

CURRENT TOPICS

GERMANY'S GREAT STRIDES

Some of the salient facts of Germany's remarkable growth in recent years are contained in a statement by Gilbert H. Grosvenor, director of the National Geographic society, Washington. Mr. Grosvenor also gives an insight into the manner in which Germany handles some of the problems which are common to this country. The statement follows:

"Only Belgium, Holland, Japan and the United Kingdom have denser populations than Germany. That country crowds 67,000,000 people into a territory so small that you could add New England to it and still have an area smaller than the state of Texas.

"Possessing only one-fifteenth of the area of Europe, Germany produces one-seventh of Europe's wheat, one-fifth of its oats, one-fourth of its rye, and one-third of its potatoes.

"Out of a total of 5,756,000 farms nearly one-half are smaller than two and one-half acres, and less than 700,000 are larger than twenty-five acres. Of our own 5,737,000 farms, more than three-fifths contain upward of fifty acres.

"The Germans use more commercial fertilizer than any other three nations on earth, and yet, with all the coaxing of intensive farming, Germany is not able, in ordinary times, to produce enough foodstuffs to feed the people. It imported farm produce worth \$250,000,000 more than it exported during a recent year, and groceries and confections worth \$120,000,000 more than exports. The balance of raw materials was \$100,000,000 against the empire.

"No other nation has made such a wonderful bid for foreign trade as Germany. While the trade of the United States increased 275 per cent in twenty-five years and Great Britain's increased 10 per cent, Germany's increased 300 per cent. Germany's merchant marine in twenty-five years rose from a negligible quantity to 4,850 ships, with a net tonnage of 3,153,000 tons and with 78,000 sailors.

"Germany takes a different view of railroad rebates than the United States. A small shipper is always required to pay higher rates than a big shipper, and goods passing through Germany get lower rates than goods shipped from one German point to another. Railroad rates on exports are much lower than domestic rates. When the Nuremberg toy makers want to assist the Hamburg Kriss Kringle the freight rate is \$9.33 per ton; when they want to assist the New York Santa Claus it is only \$5.83 per ton.

"The theory of the German government is that every able-bodied man is entitled to work and the government must find something for him to do if he can not find it himself. Wherever there is a disagreement between laborer and employer it must be settled in a court created for that purpose. Neither party is permitted by law to offer or to accept a compromise.

"The people of German cities live amid surroundings of the law that are different from our own. In Berlin, it is forbidden in apartment houses to water flowers except between the hours of 4 a. m. and 5 a. m.; no one can play a piano before 7 a. m. or after 9 p. m.; no bedding may be aired from the front window; bathing at night is forbidden; one may not employ a servant without complying with police regulations, or change his residence without police sanction. The German justifies these things on the ground that while they may sometimes interfere with his convenience, by and large they protect him from annoyances much greater than those that they entail. He says they give him a freedom from annoyances without his household that are infinitely more bothersome than the restraints they impose within his household."

AGE OF OUR GOVERNMENT

While the United States is listed among the newer nations of the earth, there are perhaps few people who realize that we have one of the most venerable governments of the world. Calling attention to the fact that, though the Hohenzollerns have had 200 years of rule in Prussia, the German imperial government is only 44 years old, a writer in the Philadelphia Public Ledger says:

"It may astonish you to note how very few

countries have an older government than the United States. Our land may be new, but the government is one of the most venerable on earth.

"China's republic is a baby but a few years old. Japan's present regime dates back only 45 years. Italy's kingdom is about the same age, and Portugal's republic has been in existence less than a decade.

"Turkey's constitutional government which came with a new sultan, and Persia's government are also political infants.

"The French republic is no older than the German empire, and the revolution that split Norway and Sweden happened since Cuba became free.

"Of the twenty independent nations to the south of us in America, every one is younger than the United States. The Australian commonwealth and the South Africa union are mere children.

"England, Russia, Austria and Spain have ancient regimes, but the American republic cemented here in Philadelphia, has witnessed the rise or the fall of nearly all the other important governments on earth."

CITIES TO OWN BIG UTILITIES

During the month conventions for the purpose of considering important problems of municipal government were held in Philadelphia and Baltimore. The Philadelphia conference was held under the call of mayors of New York, Philadelphia, Cleveland, Dayton and Chicago, and the object was to exchange ideas on the relations existing between American municipalities and the public service utilities. Mr. Fred S. Hunt, who attended these meetings as a delegate from the Milwaukee City club, gave an interview in the Milwaukee Journal in which he gives some idea of the rapid advance being made toward municipal ownership of public utilities. Mr. Hunt said:

"The practically unanimous opinion of the assembled representatives was that the ultimate solution of the public utilities problem will be found in municipal ownership. Vigorous speeches favoring municipal ownership were made by Mayor Harrison, Chicago, and Mayor Baker, Cleveland. The latter city has lately got a 3-cent car fare, with universal transfer privileges. Further than this, the city has established a municipal lighting and power plant from which small consumers are supplied lighting current at a charge of 3 cents per kilowatt hour. In Chicago, Mayor Harrison announced, they have recently obtained from the local transportation companies contracts under which the city will receive 55 per cent of the net profits of operation."

"In view of the heavy cost involved, and also because public opinion has not yet been educated to that view, it was recognized that municipal ownership is not as yet possible in many cities and that some form of regulation of rates and service is necessary. Where the same utility operates not only in a city, but extensively in the adjacent country and nearby cities and villages, state regulation was considered the more feasible. But where the utility operates largely within the borders of one city, local regulation rather than state regulation was advocated. Mayor Mitchell, New York, expressed especially strong views favorable to local regulation. So, too, did Stiles P. Jones, secretary of the Minneapolis Voters' league, in an illuminative paper upon What Certain Cities Have Accomplished Without State Regulation. Mr. Jones' conclusion was that those cities which have really accomplished anything in way of lessened rates and improved service have done so by dealing directly with the utility corporations operating within their borders. Citing a number of cases, he made rather unfavorable comparison between the results obtained in Wisconsin under state regulation and the results obtained in those cities cited.

"The Philadelphia meeting created a committee which will formulate plans for a permanent bureau, the duty of which shall be to search out, put into form and make available to all, such facts and data which will be helpful to commun-

ities which may be called upon to wrestle with the problem of municipal ownership or local regulation.

"It was the general opinion that the public service corporations are taking concerted action to bolster up the reputed valuation of their plants in order that they may get a basis upon which to found a demand for increasing of rates or for maintaining present high rates. To this end they are employing the ablest engineers and accountants obtainable. If the cities are to be placed in equally advantageous position, they, too, must be armed with reliable data for presentation in their controversies with the corporations before the state or local bodies which are charged with the task of regulation."

VITAL HISTORY SHOULD BE TAUGHT

The study of current history, as an aid to the development of an intelligent citizenship, is recognized by educators as essential, although there exists differences of opinion about its introduction into the school curriculum. Discussing this subject the Philadelphia Public Ledger says:

"Current events should be studied in the schools in order to make past history more real to the pupils, and in order also to promote among them such a civic intelligence as good citizenship requires. Current events are history, and history is nothing except as it considers civics and economics. In those phases and aspects of the war which belong to American economic history, the schools have a great educational opportunity which should not be neglected. To enlighten the young people in the questions that have to do with American independence and independence in commerce and industry is to teach them the economic resources and possibilities of their country; and to show them how these questions are affected by the European war is not to violate neutrality, but merely to give due recognition to the flow of events in the history of their own country."

GOVERNMENT OWNERSHIP OF RAILROADS

Ownership of the railroads by the national government was strongly hinted by Charles A. Prouty in a recent address before a gathering of the state and national railway commissioners. Mr. Prouty told the association that the work of valuation would cost \$50 per mile of road, or \$15,000,000. On the question of government ownership Judge Prouty said:

"Probably the most important practical question before this country today is its treatment of our railroads, and I have felt that this valuation which we are to make must have a profound influence upon its discussion. There is, first, the primary question:—Is the government to take over these agencies of transportation or shall they be left to the operation of private capital?"

"Assuming that we are to leave the discharge of this function to private enterprise, there arises the even more difficult question as to what the treatment of this private capital shall be. What rates shall be accorded in order that the present investment may be fairly dealt with and that such further investment will be induced as will render possible the proper development of these facilities? In the past this question has not been acute, for rates have been sufficient to maintain railroad credit, but it is evident the time is at hand when there is grave doubt as to whether these rates must not be generally increased."

WISCONSIN'S FREE EMPLOYMENT SYSTEM

Wisconsin's system of free employment bureaus, operated by the state industrial commission, is commended as the most effective means of preventing unemployment yet devised, in an article by Ida M. Tarbell, writing in the current number of the American Magazine on "Keeping Men at Work." Miss Tarbell says:

"A model for every state is what has been done in Wisconsin. The Milwaukee branch of the state employment bureaus has made two reports. The one for the year ending October 1,