayor to Dog-Catcher by young unmarried women. The roster tomorrow will run like this: Mayor, Margaret Esser, twenty-four; Chief of Police, Helen Thompson, twenty-one; Magistrate, Jean Harrison, twenty-one; City Judge, Katherine James, twenty-two. Fire Chief, Rosalie Smith, twenty. I suppose Fire Chief Rosalie will go after an old flame.

And after that --

SOLONG UNTIL MONDAY.