

The Importance of Calendar Reform to the Business World

By GEORGE EASTMAN

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BUSINESS men are becoming more and more dependent upon accounting and statistical records for the proper conduct of their affairs. It, therefore, becomes increasingly important that the periods of time, which form the bases for all records, should be invariable. Unfortunately, all the units of time of our present calendar are not fixed and invariable. The day and the week are invariable and the year practically so, but the month, the quarter and the half-years are not equal and uniform.

Defects in Present Calendar

THE VARIATION in the length of the month causes the most difficulty to business. There is a difference of 11 per cent between the length of February and of March. There is a greater difference between the number of working days and working days are the important factor in industry. Chart No. 1 shows the number of working days in each month of 1926, allowance being made for Sundays and holidays but no allowance for Saturday half-holidays.

There is a variation from 23 working days in February to 27 in March, or a difference of 17 per cent. If, for instance, output or sales of a concern were uniform throughout the year, the monthly reports would show the same variation as the chart, and obviously the manager would get a misleading impression. For instance, in May he would think that operations had decreased for two months. All monthly comparisons are upset by this variation, and it is expensive to make the necessary adjustments.

Another feature of our calendar which causes great difficulty is that the month is not an exact multiple of the week, some months having four weeks and some five weeks. Chart No. 2 shows the number of Saturdays and likewise the number of weeks per month during 1926. This variation in the number of pay-days per year causes an endless amount of confusion and adjustment for the manufacturer in interpreting his monthly cost and burden reports.

This variation especially upsets monthly comparison in those lines of business in which week-end operations are heavy, as in certain retail stores and railroads. There is also confusion in those small stores that make collections on a weekly basis and pay on a monthly basis, and corresponding confusion for those families whose income is on a monthly basis and whose expenses are on a weekly basis.

In addition to these outstanding defects there are other features of the present calendar which cause confusion. There can be a difference of three days in the two half-years and of



"Time," says Mr. Eastman, "is the essence of all business records. It is important, therefore, that units of time be invariable."

two days in two quarters of the same year. Holidays occur on various days of the week, changing each year; shutdowns for holidays occurring in the middle of the week are expensive in certain plants. Complications arise in setting regular dates for meetings, in providing for holidays that fall on Sunday and in reckoning the passage of time, as, for instance, in interest calculations.

The "Wandering" Easter, another objectionable feature of the present calendar, causes the church year to be of varying length and sometimes causes dislocation in certain lines of business. Early Easters often cut down the volume of Easter retail trading and sometimes bring unemployment in the clothing and shoe industries.

In view of all these defects, the question immediately arises as to why the calendar should not be changed. The length of the months in the present calendar was not based upon a well-thought-out plan.

Origin of Present Calendar

THE GREGORIAN calendar had its origin in the calendar devised by the Egyptians. The Egyptian calendar was developed through years of study of the length and direction of the noonday shadows cast by the pyramids. The Egyptians determined the true length of the year—365.242 days—and divided it into twelve months of thirty days each with the five extra days (or six extra days in Leap Years) devoted to festival holidays.

Julius Caesar adopted the Egyptian calendar for the Roman Empire, but, instead of continuing the equal months, he took care of the five extra days by adding one day to every other month—i. e., January, March, May, July, September, and November, "because odd numbers were lucky"—and by taking one day off February. Augustus Caesar, in order to have thirty-one days in the month of his birth (August), moved the twenty-ninth day of February to August. On account of the unequal quarters which this change made, October and December were made 31-day months instead of September and November.

When the Gregorian Calendar was adopted in 1582 (in 1752 by England and her colonies), no change was made in the months, the only change from the Julian calendar being the arrangement for leap-year.

All the defects in the Gregorian calendar are due to three features: (1) the months are unequal; (2) the month is not an exact multiple of the week; (3) the ordinary year consists of 365 days, just one day over 52 weeks.

Several plans have been proposed to eliminate these features, but the plan which seems to have the most advantages and to be the most practical from the point of view of modern business is the Cotsworth Calendar.

The Cotsworth Calendar

IN BRIEF, the plan is to have thirteen standard months, with each month as follows:

The new month will be inserted between June and July, as at that time of the year the change will cause the least confusion in re-

NUMBER OF WORKING DAYS PER MONTH IN 1926

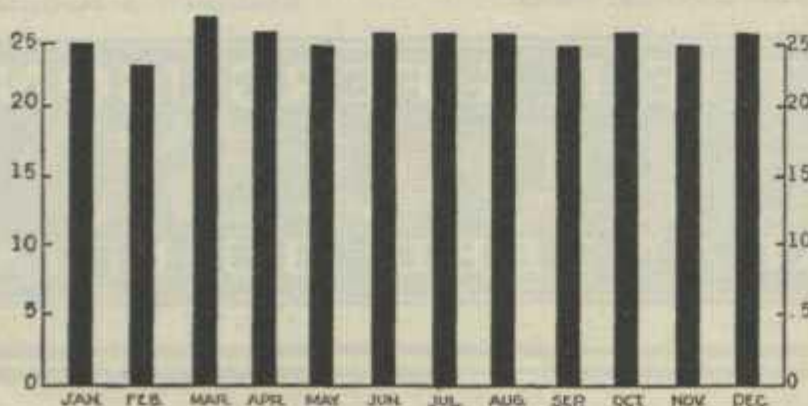


CHART NO. 1

spect to the seasons. The 365th day will be December 29th but will have no week-day name. December 29th, to be known as "Year Day," will be inserted between Saturday, December 28th, and Sunday, January 1st. In like manner, in Leap Year the extra day will be placed between June 28th and the first day of the new month.

THE COTSWORTH CALENDAR STANDARD MONTH

Sun.	Mon.	Tue.	Wed.	Thur.	Fri.	Sat.
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28

All the defects referred to can be overcome by this plan. The proposed calendar will have the following advantages over the present calendar:

1. All months would have the same number of days (28), the same number of working days, except for holidays, and the same number of Sundays.
2. All months would have exactly four weeks.
3. Each week-day would always occur on the same four fixed dates of the month.
4. Quarter-years and half-years would be of the same length.
5. The month would always end on Saturdays.
6. A holiday would always occur on the same week-day.
7. The date of Easter could be fixed.
8. Yearly calendars would not longer be

necessary; one fixed monthly calendar would be sufficient.

These features would be of great benefit to business, accounting and statistical, for all months would be comparable without any adjustments. The month of exactly four weeks would obviate many of the adjustments now necessary between four- and five-week months. The reckoning of the lapse of time for interest and other purposes would be simplified. Meeting dates could be set in advance without difficulty. All holidays could be placed on Monday with advantage to industry and workers. A fixed Easter would prevent undesirable fluctuation in certain industries.

A Faster Money Turnover

AS THERE would be thirteen monthly settlements during the year instead of twelve, there would be a faster turnover in money; the same annual volume of business could be handled with less money.

Any calendar change would cause a certain amount of inconvenience during the first year or two after its adoption. There would be difficulty in making comparisons between the months of the new calendar and the corresponding months of the old calendar. Adjustment tables, however, would considerably reduce the time necessary for making these computations. All anniversary dates, birthdays, and holidays would be changed, but there would be little actual difficulty in determining these dates by the adjustment tables.

The legal difficulties, due to changes in maturity dates of leases, contracts, and mortgages, could be easily overcome by appropriate acts of the legislatures.

The inconveniences and difficulties which would be experienced during the first few years of the new calendar are comparatively slight compared with the many advantages which would be obtained in the business, social, and religious worlds by the adoption of the proposed calendar.

In 1927 the League of Nations appointed a Committee of Inquiry to study the question of calendar reform. More than 130 different proposals were submitted to the committee, but the Cotsworth plan is the one outstanding proposal which meets the needs of business. It has already been endorsed by a number of business organizations such as the International Chamber of Commerce, the New York State Chamber of Commerce, New York Merchants Association, American Statistical Association, and is fast gaining favor among business men. In fact, many concerns have already adopted a thirteen-month calendar for their records and are already getting some of the advantages

NUMBER OF SATURDAYS PER MONTH IN 1926

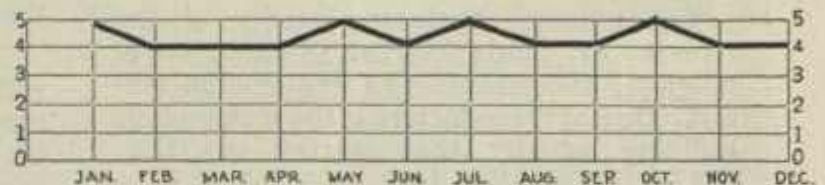


CHART NO. 2

of the proposed plan, but there are obvious disadvantages to using two calendars. Only universal adoption of the proposed plan would be of real benefit to business as a whole.

Congress—What It Doesn't Do

By WILLARD M. KIPLINGER

THIS SESSION of Congress is notable for what it does not do, for the bills it does not pass, for the work it leaves unfinished, and you can get the picture without waiting for the end.

A country editor, criticized for what he published, retorted, "You ought to see what I didn't publish." Congress is in that position. It isn't exactly a "Do-Nothing Congress," but it hasn't hurt itself wrestling with many big problems. It is the kind of Congress you might expect in an era of prosperity.

Radicalism has not been evident. Sharp partisanship has been relatively low. Strong sectionalism has shown itself on only two important issues. There are plenty of blocs but they are not spectacular. Labor has not asked much and has gotten half of what it wanted without difficulty.

Organized agriculture has failed to get what it desired, and will continue the fight. Equality of agriculture with industry and commerce has been recognized in principle, but the method is still to be worked out. Tariff revision has not been attempted, and future prospects depend partly on the fall elections.

Prohibition has been in the talk stage, and modification is not imminent.

The executive has dictated legislation less than at any session for years. Congressional leadership has been as effective as was required in the absence of many great pressing economic issues, but it has been unspectacular.

The issue over conflict of federal versus state authority has been unusually active, showing itself in taxation, branch banking, rail rates, coal, education, prison labor, 50-50 appropriations, and reclamation.

Competition of government with private business also has been openly attacked and will be more discussed at the next session. This refers to government printed envelopes, army and navy industries, prison factories, and ultimately to roads and public works constructed by state and local governments, as contrasted with the private contract system.

Government expenses have probably passed low tide and in future years will increase, while the healthy program of public debt retirement moves along without prospect of substantial change.

Number one of accomplishments at this session is tax reduction. Number two is ratification of the World Court. Number three is approval of the foreign debt settlements.

Number four is the machine-like passage

of appropriations for the vast government work.

I am assuming that by the end of the session Congress will have passed the branch banking bill, the railroad labor bill, the bill for a government bureau to help cooperative marketing of farm products, the civil aviation bill, the radio control bill, and a few others mentioned later. These are the important positive accomplishments.

On the negative side, I am assuming that Congress will have turned down the demands of the agricultural group for legislation to deal with surpluses through an "equalization fee." This is by far the most difficult problem which has faced Congress, and it will be up again next year.

Railroad consolidation will be left to the next session and probably enacted then. The same with interstate bus and truck regulation. Coal legislation has no real push behind it. Postal rate revision will not be accomplished, except for a few minor schedules. Rechartering of federal reserve banks will be put off, I think. There will be no important shipping legislation.

The important German-American claims liquidation bill probably cannot be finished this session. The vote on the Turkish treaty will be close, from all indications. Omnibus