THE SOUTH BEND NEWS-TIMES

Morning—Evening—Sunday

J. M. STEPHENSON, Publisher.
JOHN HENRY ZUVER, Editor.

Member United Press and the International News Service
Morning Edition.
Member Associated Press

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Phone, Main 2100. Private branch exchange. Give operator name of person or department wanted. After 8 p. m. call night numbers—Main 2100, classified department; Main 2101, city editor; Main 2100, society editor; Main 2102, circulation department.

SUBSCRIPTION RATES: Morning and Evening Editions, Single Copy, 3c; Sunday, 10c. Delivered by carrier in South Bend and Mishawaka, $10.00 per year in advance, or 20c by the week. Morning or Evening Editions, daily including Sunday. Entered at the South Bend postoffice as second class mail.

RATES BY MAIL.

Zones	1 Yr.	6 Mos.	3 Mos.	1 Mo.
1 2	$5.00	$2.75	$1.50	$ .60
3 & 4	6.00	3.25	1.75	.70
5 & 6	7.00	3.75	2.00	.80
7 & 8	8.00	4.25	2.25	.90

Foreign Rate, $1.65 per month.

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MAY 11, 1921

HOUSE MATERIALS MUST DROP.

With the bricklayers, carpenters, and other wage scales reset, one thing more, in the building world, and lower rents for which so many have prayed, may begin to put in their appearance. It is an economic law; that is all. The tenants can't beat it, and neither can the landlords. Lower rents are impossible in South Bend, or anywhere until the cost of building material, well as labor, has forced them down.

Prices of building materials still average, nationally, twice as high as in 1915. This is shown in a report issued a few days ago by the engineering firm of O'Brien-Disbrow Co. and the Dow service daily building reports. In the face of this, other wholesale prices average only 30 percent above pre-war levels, says Bradstreet's, and average cost of living is only 67 percent above pre-war, says national industrial conference board.

Labor formed 80 percent of building costs during and immediately after the war, says the O'Brien-Disbrow-Dow report, but, it adds, "Small house specialists put the present ratio at 35 percent. The reason for this, it was pointed out, is that labor is giving a larger day's work for money received."

At the price peak during the war, a 500-pound bale of cotton in the New Orleans spot market was worth $207.50. Today the same bale is worth about $56, because it can be replaced for that amount. What has happened in cotton will repeat in the case of residence buildings erected when prices were at their peak.

When building material prices follow other commodity prices and crash downward—as they will—a building is going to be worth exactly what it will cost to replace it. Replacement value is the basis of rent. Go ask South Bend banks what they are loaning on first mortgages, compared with a year ago. You'll find that they are loaning about a fifth less, anticipating the first step of "squeezing out of water."

Your landlord probably tells you that he can't reduce rent and make a profit on his investment, but eventually he will have to do like business men who got caught with big stocks in their warehouses—write off his loss as due to falling building costs. The average landlord figures on a gross income of 12 percent on his investment. Thus, if his property cost him $10,000 when he acquired it at top prices, he wants $100 a month rent.

Suppose building costs follow other costs and retreat to pre-war level. Then another could duplicate that $10,000 house for $5,000. He could rent it for $50 a month and get the same rate of income—12 percent—on each dollar invested. And there'll be plenty of landlords that'll build at $5,000—when prices drop. It takes a dead market to force prices down. For that reason, present inactivity in building may prove the rent-payer's best friend.

THOSE IRRECONCILABLES.

It must be painful to those irreconcilables in the United States senate; the manner after which Sec'y of State Hughes continues the pursuit of the Wilsonian international policies, and without the least sign of check from the white house. The president spills over every now and then, with words that might seem reassuring to the irreconcilable senators, but somehow the state department goes on functioning, and without much seeming regard to the impressions that the president's remarks leave.

What the secretary of state may have in mind is not known, but it is known that he is entirely out of sympathy with the extreme isolation policy which he has found, by experience, to be practically impossible. By his recent statement, and by his handling of the communication from the German government, he has exorted a great and most helpful influence in the reparation deliberations. His representations on the mandate question, his protest against a Japanese mandate for Yap, and his insistence on the rights of America as a participator in the war, all indicate a total lack of sympathy on the part of Mr. Hughes with the isolation policy as both undesirable and impossible. The general condemnation of the Knox resolution, and the opposition that is being shown to the idea of a separate peace, certainly serve to give some reflection of the public mind.

Two things, however, are clear. The administration is determining its own foreign policy, as it should, and is conducting the foreign affairs of the country, as is proper. The other thing that is clear is that the irreconcilables have altogether lost the strategic position that was theirs when the Versailles treaty was before the senate and during the campaign of last year. The republicans are in the saddle now the bridge that threatened to split and precipitate the party into the abyss of defeat, has been crossed, and Messrs. Johnson, Borah and the rest, seem approaching about the same consideration for their campaign support, as has been accorded De Valera and Vierick,—thanks to Pres't Harding and his secretary of state.

WE ARE TO BE REPRESENTED.

Pres't Harding's decision to accept the invitation of the allied powers, and, to participate, though unofficially in the deliberations of the supreme council of the League of Nations, the council of ambassadors and the reparations conferences will meet with popular approval. But the language in which the president accepts the invitation is more or less puzzling to the layman, unaccustomed to diplomatic verbiage. The president in a note to the British prime minister says:

"The government of the United States, while maintaining the traditional policy of abstention from participation in matters of distinctly European concern, is deeply interested in the proper economic adjustments and in the just settlement of the matters of world-wide importance which are under discussion in the conference, and desires helpfully to cooperate in the deliberation upon these questions * * * The government of the United States notes with pleasure your expression of the belief of the representatives of the allied governments assembled in London, that American cooperation in the settlement of the great international questions growing out of the world war will be of material assistance."

In other words, because of a local fiction, which we must maintain for American consumption, we have a "traditional policy of abstentation in matters of distinctly European concern,"—our pretense for remaining out of the League of Nations,—but we are gradually discovering our interest in the "proper economic adjustments and in the just settlement of matters of world-wide importance," wherefore, if we can ease our way in without assuming any responsibility, other than advice, watch us do it.

The note is a confession that despite our "traditional policy of abstentation," even Pres't Harding is beginning to feel it somewhat antiquated, and to realize that to stand aloof from the great international questions means our international suicide. Accordingly what we are doing now, is virtually sending an ambassador to represent us in the councils of the League of Nations. Not being a part of it, we still have to deal with it, and the next thing we know we will be entering into treaty agreements with it, or something of that kind; either that or indulging secret understandings, reviving the old diplomacy with an audacity which none of the other powers could, at least for the present, indulge.

The moral influence of American representation at the councils, even though it be unofficial—merely speaking for the president, the like of which was a crime in the Wilson days,—will be great. Europe will at least know something of our wishes, and the administration at Washington will be apprised more directly of the sources of the council's conclusions. While we will have no vote we will have a voice and while we will not be bound we will be there to hear. Maybe this is the new "association of nations" to which the president has been referring; the League of Nations with the United States unofficially associated!

SALES TAX JOKER.

The proposed "overturn sales tax," according to its opponents, would give big business an unfair advantage over small manufacturers. Take the case of a small concern making steel products. Here's what would happen to it:

Mine sells iron ore to jobber—and pays a sales tax.

Jobber sells ore to blast furnace. Second sales tax.

Furnace sells pig iron to jobber. Third sales tax.

Jobber sells pig on to small steel mill. Fourth sales tax.

Mill sells steel billets to small manufacturer of steel products. Fifth sales tax.

Mine sells coal to jobber. Sixth sales tax.

Jobber sells coal to coke oven. Seventh sales tax.

Oven sells coke to blast furnace, steel billet maker and manufacturer of finished products. Three more sales taxes. 10 sales taxes in all!

They are passed on to the small manufacturer of steel sheets, cold-rolled shafting, etc. While he in turn passes them on to his customers, still these 10 sales taxes become a part of his production costs and increase the minimum price at which he can sell.

On the other hand, take an outfit like the U. S. Steel corporation. In large part, it owns and mines its own coal and iron ore, makes its own coke, pig iron, steel billets and finished products. No sales tax would appear in U. S. Steel's production costs.

Result: U. S. Steel could undersell the small manufacturer whose costs would include at least 10 sales taxes.

Einstein says time is never identical in any two parts of the universe. He must have lived in a Daylight Saving town and tried to figure out when the trains arrived.

Do you remember when movie theaters had phonograph horns sticking out over the sidewalk, playing "Bedelia" and "In the Shade of the Old Apple Tree?"

William Colfax Bryant Barlow Bee Beauregard Johnson Robert Edward Lee Humphries is plaintiff in a court action at Greenville, S. C. And probably everybody calls him Bill.

Other Editors Than Ours

PRESIDENT AND SENATE.

(Indianapolis News.)

It is in no way surprising that the senate should find it difficult to realize that it is not charged with the conduct of foreign affairs. It held that view strongly during a considerable part of the Wilson administration, and more than once attempted to make it good. The authority which it asserted, or attempted to assert during those days, the senate is reluctant to lay down. When Pres't Harding was elected it was assumed that he, as a former member of the senate, would accept the senate theory. Sen. Penrose, it will be recalled, said that it did not matter who was secretary of state, since the senate, or its foreign relations committee, would say what the nation's policy should be.

But now it appears that even a senator, when he takes up his residence in the white house, ceases to be senator and becomes president. Mr. Harding is no more disposed to submit to senatorial dictation than was his predecessor. He and his cabinet "feel that it is of the greatest importance that the legislative branch of the government shall not be permitted to encroach in any way on the executive branch," and they propose to see "that the proper relationship between the executive department and the legislative department is maintained." Mr. Harding has made it clear, in a polite way, that he will insist on the same freedom for himself in executive matters that he willingly concedes to congress in legislative matters. And he holds, quite rightly, that the management of foreign relations is an executive function. So he asks that the question of disarmament be not now considered since it has an important bearing on the present European situation and our relation thereto. It is believed also that he would prefer that consideration of the Knox peace resolution be postponed till the reparations question is settled, and even then that the policy declared shall be one that is in accord with the state department program.

It is not easy for the senate to understand the situation. For instance, Sen. Lodge said in the senate last Saturday that it had been found impracticable to separate the League of Nations covenant from the treaty. "Found impracticable" by whom? The impression that one would get from these words is that the president had found this impracticable. This may be so, but the senator had no authority for such a statement. So it seems that this was an attempt to force the hand of the president, or at least to commit him to a policy not of his own making. The country will be glad to know that Pres't Harding intends to maintain the full authority of his great office, the authority conferred by the constitution. The senate is going through an educational process from which it should, if sufficiently humble, derive much profit.

The Tower of Babel

BY BILL ARMSTRONG

The government hasn't any money for the bonus and it hasn't enough to take care of the disabled soldiers properly, but it can always dig up a few hundred thousand to continue the hearings with reference to the well known escape of Grover Bergdoll.

An Italian statesman has just died at the age of 102 years. If an American statesman lived to be 102, he wouldn't have friends enough left to have any pallbearers at his funeral.

Mayor Carson will turn over the keys of the city to the Eagles of Indiana sometime today.

To Tom Brandon—Thanks for them kind words you wrote with reference to The Tower's second birthday on Thursday.

Thank goodness, we've got another opening we can attend tomorrow, if we have the time.

SOMETHING NEW IN ALIBIS.

When a man's late in getting home at meal times, we've just uncovered a corking good alibi for him. Tell the wife that you met George Platt, the well known clothier, and had to listen to a couple of new stories about George's boy.

UP-TO-DATE SIDEWALK CONVERSATION.

"Where are you going?"

"Oh, lets go down to the Auditorium and tame that woman they've got down there."

M. A. Donahue of the Gas company is the latest column conductor to make his appearance in South Bend. He of the Swedish name is writing what he chooses to call, "Hitch Your Car to a Star," and it appears each month in the Chamber of Commerce magazine, "South Bend Today." To give the column more of a local atmosphere, we would suggest in place of the title, "Hitch Your Car to a Star," that of "Ditch Your Car On the Niles Road."

If the Chicago Tribune's slogan, "1921 Will Reward Fighters," holds good, we know of one married couple in this town that will be able to retire at the end of the year, millionaires.

HERE'S A LITTLE PUZZLE FOR OUR READERS.

Sam Schwartz wants to know why a revolver full of bullets is like Ernie Pioway's pair of dice. A used typewriter ribbon will be awarded to the person sending in the first correct answer to this important question.

BRIEF NEWS OF THE CITY.

Joe Grand Leader was seen to smile for the first time today since Gov. Cox was defeated.

Frank Jefferies, the realtor, was in the office today wearing a new straw hat. To our customers we will say, it is not necessary now to wait for Andy Weisbery to officially open the season as Mr. Jefferies has taken the lead. Mr. Jefferies' hat is about the color of an orangeade, and is shaped like a ten cent plate of Velvet ice cream, not including war tax.

Charles B. Sax is preparing a 16-page closely typewritten opinion on how the Jack Dempsey-Georges Carpentier fight is going to turn out.

Ignorant Essays

By J. P. McEVOY

BACK TO THE TREES.

"The human race has reached its highest development," says Dr. James John Monahan, of Chicago, "and now it's going back." In a few hundred thousand years, according to the doctor, we will all be back up in our trees again, leaping lightly through the branches, swinging gaily by our tails, throwing cocoanuts at each other with great good will.

I hope the learned professor knows what he is talking about. I hope he is right. If what we have all about us is the highest development of which the human, in some respects, perhaps, race, is capable, then the sooner we get off the ground and up into the highest atmosphere of the trees, the better off we will be.

If, according to the old adage, "there is plenty of room at the top" that must also hold good for the treetop, and we should have stayed there. Instead of that we came down and became part of the earth earthy and in many cases the dirt dirty.

We have heard a great deal of the "back to the soil movement." This looks like a back to the tree movement. Some will say that this is a revolution, that paradoxically we are going down by going up, but is this true? Is it too much to hope that the wide, far regions of the tree top—top world will bring us a newer freedom? Will it not expand our horizons? Will it now bring up new vistas? Will it not make of us three dimensional creatures instead of two?

Now we look forward and backward and sideways, but never upward. In fact, we have almost quit looking forward. The most popular step these days is the side step. If we are up we will not only look forward and backward and sideways but we will also look downward and no doubt we will see our successors, whatever they will be, crawling around on the ground, scheming their petty schemes and dreaming their idle dreams. We will laugh at them with superior condescension and occasionally fling cocoanuts at them.

What a beautiful life to lead! No one to uplift us—we will be uplifted. No one to hold us down. If you can't keep a squirrel on the ground certainly you can't keep a monkey.

Kipling says that the monkeys have their regular highways over the tops of the trees; even so, even if our trails are marked and trodden there will certainly be more variety and allure to them than the flivver ridden highways we now infest. I hope Prof. Monahan is right. I hope we are going back. I am sorry I won't be with you when you get there, but I shall do my part now.

This reforestration project gives me a chance. So that there will be plenty of trees to climb, I shall support the movement now afoot to plant some more. This very day I shall go out and plant a tree in the yard. Who knows but that in the top of its great-great-grandchildren, my great great-grandchildren will be swinging gaily by their tails and discussing matters of infinitely more importance than prohibition, income tax, immigration, and Blue Sunday Laws.

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More Truth Than Poetry

By JAMES J. MONTAGUE

AS GOOD AS THE SOIL.

A Yale professor contends that Yale is falling off in athletics because the impoverished soil of Connecticut raises inferior vegetables.

Silas Jones of Middlebury
Didn't fertilize his soil;
Silas wasn't ever very
Keen for any form of toil.
All the spuds he dug last autumn
Turned up kind o' gaunt and pale
But a wholesale grocer bought 'em
For the football squad at Yale.
Weren't like real potatoes should be,
Didn't look or taste the same;
Weak and watery as could be;
That's why Princeton won the game!

Henry Smith, just out of Groton,
Thought old ways were good enouh;
Henry didn't seem to cotton
To the scientific stuff.
Sickly looking were his squashes,
Like a child that's nourished wrong.
But the young New Haven froshes
Bought and ate 'em, right along.
This mistake in dietetics
They adhered to as a rule
Till their rank in frosh athletics
Was a theme of ridiclue.

Jasper Hoskins of East Haddam
Wasn't smart by any means;
Knew about as much as Adam
Of the way to raise string beans.
Crops were never alternated,
Thin and droopy were the vines,
And the beans weren't saturated
With the needful vitamines,
Notwithstanding, Jasper sold 'em
In New Haven, for the crew;
That's why Yale could never hold 'em
When the rooters told 'em to!

(Copyright, 1921.)

A Superman.

Ring Lardner asserts that Pres't Harding always counts his strokes on the golf course, which is a bigger boost than even his campaign managers ever gave him.

Profound Mystery.

We don't see many clothing manufacturers' ads in the Dearborn Independent.

That'll Do It Fast Enough.

Apparently the only way to reduce navies is to have another war.

The wool grown on different parts of an animal's body is of different strengths.

JUST FOLKS

By EDGAR A. GUEST

EQUALITY.

I hold to this: that if a man be true,
If he will live unto his spoken creed,
It matters not the work he finds to do
Nor what his garb—of him the world has need.

There are degrees of skill and wealth and fame,
One may grow richer than his neighbor can,
But if to gain, another stoop to shame,
The honest toiler is the better man.

Who stands to duty patiently by day
And gives his best, no matter what the task,
Who meets with faith the cares which come his way,
Is doing all that God shall ever ask.

The chance of one fingerprint being exactly like another is one in 64,000,000,000.

Sugar cane waste is now being made into a board suitable for lining building walls.