

BEHIND THE SCENES

IN American Business

By JOHN CRADDOCK

New York, Feb. 5. — Reports to the Census Bureau from 18,221 independent stores, representing most kinds of business except department stores, add up to an increase in sales volume of six per cent for 1944 over the previous year. It may be estimated, therefore, that total volume for all retail outlets — independents, department stores, chains and mail order — ran at least as high as \$66 billion last year, a record.

This is quite an achievement for a country during a third year of war. Allowing for a 25 per cent rise in average prices and the fact that some 12,000,000 persons have entered the armed forces, the estimate indicates that America's civilian population enjoyed during 1944 a standard of living, in terms of merchandise bought at retail, on a par with that obtained in the 12 months prior to Pearl Harbor. The retailers of America are to be congratulated for handling such a physical volume with greatly reduced store personnel, and industry and agriculture, likewise, for supplying such a volume while maintaining an unprecedented flow of armaments, equipment and food to the armed forces of all the United Nations.

SAVING SMALL FARMS — The family-size farm, backbone of American agriculture, needs greater mechanization to survive competition from increasing, large-scale operations with complete labor-saving equipment. To meet this need, industry is planning new and improved equipment for volume production after the war, according to Joseph W. Frazer, chairman of Graham-Paige Motors.

Pointing out that less than a third of the six million U. S. farms are adequately mechanized and that there are still 13 million horses and mules on farms, he said that horse-drawn implements must be replaced with economical, time-saving machinery if small farms of 100 acres and less are to flourish. He said his company will produce tractors and rotary tillage implements, and that other companies have indicated they will introduce new one-man balers, harvesters, improved combines, mechanical cotton pickers and similar equipment designed to aid the small farmer. Greater mechanization can mean fewer mortgage foreclosures, Mr. Frazer said, and low-cost mechanized tools which industry is planning will help solve

the multiplying problems of the small farmer not only by saving man-hours, but also by improving the quality of his production.

734 VS. 45,000 — When the government synthetic rubber plant at Louisville passed the two-million-pounds mark the other day, statisticians noted that this two-year record was accomplished with a staff of 734. But it would have taken some 16 million Far East rubber trees, tended by some 45,000 natives, to have turned up an equal amount of natural rubber in the same time!

To many persons who have regarded synthetic rubber as a great job creator in itself, the contrast between 734 and 45,000 will be quite an eye-opener. It illustrates the point that John Collyer, president of the B. F. Goodrich company, which incidentally built and operates the Louisville plant, has long emphasized. Although Mr. Collyer, earliest and most persistent advocate of synthetic rubber for national defense, is strong for maintaining substantial operation after the war, he has always made it clear that it will be the widening of markets, made possible by low-cost raw materials, that will be the principal factor in providing more jobs. Where synthetic fits into that picture is in the fact that America's skill in "making its own" rubber has created a potential ceiling on the price we will have to pay for raw rubber, whether tree variety or man-made.

LAUNDRY FUTURE — America's commercial laundries today are hard-pressed to keep up with service demands for a reason that may not be apparent to most customers. Lack of manpower is one reason, of course, but even more fundamental, in the opinion of A. R. Braun, president of the Prosperity Company of Syracuse, N. Y., is the increasing scope of laundry operations.

Before the war laundries were equipped preponderantly for wet wash and other semi-finished work, because housewives were inclined to do their own ironing. But when millions of women took war jobs, demand for full-finished laundry work shot upward and caught the laundries unprepared. Mr. Braun believes that housewives, having once been relieved of the arduous task of starching and ironing at home, will continue to lean on laundries for such work even after the war. This will force expansion, mechanization and further modernization of the industry to the tune of an estimated \$100,000,000 outlay for labor-saving presses, modern washers, tumblers and extractors. Moreover, as laundries move forward to full, finished service, he foresees an inevitable merging of the laundry

and dry cleaning industries, already closely related.

BITS O' BUSINESS — New lighting fixtures and new store fronts lead the list of postwar improvements to be made in the nation's grocery stores, according to a survey by the National Association of Retail Grocers. . . Railroads handled without serious congestion in 1944 the greatest volume of export freight traffic on record, 1,866,324 cars compared with 1,401,186 in 1943, a gain of 33 per cent.

Washington Snapshots

by JAMES PRESTON

The Senate controversy over appointment of former Vice President Wallace to succeed Jesse Jones as Secretary of Commerce has at least revealed to the public the almost unlimited powers given the commerce secretary over the nation's business and industrial life. "I have authority to make loans in any amount, for any length of time, at any rate of interest—to anybody," Jones told a Senate committee . . .

The War Production Board is ready to give stronger backing to the War Manpower Commission's voluntary procedure for meeting labor shortages in critical production areas, it is indicated by WPB Chairman Krug. He says the WMC's tightened employment ceiling program is proving effective in transferring workers from non-war employment to critical war jobs . . .

The Foreign Economic Administration has sold 58,000 new and used lendlease machine tools to the United Kingdom—at an average price of less than 20 cents on the dollar! . . .

Congressional leaders say action probably will be delayed on the administration's proposals for a broader social security coverage and a national health plan . . .

Russia's request for a postwar reconstruction loan of \$6 billion is expected to embarrass President Roosevelt at the "Big Three" parley. It is pointed out that the President lacks congressional authority to grant the request when Josef Stalin brings it up at the conference.

Australia has been hard hit by a prolonged drought. The 1944 wheat crop was only one-third of the prewar average. The Commonwealth supplies about three-fourths of the food for American forces in that area.



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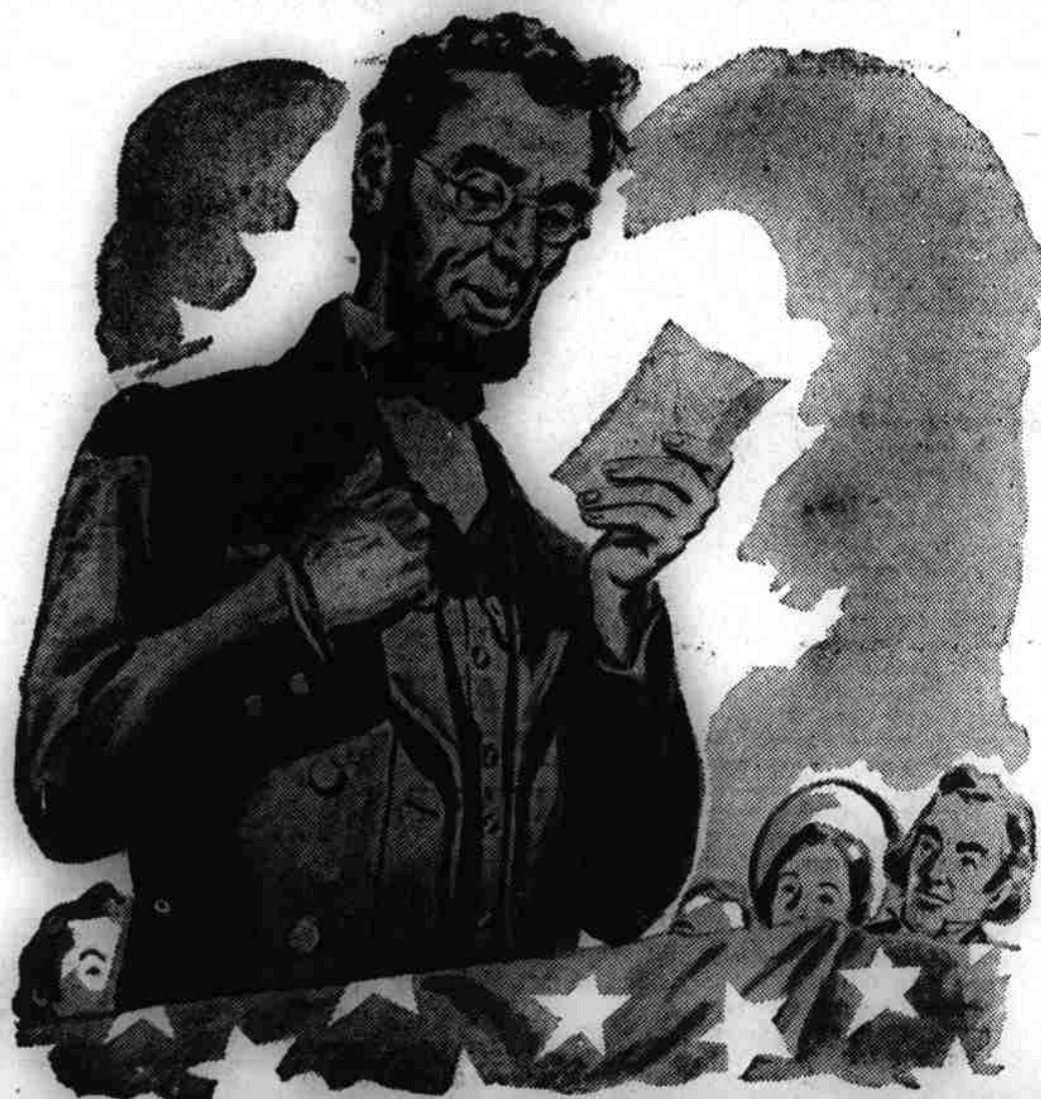
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"IT IS RATHER FOR US TO BE HERE DEDICATED TO THE GREAT TASK REMAINING--"

ABRAHAM LINCOLN'S Gettysburg address might well have been written for America today . . . and for American soldiers now fighting and dying to keep freedom alive. Lincoln said of his soldier dead . . . "that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain." That goal, stated so many years ago, is the goal we now must set ourselves constantly to remember when, the fighting over, our war torn world must be reconstructed so that the peace will be a lasting one . . . so that the freedom Americans died for shall not be attacked again.

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