

Mr. Roosevelt's New Deal for Women

THE GALLANT OLD MOTTO, "*Place aux dames*" is having a new day in Washington:

Ladies first, indeed, as often as possible.

Give them a place in the sun—a new place, among the seats of the mighty.

And so it has come to pass that when important governmental or diplomatic posts are to be filled, Washington no longer knows whether the new incumbents will be the lords of creation or "their sisters or their cousins or their aunts," as *Sir Joseph Porter* sang.

The new deal for women started, of course, with the selection of Miss Frances Perkins for the Roosevelt Cabinet, where she has already set a high mark as a new broom in the Department of Labor. With her little three-cornered hat crowning her diminutive and serious person, she has figured before the country as an abolisher of obsolete and offensive bureaus, a spirited witness before a joint Congressional committee, and a lone "Madame Secretary" at Cabinet meetings.

"*Place aux dames*" for Frances Perkins!

And again it is "*Place aux dames*" for Ruth Bryan Owen, who is to be "Madame Minister" to Denmark.

And it's "*Place aux dames*" for Mrs. Nellie Tayloe Ross, once Governor of Wyoming, who is to be "Madame Treasurer" in the United States Treasury, with her feminine signature on all new paper money that comes out so long as she holds that important position.

Future historians may dwell upon the feminine element in the Roosevelt Administration. We print some portraits of the women most concerned in this article, adding those of Mrs. Roosevelt and the President's lovely daughter, Mrs. Curtis Dall, each of whom, in her different way, contributes notably to the feminine coloring of the present era in Washington.

And nobody knows yet how far the Government of the "new deal" may carry the *Place aux dames* principle in what seems to be a new age for women in public life.

AND are they making good?

"Miss Perkins Holds Her Own" is the title of one of the many enthusiastic editorials following the "Madame Secretary's" bout with the before-mentioned committee. Says the *Norfolk Ledger-Dispatch*:

If any one had misgivings about the ability of Frances Perkins to handle the job of Secretary of Labor he must be convinced, after reading her testimony before the joint Congressional committee hearing the President's first work-relief bill, that she is a wise and informed woman fully capable of holding her own with all-comers, as she was with Representatives who undertook to cross-examine her about the merits and workings of the bill.

Representative Connery, of Massachusetts, who refused to introduce the bill, talked about the Government's lowering wage



"Madame Treasurer"
(Mrs. Nellie Tayloe Ross.)



"Madame Secretary"
(Miss Frances Perkins.)

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standards by paying a man \$1 a day and keep for a year's enlistment in the Conservation Corps to work on forestation and other projects. "That doesn't make sense," Miss Perkins admonished the Representative, explaining that the bill was designed solely for relief by giving employment to a portion of the 12,000,000 men in the country who are getting no wages at all.



"Madame Minister"
(Mrs. Ruth Bryan Owen.)

Press dispatches assert that Miss Perkins left the quizzing committeemen groping for replies, and that but one Cabinet officer in years, former Secretary Mills, had handled a case so well before a Congressional committee.

Earlier in the week, Miss Perkins started house-cleaning in the Department of Labor. The senseless drive Secretary Doak carried on at huge expense in harassing foreign-born residents was ended; the "secret service" operatives of the department were fired; and the statistical bureaus, which for three years were undertaking to show that business was improving while the total of unemployed mounted were directed to report facts only.

To get the full flavor of Miss Perkins's performance as a witness, we quote some descriptive passages from the *New York Times*:

Attired in black, wearing her well-known tricorne hat, Miss Perkins stood during her testimony.

Much of her testimony was recorded by sound motion-picture apparatus, and she testified literally in the spotlight.

The plan which she defended is considered generally as her own, and she spoke of it with authority in the face of criticism.

The principal criticisms were aimed at the wage scale of \$1 a day provided for the men enlisted, which some committee members maintained would tend to lower all wage scales.

Representative Connery of Massachusetts, chairman of the House Labor Committee, said flatly that he would refuse to introduce the Administration bill in the House.

Miss Perkins replied sharply to Mr. Connery's complaint.



Mrs. Curtis Dall
(The "Daughter of the Administration.")

She went on to say that the plan is "primarily a relief measure to provide honest occupation to self-respecting Americans who have been forced to panhandling and similar practises against their will.

"I can not see that the work is in competition with private employment or comparable to it, in any degree."

Representative Welch of California, who apparently assumed the conservation corps would be conscripted, received a sharp reply when he asked Miss Perkins if she thought it proper "to force a man to leave his family for a year to get \$1 a day?"

"Let us be realistic!" Miss Perkins urged. "We are not going to force any man to join this conservation corps, but if I may speak lightly too, it might be the best thing that

could happen in some cases to separate a man from his family for a year."

Laughter and applause, especially from women spectators, followed that remark. And the busy brain under the tricorne hat was still working on that domestic equation.

"But we need have no fear of destruction of family life by this measure," Miss Perkins continued. "Nothing is more destructive of the family than prolonged unemployment, where a man has to sit around the house and brood, and his only occupation is to go twice a week and get his basket or dole.

"Call it a day, boys, call it a day!" exclaims the *Baltimore Sun*, apostrophizing the discomfited legislators, and adding:

The lady is better than you are, and we should not be a bit surprized if even higher compliments could be paid her.

What's more, she is not afraid of you.

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And that makes an awful combination.

A woman smarter than a man is something to get on guard about. A woman not afraid of a man is something to get on guard about. But a woman smarter than a man and also not afraid of a man, well, good-night!

SPEAKING of "Secretary Perkins's Housecleaning," the *Louisville Courier-Journal* reminds us that early this year newspaper readers and motion-picture fans were "treated to a widely heralded foray on Hollywood by American immigration agents." Further:

Movie actors and actresses from other countries were questioned as to their right to remain in the United States.

Speculation was rife whether Greta Garbo would be allowed to return from Sweden, whether Marlene Dietrich would be sent back to Germany, whether Maurice Chevalier would be given his walking-papers, whether this star and that would literally be fired from the country. There was much ado, but nothing done. It was little more than a circus stunt not unlike the quest for deportable aliens among the gangsters and hoodlums of Chicago.

This kind of alien hunt is now off. It does not fit in with the Roosevelt Administration's efficiency and economy plans. According to Secretary of Labor Frances Perkins, it was costly and largely ballyhoo, and forthwith she has abolished the alien secret service organization which carried on the futile Hollywood and Chicago investigations.

MADAME SECRETARY'S distinguished efficiency in her own field is expected to be matched by Madame Minister in the diplomatic field. Ruth Bryan Owen knows her Europe and knows her Denmark, where she has powerful friends in high places. She is esteemed in Washington as one of the wittiest women in public life, and also one of the best drest and most debonair. In the capacity of American Minister to Denmark she is expected to reflect credit on her country and have an excellent time.

When William Jennings Bryan's gifted daughter made her exodus from Congress last winter with the rest of the "lame ducks," she went window-shopping for a job under the first Democratic President since Woodrow Wilson, whose nomination was forced by her father in the Baltimore convention, and whose first Secretary of State he became.

In the new régime of "*Place aux dames*," the only question was, what would Mrs. Owen like to be or do? At first there was talk of her as an Assistant Secretary of State, but later came the intimation that she was to be her country's envoy at Copenhagen. The *New York Times* gives this brief sketch of her:

Mrs. Owen, who is forty-seven years old, is the widow of Maj. Reginald Owen, a British Army officer, who died of war wounds a few years after the Armistice. Altho they had four children, Mrs. Owen volunteered for active service during the struggle, and was an Army nurse in the

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campaigns in Egypt and Palestine. After the war she studied law in Florida, and was elected to the Seventy-first and Seventy-second Congresses.

She was defeated for renomination in the Democratic primary because, she said later, her opponent was wetter than she was. As a "lame duck" she voted for beer and for repeal.

ACCORDING to the United Press, Mrs. Owen presents a fetching contrast of dark eyes and iron-gray hair. Her face sparkles with humor and irony. She is tall and strong, with a vigorous, elastic walk and a resonant voice, whose tones sometimes recall those of her "silver-tongued" father. Her accent has a mildly British flavor.

Of all the retiring members of the expiring Congress, it was said that she supplied "the only good-natured comment." This consisted of a "lame duck" last will and testament, in verse. *THE DIGEST* printed it at the time, but some of our readers may have missed it, so we give it again:

To members in the coming session
 We leave what's left of the depression
 With fifty thousand tomes appended
 Telling just how it can be ended.
 To Congressmen who'll draw our salary
 We leave all gunmen in the gallery,
 All Communists who march and fight
 And threaten us with dynamite.
 Those stalwart ones may have the onus
 Of laying hands upon the bonus.
 The currency—to them we hand it
 To shrink, contract it, or expand it.
 We'll let them exercise their talents
 On making that thar budget balance
 And, pointing out, with no delaying
 A tax the public won't mind paying.
 To make this simple as can be
 We leave to them Technocracy.
 To them we're leaving the analysis
 Of beer producing no paralysis,
 To them we leave, with stifled sobs,
 All persons who are seeking jobs.
 Our pangs of exile 'twill assuage
 To know we have no patronage.

Aside from having her "John Hancock" on all the new paper money, "Madame Treasurer" Ross will not be idle. "She will be in charge of the keeping of the books of the Secretary of the Treasury showing the movements of billions of dollars, and will prepare his daily, monthly, and annual reports," says a *Chicago Tribune* correspondent.

Mr. Roosevelt's conviction that women should be given a larger share in the responsibilities of government have long been known, comments the *New York Times*, adding,

Both Mrs. Ross and Mrs. Owen have amply demonstrated their abilities to compete on an equal footing with men both as to efficiency and ability, Mrs. Ross as Governor of Wyoming and Vice-Chairman of the Democratic National Committee, and Mrs. Owen as a Congresswoman.