

The Nation's Business

(A Series of Articles by National Leaders Published Exclusively in This Territory in The Herald.)

"The Necessity for Export Trade," by William C. Redfield, Former Secretary of Commerce.

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Editor's Note.—William C. Redfield was Secretary of Commerce under President Wilson and is now the chairman of the board of the National Manufacturers' Export Association. His knowledge of the need of an active and world-wide export trade is based on investigations carried on for years both as one of the leaders in the Wilson administration and as the head of an organization whose life is given to furthering the movement to place the United States in the lead as the world's greatest producing and export nation.

China once adopted a policy—and under it she crumpled to a spineless bulk that at one time threatened death to her as a nation and her people as a race.

Thousands of American citizens today are asking why we do not adopt a similar policy, asking this question even in the halls of legislation and among the units of our commercial life.

Is the United States sufficient unto itself? Can it draw about its shores a Chinese wall that would exclude not only immigration and the exchange of relationship but would wipe from the seas the import and export trade and turn inward all the powers and possibilities of her growth?

Dressed in glittering generalities, bedecked in false conception of progress, tricked out in brilliant but empty phrases of a selfish patriotism grounded on false logic, the campaign has been carried on since the time, scores of years ago, when our unthinkable citizens brought shame to true Americans as they boastfully shouted before a contemptuous Europe, "America can lick the world."

Leaving aside the obvious fact that there are many things we cannot produce in the United States and that our necessary purchases of these abroad can be most conveniently covered by sending our goods in return, are there no cogent domestic reasons which make a foreign market for our products a matter of necessity?

Three Great Staples.

At least three great commodities spring to our thought when this question is raised. These are cotton, wheat and copper. We have never consumed nor can we consume, anything like the quantities of these which we produce. Shall we produce less, therefore, or shall we sell the surplus we always have in the only available markets, which are the foreign markets? The question answers itself. It is, we at once see, vital to the prosperity of our agricultural and mining interests that we have a large and steady foreign market for these commodities. The home of every farmer and miner is directly affected by the conditions in our export trade.

This foreign commerce has neither been large nor steady in recent months and the result appears in every copper-mining town and on every cotton plantation and wherever wheat is grown. None are so foolish as to say that an export market is not essential to the prosperity of both the capital and the labor concerned in the production of cotton, copper and wheat.

But these three are in some degree typical of others. We sell abroad such commodities as lumber, oil and steel, and each in different forms or states of manufacture. Why are they sold abroad? Is it not because there is no sufficient market for them at home? Is it not, therefore, also true that the steady employment of labor, the regular return upon capital both require that a foreign market shall be found for the products which they jointly make, and that it is certain that capital cannot continuously earn and labor be continuously employed unless such markets are found for any surplus over the consuming capacity of our own country?

Pre-war Markets.

Leaving these major items, which some might say were selected ones, we find that before the war there had been a steady growth in our export sales of partly or fully finished manufactures until these had become the largest elements in our outward foreign business. Why was this? The foreign markets are not usually those in which excessive prices can be had, and therefore it is hardly true that our manufacturers sold these goods to the value of many hundreds of millions of dollars yearly in other lands in order to make a larger profit upon them than could be had at home. On the contrary, everyone familiar with the subject knows that before the war our industrial output had become so large that our own markets could not continuously absorb it when the factories ran full time. Therefore, the alternative was to find a market in other countries or to shut down in whole or part for a portion of the time. In other words, manufacturers knew that if they would run steadily they must find foreign markets for a portion of the goods they made. Everyone who gives the subject thought knows, also, that during the war in this country, as in all other industrial ones, the capacity of our plants was greatly increased. This increase varied in different industries, but the demands of the Allies and

later of our own forces covered substantially all the wants of man and it is therefore true that some increase in productive capacity was well nigh universal. In certain industries the increase was large; more than a few entirely new factories were constructed.

Today's Need.

The war is over. These new and enlarged plants are here and some at least are idle, while others are working but part time. Capital is invested in them. The men who own this capital would like to employ labor to the full capacity of these plants in order that they may earn interest upon their investment. The men who are out of work today would also like to be employed in these plants in order that they may earn food and clothing for their families. How shall this employment be provided? Can orders be found in the United States in these times sufficient to keep these plants moving? Everyone knows that they cannot. Can orders be found at any time in the United States sufficient to keep all these plants moving steadily at their full capacity? Everybody knows that this also cannot be done. We could not consume the product of these plants continuously before they were enlarged. Now that they are greatly grown we are much less able to absorb all their products. There has not been time for the national consumption to grow up to the national industrial production and until our home consumption shall equal our home production. This is an inexorable fact; as certain as gravitation.

It is easy to see the process in its details. A great plant in a city of the central west, employing some thousands of men, is idle. Far in a distant land a skilled industrial officer negotiates a large order for the product of that plant with a foreign government. Forthwith the plant springs to life. Thousands of men find productive toil. Their families are able to purchase needed supplies and clothing, and business revives. In still another land a great municipality requires a large lot of American apparatus. Necessary arrangements being made for the financing of the order, it is placed in another city in the central west. At once the same process appears. Men go back to work and their families are once more able to buy. In a different continent a large eastern manufacturer finds business sufficient to keep his works moving full time when others are all but idle. On the other hand, a large concern finds that it has productive capacity beyond its selling power. This country cannot consume the entire product and circumstances are such that foreign markets are not found. Forthwith dullness settles on the plant. Men are discharged; their wages cease. At least, in order to supply the limited market which does exist, such a concern offers for sale the machinery which has been producing on its floors rather than undertake the expense of manufacturing a limited quantity of new machinery. Here is seen the process of actually reducing the productive capacity of the country for lack of markets.

If the basic proposition is plain, a long step is taken toward the solution of co-ordinate problems. Do the American people yet understand that their prosperity is inextricably linked with the export trade? If they do understand this fact, they will be guided accordingly in all matters collateral thereto. If they do not understand this fact, it is high time it was learned.

Just when a town thinks it has become metropolitan, some citizen spoils it all by writing a letter to the leading newspaper congratulating the fire department for some smart bit of work.

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American Legion Notes

"FACTS—NOT OPINIONS"

Is the American Legion opposed to organized labor? Has the Legion participated in mobs that have attacked picket lines where men have been killed? Is the Legion subsidized by big business? "To stop such contemptible lines and show union labor that we resent the charge that we are opposed to them," William Ritchie, Jr., has filed suit for \$100,000 against F. H. Shoemaker, in the name of the Nebraska American Legion.

Shoemaker is an organizer for the World War Veterans, and in a talk before the butchers' union at Omaha said, in effect, "the American Legion as an organization has broken up picket lines in which disturbances men have been killed. The American Legion is subsidized by big business. The packers have contributed to the Legion." The army records show that Shoemaker was in the army for six days.

George L. Berry, national vice commander of the Legion and president of the international Pressmen's union, has sent the following telegram to Mr. Ritchie:

"Am advised that a man named Shoemaker now in Omaha endeavored to convey the idea that the American Legion and its posts are opposed to organized labor. Such a statement is absolutely false and unwarranted in every respect. . . . The Legion is made up of American citizens from all walks of life and is pursuing a course that is deserving of the commendation of every American citizen, non-partisan and neutral as effects political parties and between employers and employees."

"If pardon is granted to Debs or others fairly convicted of treason or sedition during the time when the nation's very life was at stake, the lives of those boys who lie on the fields of France and those who lie broken in hospitals have indeed been sacrificed in vain," Hanford MacNider, national commander of the American Legion has wired President Harding, requesting that "no leniency be shown those traitors who stabbed us in the back while we were giving our all to this country."

A drastic change in the system used by the Federal Board in dealing with ex-service men has been suggested by William Ritchie, Jr., state commander in an open letter to Colonel Forbes, head of the bureau. The present appeal boards, which pass on the claims of the veterans, is characterized by Mr. Ritchie as the "dam in the stream". The appeal board is composed of a doctor, a lawyer and a third person, who pass on the case from the papers, affidavits and reports from the local representatives. The sittings are generally held at the bureau headquarters, which for this district are at St. Louis.

The Nebraska Legion leader suggests that the board should hold its sittings at the various sub-offices of the bureau, with a local man sitting with the doctor and lawyer; that these meetings be held at regular intervals with the local representative authorized to grant temporary relief in necessary cases.

He also suggests that the board should not judge solely from the papers, but that both the applicant and the government should be represented by an advocate, who would see that the cases are presented entirely on their merits.

Mr. Ritchie has asked Colonel Forbes to make a public reply, and it is being awaited with considerable interest by Nebraska ex-service men, as the bureau handles all cases between the veterans and the government.

Posts of the American Legion and women's Auxiliary will not be required to pay the so-called amusement tax on admissions after January 1, 1922. An act of Congress "to simplify the Revenue Act of 1918" which was approved by the president on November

23, especially exempts the veterans' society and its auxiliary.

The Nebraska American Legion has adopted an extensive program of Americanism for the coming year, which will be put into operation through the 300 posts and 20,000 members of the organization. The Legion will seek to inculcate a love and respect for American institutions and principles. It will impress upon all citizens and residents that the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution are the foundation of the best government on earth, and that faults should be corrected through an orderly process and not by a disregard for the laws and the courts.

The school children will receive special attention, though all citizens and aliens will be reached, according to the Legion program. Agencies through which the program will be worked out include the schools, pulpit and platform, all social, fraternal and commercial organizations and the public press. Prize contests will be conducted in the schools with special emphasis on the growth and value of American institutions. The period between Lincoln's and Washington's birthdays has been proclaimed "Respect the Flag Week"

by the Nebraska Legion.

In the press the American Legion will seek to encourage patriotic utterances and editorials, secure publicity for the Americanization program and discourage the advertising of criminals as "ex-service men." Advocates for the veterans' program will be sought among prominent public speakers, in pulpit and platform.

For the citizen the Legion will attempt to "inculcate a sense of individual obligation to the community, state and nation", teach the obligation of jury duty, the ballot and other public service. It will emphasize the importance of aiding aliens to become good citizens by proper instruction and by appropriate ceremonies on the day they are admitted to citizenship.

Corn on the cob would be wholly admirable if it had not ruined so many summer romances.

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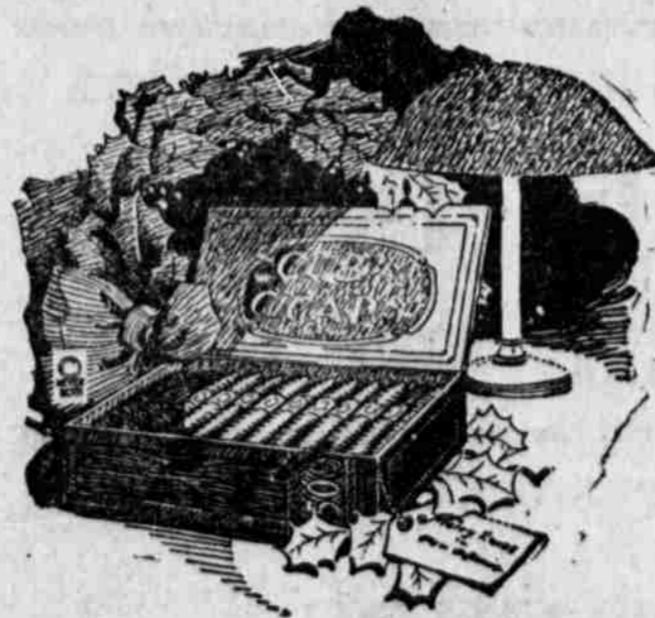
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