

Merry-Go-Round

By Drew Pearson

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(This is the second in the series of Washington Merry-Go-Round columns on the State Department, now considered the most important agency in Washington.)

WE HAVE already seen that one of the handicaps in building up efficient machinery for foreign affairs is lack of sufficient money.

This is not the fault of Congress. Many times in recent years, various Senate leaders, including such isolationist-inclined men as Bob LaFollette, have sent word to the State Department that they could have more funds for the asking.

Despite this, the State Department has been content to limp along, geared to old-fashioned diplomacy, apparently unworried over the fact that the fate of the world, after the war, rests largely on its shoulders.

This penny-pinching is partly due to a laudable, though misplaced, pride on the part of Secretary Hull in keeping down the budget. But even more it is a hand-me-down from the halcyon days when the State Department was a rich man's club and no one was afraid to admit it. Chief change is that today no one will admit it.

Against Higher Pay

IN COOLIDGE'S DAY, career diplomats quite openly worked against the Rogers Act, which boosted their salaries, because they sincerely believed that high salaries would open the gates of diplomacy to hol polloi and that responsibility for American foreign policy should rest only on the shoulders of the wealthy few.

Result is that today, while salaries are somewhat higher, younger diplomats sometimes have to scrape along on the pitiful pittance of around \$50 a week, and no man can get anywhere unless he has a wealthy wife, was born with a silver spoon in his mouth, or has made a fortune of his own. In addition, personnel inside the State Department is so limited by a scanty budget that its abler men are worn almost ill with work.

In contrast to skimpy American salaries (a U. S. Ambassador gets only \$17,500 plus the most meager expense allowance), the British Ambassador in Washington gets \$80,000, while the French used to get \$70,000.

All of this means: (1) that American diplomats look upon our international problems through the tinted glasses of entrenched wealth; or (2) the man with no private income becomes so anxious about keeping his job during shifts be-

tween Democratic and Republican administrations that he becomes skilled in the poll-parrot practice of telling each Secretary of State exactly what he thinks, the Secretary wants to hear.

Caution and Fear

IN EITHER CASE, timidity, caution, fear become the guiding instincts of the State Department. This is especially true when the gentleman at the helm had a great record for fearlessness in his younger days, but has been content to rest on his oars since.

To sum it up in the words of Dean Acheson, who had more sense of humor before he became Assistant Secretary of State, State Department policies take their cue from the Pullman car sign: "Quiet is requested for the benefit of those who have retired."

Around Secretary Hull, as a result of this system, are gathered the most delightful and charming group of dinner-table companions to be found any place in Washington.

Most colorful is Breckinridge Long, whose appointment as Assistant Secretary of State was first considered a real achievement for the Middle West; since it broke away from the unwritten rule that no top State Department officials should be appointed from west of the Alleghenies. "Breck" comes from St. Louis, once ran for the Senate against Jim Reed, but has long since shaken off all traces of Missouri mud for the horsey aroma of Maryland.

Charming 'Breck'

Wealthy but inerudite, Breckinridge Long is famous for his St. Louis mansion in which he once entertained Marshal Joffre and the Marquis de Chamberlain; for his Maryland plantation, Montpelier Manor, where he once entertained the Prince of Wales, and for his gracious millionaire wife, the former Christine Alexander Graham, whose greatest passion in life is bridge.

The Longs enjoyed three exciting years in Washington during the last war when "Breck" was Third Assistant Secretary of State under Wilson, and they have clung to it ever since. During 12 lean years of Republican rule "Breck" managed to keep reasonably happy by dabbling at law and on the horses at Pimlico. Then after a heavy contribution to Roosevelt's campaign in 1932 he was appointed United States Ambassador to Rome.

There he distinguished himself for his general geniality, a mild case of Mussolini worship and for telephoning from Rome during a crisis to discuss confidential matters with the State Department, with the GESTAPO and OVRA obviously listening in.

President Keeps Him On

Back in Washington a kind-hearted President has kept him on as Assistant Secretary of State, partly because Mr. Hull likes him, partly because "Breck" and FDR were Little Cabinet members together back in the Wilson Administration.

"Breck" Long is one of the good-hearted souls around Mr. Hull in whose well-meaning, dilettante hands are entrusted the peace plans for which 10 million American young men are fighting.

(Another Drew Pearson column on the State Department will follow soon.)