

goal being to accomplish the election of Warren G. Harding and the Ohio Gang? My guess is they will say nothing. Perhaps they have already done what the esteemed Washington *Star* did on the day of the disclosure—eliminated all mention of Secretary Mellon's name from the news story. Or they may have done what the Associated Press did on the day that "Andy's" name was found on the sinister memorandum—started the story by describing the hearing as "a rather drab session."

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FOR a candidate who holds such a commanding position, Secretary Hoover is risking his chances of the

nomination rather desperately. By allowing his name to be entered in the Ohio and Indiana primaries, he has exposed himself to the danger of defeats which would ruinously impair his prestige. A beating by such a blatherskite as Frank B. Willis would be sad enough, but if it were followed by a defeat at the hands of the unspeakable Jim Watson, it is difficult to see how the Hoover boom could survive. Every day of the campaign brings new evidence of the extent to which the Secretary's clever young men are playing into the hands of those seasoned and crafty strategists who, at the proper moment, will engineer the swing toward Charles Gates Dawes.

Americans We Like Congressman La Guardia

By DUFF GILFOND

CONGRESSMAN FIORELLO H. LA GUARDIA of Harlem wished to exhibit on the floor of the House the touching pictures he had taken on his recent visit to the Pittsburgh mines. The Washington correspondent in whose possession they were offered to bring them down to Capitol Hill the following day. But La Guardia, fearful lest the fellow oversleep, insisted on getting them himself at once. I was in his office at the time and offered to take them up in my Ford. On the way the engine stalled and the starter died. While I fumed and the correspondent suggested what might be amiss, the cherubic La Guardia hopped out, cranked the car, and made her go.

Since Congress convened in December, besides inspecting the mines, he has fought the naval appropriation bill, attacked the Administration's Nicaraguan policy, cruised in a sister submarine of the S-4 for thirty-six hours, given a number of Prohibition enforcement officers heart failure, messed up \$300,000 worth of army posters, introduced a liberalizing immigration bill and a number of labor bills.

In spite of his earnestness and the disappointments which such a liberal program necessarily brings, the merry little Major (his title in Washington since the war) has preserved his sense of humor. He persists in introducing bills that cannot pass—for ten years. "They serve for educational purposes," he says, puffing at his two-and-a-half-cent Manila cigar. "The function of a progressive is to keep on protesting until things get so bad that a reactionary demands reform." He slaps his fleshy thighs in great glee as bills he sponsored years ago get a hearing today. Only the other day a constituent wrote him to support the pending civil-service retirement bill. "Why wouldn't I support my eleven-year-old son?" he responded. Optimistically he tore away to a committee hearing recently on the changing of the Congressional calendar according to which Congressmen meet thirteen months after they are elected. What matter that only one other Congressman came, too? "We're paving the way," said La Guardia.

He attends all his committee meetings, dictates all his letters, and never gives his colleagues a chance to slip a bill

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of Personality Portraits*

through by absenting himself from the floor. If he is not making a speech or an objection his dark little rotund figure is at

least conspicuous in the House. He is a great trial to some of his colleagues—especially the rabidly dry and Nordic—but just as great a comfort. One of the very few men who study every bill on the consent calendar, he can invariably answer the questions of his less prepared cohorts. He is the hated and beloved boy who does the homework. La Guardia has affected more bills in the House than any other member. There is not a branch of the Government, from the Shipping Board to the Department of State, that he has not attempted to reform.

How he does it?

Watch him for a moment in his office—gesticulating wildly as he argues in Italian with a constituent, dictating a letter urging a Cabinet officer to be sensible, listening to the sob story of a rabbi told in Yiddish, feeding the newspapermen with another rum-rum-rum revelation, and doing them all at the same time. To be sure, his Yiddish and Italian are repeatedly interpolated with such adjectives as "lousy," but is the fiery little Major angry? Indeed, not. He is having too good a time to be angry. He is in action. In the House restaurant the other morning he was served so readily that a group of ladies at the next table remarked about it. "Oh, I work here," explained La Guardia. "They know I have to get to work."

His forthrightness is astounding. A contracting firm



Fiorello H. La Guardia

in his district wrote him to vote for a bill in accord with its interests. La Guardia could easily have told them he would "take the matter under consideration" as his more tactful colleagues do. Instead he dictated: "I will fight, oppose, and attack this measure in every way I can."

When weariness does overtake him he plays a tune on his cornet, slips into the movies, or cheers up a lonesome member with a sample of his own spaghetti and of his superb mimicry of their colleagues.

The diversity of his activities has not made him superficial. Although his sympathy was with the miners, he obtained his facts and figures from the coal operators. There could be no question of fairness about the deductions he brought to the House: the coal operators want the miners to pay for bad conditions in the industry; an industry that cannot pay its workers a decent living wage has no right to exist; the cost of maintaining the private police, who forceably keep colored strike-breakers on the property, under a system of virtual peonage, would pay for the increase in wages demanded by the miners. With the same fair-mindedness he tore up a speech he had prepared in criticism of the navy's efforts to raise the S-4 and went down to see for himself. The exculpation—La Guardia really believes nothing can be put on a submarine to enable lifting her once she is sunk—may have disappointed many, but it showed the defiant Major is open to conviction, even by the navy. Naturally, the new friendship was not long-lived. "Wait," he told one of the admirals who came to thank him for his supporting speech, "till you hear what I have to say about naval armaments."

Similarly he takes the heart out of the dry-law officers, illiberal lobbyists, and organization men in the House. They never know what he will do next. Why, he would change his vote on a bill because he was convinced by the opposition! He has come to Congress as a Republican on a Fusion ticket and as a Progressive indorsed by the Socialists. Before his last election he nearly ran as an Independent but the Republican candidate got cold feet and ceded the nomination to him. Asked why he took it, he rumbled his black hair and said: "Well, I can do more here than on Second Avenue, so what's the difference?" He never attends a caucus; he gives White House invitations to the children; taunted with radicalism on the floor, he aptly retorts: "As long as a person talks about great American standards he is applauded; when he asks to put them into practice he is a radical."

La Guardia got the opportunity to keep his promise to the admiral from the National Republican Club, where he was invited to speak at a non-partisan discussion on the new navy bill. To insure equality and fairness Admirals Plunkett and Fiske, Colonel Theodore Roosevelt, Jr., and Representative A. Piatt Andrew of Massachusetts were also invited. La Guardia immediately got the irony of it.

"It does not require much imagination," he said, "to predict the feelings of the Londoner at breakfast tomorrow when he reads in his *Times* that the only one who criticized the great naval program of the Administration at a non-partisan discussion at an influential club was an obscure little Representative from New York by the name of La Guardia."

He argued that the appropriation was absurd because a war between England and the United States was unthinkable and no other Power was dangerous. To the contention that commercial competition made war inevitable he said:

"The muzzle of an eighteen-inch gun is a poor salesman for American goods in other parts of the world." Finally he suggested that if we did continue with our present naval policy we ought to abandon the pretense of being Christian, return to the old nationalistic religions, and build up the necessary hate. It was his remarks that provoked the senile Plunkett to declare that war between England and the United States was imminent.

Immediately upon his return to Congress from the World War La Guardia offered an amendment to reduce the army by 200,000 men. He was a war hero and his little boon was granted. He has since offered a resolution annually to outlaw war. He succeeded in making the War Department retract a very effective enlisting poster which, unfortunately, was misleading. It pictured a handsome cadet and read: "Do you want to go to West Point? Ask recruiting officer." The little Major, dashing by it, was attracted. He removed his sombrero and thoughtfully scratched his head. This was a startling concession, indeed! Then he sent a few boys to the recruiting office for particulars. It was true. They didn't have to go to a Congressman at all. All that was necessary was to enlist for three years in the army and they would be sent to West Point. The recruiting officer said so. Mr. La Guardia returned to his office. He figured out that only one man out of twenty-five thousand in the army goes to West Point. Whereupon he framed a letter to the Secretary of War and posters amounting to \$300,000 had to be withdrawn.

It is quite remarkable that so much correspondence should be exchanged between "an obscure little Representative from New York" and the illustrious members of the President's official family. Mr. La Guardia is in constant communication with the Secretary of the Treasury and with the United States Attorney General. Whenever these gentlemen pat themselves publicly on the back for a successful dry raid the irrepressible La Guardia blurts out a countercharge which leaves them gasping. While they were reveling in their capture of the Remus rum ring, for example, the little Major gleefully informed them that their ace captor was bootlegging the whiskey he had confiscated. To the Secretary of Labor he complained because the immigration laws were not as rigidly applied to "repudiated, unemployed, and shiftless dukes and archdukes" as to respectable aliens. To the Shipping Board he protested against "joy rides" for the elite rather than for wounded soldiers.

Thus have the officers of the present Administration managed to keep the dynamic gentleman from Harlem in his beloved state of activity. In spare moments he can always take a rap at prohibition. A few days ago he summed up the situation on the floor: "Politicians are ducking, candidates are hedging, the Anti-Saloon League prospering, people are being poisoned, bootleggers enriched, and government officials corrupted."

A magazine article charging that New York is an alien city whose Representatives in Congress are not even "real Americans," elicited a delicious "come-back" from La Guardia. The *New York World* took up the accusation and asked each member of the New York delegation to trace his ancestry. "I have no family tree," responded La Guardia. "The only member of my family who has is my dog Yank. He is the son of Doughboy, who was the son of Siegfried, who was the son of Tannhäuser, who was the son of Wotan. A distinguished family tree, to be sure—but after all," added our irreverent Honorable, "he's only a son of a bitch."

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