

The ^{Post} ^{7/28/42} Federal Diary

Editor's Note: Harold L. Ickes, Secretary of the Interior, writes the Federal Diary today in the absence of Jerry Klutz. Columns by other Federal officials will follow.

By Harold L. Ickes
Secretary of the Interior

I have been waiting all of 68 years for this chance. Little wonder that, occasionally, I have been cross. Nothing wears my patience so much



ICKES

as hanging around for something to happen. In this case I was beginning to doubt that Jerry Klutz would go away and invite me to fill in for him.

But here I am—a columnist! So throw in the "Klutz" and let's get off to a fast start. I

haven't been more excited since the day that I joined the Cabinet. My only worry is that it would take me another 68 years to tell everybody on my list what I think of him. And tomorrow I'll be out of the columnist business.

At least no one is going to be able to charge that I slighted the opportunity when it came. I'm a columnist for a day bursting with enough assorted language to fill a thousand and one columns. I realize that, unlike Martin Dies, I have no convenient immunity to hide behind in case I become libelous.

I am accused, on occasion, of tearing into people. But what a break it would be to be able, like Brother Martin, to hit and hide in the cellar of immunity. Br'er Martin is pretty good at that.

Off the Beam

Dies got off the beam the other day and barked at the wrong person when he didn't have his immunity with him. Result—a couple of libel suits. Then he broke into a high lope, running to Congress to prevail upon it to foot the bill for lawyers' fees, etc., as if the war weren't costing us enough already. Perhaps he has a point at that. If Congress dishes out good public money to make it possible to commit libel, maybe it is only fair that it also finance damage suits.

Typical pattern for a typical demagogue: If anyone calls you a stuffed shirt, you mop the floor with him. You call him things that you wouldn't dare call him if you couldn't claim congressional protection. You invoke the Nation's armed

forces the Administration and the Judiciary, and with two policemen at each door, you operate on his eardrums until they sound like a beehive. And when you have talked yourself out of breath and everyone around you into a stupor, you get unanimous consent to extend your remarks in the Record and there you really vivisect the similitude that you have created.

As the last nail in his coffin, you mail 50,000 copies of the Record (on the house) to places where they will do him the least good, and with the help of the newspapers that enjoy a good snappy round of mayhem as well as anybody, the operation is complete. You'll teach him not to go about calling you a zany and saying that the investigators Congress hired for you with which to heckle people are professional wire-tappers, when it is of record that your specific instructions to them have been to stick to window-peeping.

The are, fortunately, only a few such and they certainly are not typical of the Congress, although the few grab the headlines. How about a House and a Senate Committee on Congressional Ethics to help the majority clamp down on the obstreperous few who fail to measure up? The Greeks had a word for it: ostracize.

She Snoops to Conquer

"Old Mother Hubbard, she went to the cupboard,

"To get her poor paper a bone,
"And when she got there, the cupboard was bare,

"And so the poor paper had none."

One can't hit a Congressman when he's behind his immunity, and the other one just referred to, no gentleman would hit without first removing his hat unless, of course, he is in the habit of taking a poke at his great-grandmother just to remind her who's boss. The charming, if garrulous, editress whom I have in mind has two principal defensive advantages, namely,

1.—but it isn't necessary to go into that and

2.—she has a newspaper in which she would always have the last word even if she weren't a woman.

Completely surround her with a polyloquent staff, males and females, who "have to earn a living" somehow, and you are probably worse off than when a Congressman sneaks behind his immunity and starts abusing you.

'Christianly' Letter

I had a "Christianly" letter from the Oh! So Rev. Gerald L. K. Smith the other day. When it flew open and snapped at me I was glad that I had been inoculated against hydrophobia. The Oh! So Rev. Mr. Smith mentioned some pornographic (or-so he alleged) magazine which apparently he had just read. Just why he should be reading this kind of literature and then advertising the fact I don't understand. But then I never have been able to understand the Fascist mind anyhow, or the rabble-rouser's. Take it from me, a preacher turned rabble-rouser is the worst of the lot.

But what interested me in the Oh! So Rev. Mr. Smith's letter were his violent threats that if he succeeds (he needn't worry—he won't) in shouting his way into the Senate from the State of Michigan next year he is going to impeach the Secretary of the Interior (if he finds me still here), have him adjudged guilty of various crimes and misdemeanors, particularly those involving criticism of the Oh! So Rev. Mr. Smith, and locked up in jail. I began to suspect that the Oh! So Rev. Mr. Smith had never read his Constitution and does not know the powers and duties of a United States Senator, however learned he might be on the subject of a Senator's emoluments.

It was getting on towards evening and I hadn't yet done my daily good deed. So I wrote to the Oh! So Rev. Mr. Smith—very, very politely—and observed that it seemed to me that he thought that he was

going to be a candidate for fuhrer and not merely for Senator.

I can already see the bottom of the column. Time to begin tapering off. And I really haven't started! There are so many things that I want to say and so many people that I want to talk about. But you will get the idea, I hope, that if I ever get into my own editorial sanctum I will be plenty tough to deal with as long as I can have a bodyguard of heavyweight pugilists nearby to protect me. I quit claim to the Oh! So Rev. Mr. Smith all of the aspiration that I ever had to be a really great public figure.