

Amazing Profits Charged for U. S. Munitions

(Gilson Gardner, in New Orleans Daily States.)

Public service or private graft?

That is the question which has come to the front in connection with the administration's preparedness program.

Are the millions to be spent really for defense or are they to be distributed as enormous profits to the steel trust, the powder trust, the ship-building trust, and other American Krupps?

Shall the government spend the money and get a dollar's worth of preparedness for every dollar spent, or shall the government let the private corporation take from 20 to 60 per cent. in private profit for doing it?

This is the very real and practical question confronting congress. It can not be dodged.

A group of determined congressmen will force the issue during the whole time the preparedness program—both army and navy—is on the floor of congress. These men will not oppose preparedness—but they will oppose private-profit preparedness.

The question will be emphasized, too, by the attitude of Secretary of Navy Daniels, who charges openly that ship-builders are a trust; that their bids are collusive, and that their profits are extortionate.

The question will be forced from another angle by the charges and counter charges between the navy league and Representative Clyde Tavenner, the league threatening libel suits and Tavenner threatening a congressional inquiry to determine whether the league is supported by men who profit by private munitions manufacture.

A hint as to what has in the past become of the staggering sums appropriated for preparedness is to be found in the fact that four firms have received since 1887 orders aggregating \$175,000,000, and have been paid from 20 to 60 per cent more than the same could have been manufactured for in government arsenals and navy yards.

It is possible to obtain some definite and specific information as to the economy of government manufacture. In the item of armor plate, for instance, ten official estimates as to the actual cost of a ton of armor plate give an average estimate of \$238.64 a ton.

Since 1887, however, the navy department has purchased 217,379 tons of armor, paying the armor ring an average of \$440.04 a ton, or a total of \$95,856,240. If all this armor had been manufactured in government plants, at least \$35,000,000 would have been saved to the taxpayers.

Other items of preparedness show the same discrepancies. The war department, in 1913, for instance, purchased 7,000 4.7-inch shrapnel from private manufacturers. It paid \$25.26 for each shell. At the same time the exact article was being manufactured in the government plant at Philadelphia at a cost of \$15.45.

For a 3.8-inch shrapnel, the department paid \$17.50; the government cost of the identical article is \$7.94.

At the government plant at Rock Island, Ill., the war department manufactures caissons for gun carriages at a cost of \$1,128.67 each. Private manufacturers have been paid \$1,744.10 for the same article, which is 54.6 per cent greater than the government cost.

The same is true in government purchases of powder. The government has bought about \$25,000,000 worth of powder from the powder trust since 1905, paying all the way from 53 cents up to 80 cents a pound for it. The government plant at Indian Head is manufacturing the identical powder to day at 34 cents a pound, and the faster the plant capacity is increased the lower the cost will be.

Secretary of the Navy Daniels has stated officially in his annual report that the navy department can manufacture every single item from paint to superdreadnaughts cheaper than the same articles can be purchased from private manufacturers.

This is true in spite of the fact that government employees are generally better treated, have shorter hours of labor, more holidays and better pay than is the rule in private plants. These government arsenal costs also include 15 per cent for overhead charges, depreciation of plant and similar items.

All these facts are going to be pointed out with greater emphasis on the floor of congress.

A rich lobby is to be on hand for the American Krupps.

The rich lobby is to be assisted by

another rich lobby of social influence.

Congress is easier than you may think! It's not going to be hard for the lobby of privilege to make congress vote their way, unless—

But that isn't going to be enough! The American public wakes up right now—right now quick—and tells congress that—

This nation will not stand for anybody to profit in gold and silver from the blood shed by its army and navy!

RESPONSIBILITY FOR WAR

Springfield, Ill., May 3.—[Editor of the Chicago Tribune.]—Your clear, forceful editorials for the most part leave nothing to be desired. You are doing a great work for our nation. We, the common people, are with you. We even believe in your and Decatur's motto, and when the war with Germany is on will turn in and fight for these rabid Anglo-maniacs who have forced it upon us, against the Germans.

But we beg of you not to desert us in the hour of sorest need. Don't be sentimental over your motto. It will be time enough to sustain the President when the war has begun. Why not sustain to the utmost the handful of patriotic congressmen who are striving to keep us out of war? Perhaps congress will have an opportunity to exercise the discretion imposed in it by the constitution, even after diplomatic relations are broken off with Germany.

It may become the duty of congress to assume the responsibility placed upon it and decide not to go to war. If you are going to deny congress the right to veto the President in this, wherein will the making of war by our republic differ from the initiation of a war by an autocracy? Don't desert us until the die is irretrievably cast.—Robert Perry.

THE AMERICAN MERCHANT MARINE

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and it will take some ships to handle it. Perhaps that trade will not be as large as it was. I do not know, but if it is not, there are not as many ships to carry it as there were. Neither Great Britain nor France are doing as large a foreign trade as they did, and when the war ends they will seek to redeem it and will need ships for it, and it is possible there will not be as many ships as there were even if the trade should not be as large as it was.

In our own traffic certain fairly good customers have not been buying of late. We sold Austria, Germany and Belgium over \$429,000,000 in 1913 and nearly \$430,000,000 in 1914, and it took ships to move it. I assume it will take some of them after the war is over and our customers commence to buy again. Furthermore, we are told on good French authority that they, and perhaps others, will need to buy largely in America for re-establishing industries, and this will take ships. We have made some use and are making better use all the time of our opportunities during the war, and should Great Britain or Germany require their ships for their own restored trade when the war ends, we shall need American ships to do the larger business we are finding with neutral countries unless we are content again to lie down and do this business as of old at the will of others and for such a time and in such a way as they wish us to do it. I take it, however, that the United States has gotten a larger vision than it had two years ago, and that by the extension of banks and other mechanisms of

trade, it is reaching out more than it ever did into the greater world. I think this process will not be denied and can not be stopped and that we shall insist upon doing it where we please and as we please and for our own benefit though with due regard to the rights of others, and this means that we shall think it necessary to do it in ships which, if there were difficulty anywhere will be concerned to do things our way.

I have not touched yet upon another serious factor in this matter. Great Britain is using something like 3,000 ships as attendants upon her great war fleet. These are of many kinds but they are all merchant vessels, yet without them the war fleet would be helpless. When we sent one fleet of battleships around the world some years ago, we had to hire foreign vessels to keep them in coal and supplies. When we indulged in a trifling war a few years since, we bought auxiliary vessels suitable and unsuitable where we could get them at almost any price, and sold them at a mighty loss. What should we do today if we had to use our navy on the sea? We do not make the navy to keep it in ports but we have not the means, to be candid, to keep it long at sea. It would require about 900 ships of all kinds from the merchant service to keep it well supplied at sea, and we have not those ships. We have about 500 and that is not enough, and so our navy would have to leave the job and come home to get coal and supplies at the time when it was most needed at sea. That is, it would do this unless we get more ships. We need 400 more at least, and we ought to have them as soon as possible, and there ought to be no doubt about it. Observe that if we took all the vessels estimated to be available for this purpose, we should still be short 400.

One may hope that foresight is getting a dent made in the American mind for its reception. We have heretofore looked at the immediate and considered whether it was cheap. So we are worrying over dyestuffs because we do not make them fast enough. We were content for cheapness sake to depend on a foreign source. The same was true of many other things. A small portion of what that weakness has cost us would have saved the losses we have endured. It is a lot cheaper to provide peace ships soon, useful both in peace and war, than to have war ships leave their job when it is going on in order to become coal carriers for their own engines because we have not provided merchant ships to do that work. I think Americans are getting over a certain stage of pride in our bigness and power combined with unwillingness to pay the bills and that we are taking things more soberly.

We need then ships not alone for the present emergency, much as they are needed there, but for the maintenance of our commercial independence on the sea and for the support of our navy should it be required for our defense. How shall we get them? It is not a job to be delayed for time is of its very essence, yet every private yard is full for about two years to come. They may be, I trust they will be, extended or multiplied, but it will be necessary to have some assurance of business sufficient to warrant the investment in so doing. We have a few government vessels capable of carrying coal or cargoes

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