

Washington Digest

Scientists Favor Unhindered Freedom in Research Work

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The bomb which leveled Hiroshima and has since been echoing in the Pacific did something to congress that could not have been done before the explosion. It induced the senate to loosen the public purse strings to the extent of voting to subsidize a national scientific research foundation.

Scientists don't have many votes, so the persuasion couldn't have come by way of a lobby. The public imagination had been stirred. Suddenly the layman realized that science was a powerful factor in war. He realized that perhaps men who could smash the atom and make it smash the enemy, might learn how to use the powers of the sleeping giant—atomic energy—for the good as well as the ill of mankind.

At this writing congress has not completed action of the bill but probably will have done so by the time these lines are read. The idea of a national research program seemed very good to me. Therefore, I was somewhat surprised to hear a pharmacological authority of my acquaintance say that passage of this legislation "would be as destructive in the field of science" as the bomb was in the midst of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. He made the observation in a group, several of whom were scientists. His hearers appeared to echo his sentiments—sentiments which I later learned he had set forth in the recent Bulletin of the American Association of University Professors. He (Dr. Theodore Koppányi) said: "In an analysis of the bill, a basic wrong immediately leaps to the eye. This is the assumption that scientific research can be 'initiated' or 'prescribed' for." If this assumption could be grounded, the natural sequel to a national research foundation would be federal foundations to 'initiate' and 'prescribe' for the composition of music, the painting of pictures, the writing of poems, and the establishment of social controls and education, for science is probably the most personal and individualistic of all human endeavors. No agency, however authorized and directed, can develop a national policy for scientific research."

Difficult to Pass
On Projects

The theories and ways of thinking of scientists, Dr. Koppányi explained, (and his colleagues agreed) are as diverse as the world itself. "How can we set up a court with the power to pass on what is good and what is not good for science?" he asked, and then he turned to me with this question: "Would you approve of having a member of your profession—a commentator or news-writer—appointed by a President of the United States, as head of a similarly selected group of your colleagues who were made privy to private government information, which was barred from other speakers or writers?"

Naturally I said: "No." (That would be the end of the freedom of the press and radio.)

Then Dr. Koppányi concluded: "You can spend a lot of money and get no return. But if you trust in human ingenuity, motivated by desire of public service, the love of science, recognition, and maybe selfish aims alike, you will have done more for basic science than you could ever do with billions of dollars of federal money."

Social Science
Study Lags

Spokesmen for the so-called social sciences (the study of people, of individuals and groups) were loud in criticizing the omission from the bill of provisions for research in this field.

An engineer spoke for the social scientists in these words: "We've gone miles ahead in our study of inanimate things, in physics, chemistry and the other sciences that deal with inorganic matter, compared to our advancement in the study of human beings—why they act the way they do under given conditions, their relations to other individuals and to groups, and the action of the groups in relation to each other."

He spoke of the recent pogrom in

Kielce, Poland, where the Jews were attacked and killed. It all started from a false rumor, a planted rumor. The very same thing, the engineer pointed out, touched off the riots three years ago in Detroit. Those are known facts but there is very little public knowledge of what causes such action, how it can be prevented.

Possession Is Law to Russ

Russian expropriation of Austrian property and her delaying tactics in the setting of the peace conference to date seem to be predicated on the theory: Why start any discussions of who gets what if you can operate on the old theory that possession is nine points of the law?

Possession is an important factor. Take the recent experience of a Philadelphia horse. Around midnight one night a horse walked into a residential district and began devouring gardens of dahlias, morning-glories, snapdragons and other flowers. The infuriated householders tried to shoo the horse away, but he kicked at them and went right on expropriating the bourgeois blooms. However, in the good old American tradition, a policeman appeared with a rope and lassoed the beast. He was removed to the police stables where he couldn't exercise a veto on this purely procedural process.

This subversive tendency in the animal world was revealed in another part of Philadelphia at about the same time. Returning from a week-end, a householder and his family who had started a counter-revolutionary campaign against what they thought to be a harmless mouse, found a large-sized rat in the trap they had set. The rat with the trap attached as a minor incumbrance went right after the family which climbed tables and chairs. This time when the cop came he felt aggressive warfare justifiable and finished the rat with his reactionary night-stick.

Congress Work Is Never Done

Congressmen invariably come to work January 14 brisk of step, bright of eye, confident they'll have all the bills passed, all the necessary business disposed of by July 1 at the latest, so they can go home to their fences.

The old timers, of course, know they are just kidding themselves. Business is never completed by July 1, though they work from sun to sun for, like woman's, congress' work is never done. Consequently, fishing trips, motor jaunts, and important electioneering have to be postponed while house and senate members labor in Washington heat to complete last-minute legislation.

This year, it was the OPA agony that fevered congressional brows late into July. Debate was so furious, night sessions were so frequent that I wasn't surprised when I heard a man in the visitor's gallery of the capitol ask: "Why did they wait so long to get at the OPA bill? Seems to me they always have a lot of stuff left to do at the end of a session that they could have taken up earlier. Do they always let it go so long that these closing days sound like a rowdy jam session?"

I reported this remark to a man who knows Capitol Hill, as you and I know the short-cut home.

"There are no jams in congress," he answered as he inhaled another table-spoonful of the famous senate restaurant bean soup.

"Not even on OPA?" I modestly needed.

"No," he said, "but I'll admit they came to a near-jam when they had to work like the dickens to get the bill to the President before the OPA expired. But they did get it to him (he was talking about the first OPA bill)—and it was better than a lot of people had expected. That was no jam."

"What is a jam then?"

"What we used to have in the days of the lame-duck session," he came back promptly. "Then congress had to adjourn on March 4. A one-man filibuster could stymie legislation up to midnight of March 4, and it would never be passed. Then congress might act hastily, and perhaps unwisely, to meet its inexorable deadline."

A jam, then, is when congress is forced to precipitate action, or to no action. That's a congressional opinion.

I'd still like to hear what Harry Truman would define as a congressional jam-up.



PROUD OF HIS CATCH . . . Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower, army chief of staff, proudly displays his catch on the first day of his week's fishing trip to Big Lake, Northern Wisconsin. He was accompanied by his four brothers.



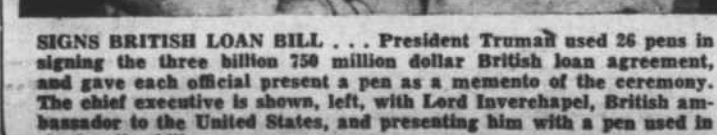
QUINT CALVES MAKE A DEPOSIT . . . The Wayne "Cornhusker Quints," world's only living quintuplet calves, visit the Fairbury, Neb., bank to make a deposit in their personal savings account—money they have earned at state fair exhibitions. The quintlets were born Nov. 20 on the farm of Leo Schmoldt, near Fairbury, and now weigh an average of 425 pounds. Left to right they are: Russia, England, China, France and United States.



PRESENT NEWEST ATOM-SMASHER . . . Prof. Ernest O. Lawrence, right, and Prof. J. Robert Oppenheimer, have announced that construction is nearly completed on the University of California's latest and largest cyclotron, capable of producing more atomic energy than is derived from present facilities. They are shown stepping from recess in cyclotron which ultimately will contain acceleration chamber which will speed atomic "bullets" on explosion journey.



NATIONAL PRO NET CHAMP . . . Bobby Riggs holds the victor's trophy after winning the national professional tennis championship at Forest Hills, N. Y. He defeated Don Budge (right), in the finals, 6-3, 6-1, 6-1. The Forest Hills competition has long been considered the classic of American professional tennis matches. Riggs won the U. S. tennis championship in 1939 and 1941.



SIGNS BRITISH LOAN BILL . . . President Truman used 26 pens in signing the three billion 750 million dollar British loan agreement, and gave each official present a pen as a memento of the ceremony. The chief executive is shown, left, with Lord Inverchapel, British ambassador to the United States, and presenting him with a pen used in signing the bill.

NEWS BEHIND THE NEWS

By PAUL MALLON

Released by Western Newspaper Union.

PEACE CONFERENCE 'VICTORY' MORE APPARENT THAN REAL
WASHINGTON. — 'Tis being advertised as a famous victory at Paris. The accounts from there were headed: "Molotov Finally Yields." A weighing of the event since then by expert—and even some official news accountants—has developed wonder if it was victory, and how much Molotov yielded.

In the first place, China was not made a sponsoring nation for the big peace conference of 21 nations. Molotov did not yield on this. The leading dispatches from the conference the day after neglected to mention this point. Nothing was said about China. Earlier both Messrs. Byrnes and Bevin contended the omission of our friend in the Orient as sponsor would be an insult to her. Molotov claimed China was not influential in the defeat of the nations for which treaties were being written in Paris—Romania, Bulgaria, Hungary, Finland and Italy—and therefore she was not entitled to be a sponsor.

Morally, China was entitled to be a sponsor as a big five member and a participant in the war. Technically, she may not have used any troops in the five countries mentioned, but the United States did not use many either in Finland (with whom we were never at war), and not many more in the Balkans, although the Russians used plenty of our equipment.

POTSDAM AGREEMENT CITED
Next day France worded the invitation more peacefully, and a movement to save China with the chairmanship upon the second day of the meeting was attempted, but Molotov insisted upon China's omission as a sponsor, pleading this was provided in the Potsdam agreement, which has never been enforced, economically at any rate.

Then the big four conference decided to call the 21 nations, apparently to approve the treaties they are making. This was regarded as a victory for our Mr. Byrnes, who wanted such a conference. But Molotov wanted to restrict the rules of the conference, which naturally had no rules, never having been in assemblage. He succeeded in requiring that each treaty go to a committee made up of the leading participants in the war on that country (which is all right), but he said the committee must make decisions only by a two-thirds majority (which is not all right). The committees apparently had no power to make any decisions. At least the conference did not. It could not change a treaty, or no public suggestion was made that it could. It was merely called to approve. Certainly its committees could not do anything it could not do. Yet Russia imposed a two-thirds majority upon decisions of committees, with majority decisions among the whole.

What this will do, I have not yet found an authority to explain. A two-thirds majority without authority can only be a two-thirds majority without power—except to nullify any action.

TWO-THIRDS RULE A JOKER
Actually, the big council of nations was insisted upon by Byrnes to let the smaller nations participate in the decision of the peace. His victory in this respect was far from clear cut. Will the small nations be satisfied? The question cannot be answered until you find out what the two-thirds-majority-rule-in-committees-only will mean to their conference. Obviously Russia drew her peace in such a way as to believe she excluded the small nations from changing it. This is an old Russian position against small nations, which has taken many forms since the San Francisco conference. Actually, she does not care what small nations do, but we do care.

What it looks like to me is that Russia has considerably but yet indefinitely stultified the Byrnes-inspired conference, first by excluding China as a sponsor, and secondly by a fool-rule she can use as a veto on action. This would deny the existence of a victory for anyone except Russia in her purpose to get the world to accept peace-treaties which (except for Italy) she is largely imposing.

The peace then depends actually upon the terms of the treaties themselves, and in Finland, Bulgaria, Romania and Hungary these are being enforced and imposed by Russia—in Italy by us.

IS RUSSIA NECESSARY?
The illusion of a co-operative world peace is thereby becoming more elusive. The participation by the smaller nations becomes less and less important and more and more restricted. What was won at Paris was that we got Russia into another half-world conference for better or worse.

My personal opinion is Mr. Byrnes is proceeding on the wrong theory: namely that we must get Russia into an agreement on everything or he will lose his case.

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BARBS . . . by Baukhage

Russia apparently wants to win Germany's sympathy so that Germany will yield more easily to Communization later. But that's a big job, and the bear might find it had something by the tail that would wag it.

Russia has used the veto much as Senator O'Daniel and some of his colleagues use the filibuster.

According to the American magazine, New York and Chicago have yielded (dis)honors to the far western states which now top the crime record. Westward the course of . . .

I understand that there is a new combination gasoline propelled lawn mower and hedge-trimmer. Now if it would only sit up with the baby we'd get a little time off.