

President Wilson on Profits and Patriotism

A Washington dispatch, dated July 11, says: President Wilson tonight summoned American business to the colors.

In an "address to the mine operators and manufacturers of the United States," he stated plainly what the government's program of determining just prices is. And he looks to every business man—big and little—to meet the situation in a big way. "Prices," he says, "mean victory or defeat."

The address follows:

My Fellow Countrymen: The government is about to attempt to determine the prices at which it will ask you henceforth to furnish various supplies which are necessary for the prosecution of the war, and various materials which will be needed in the industries by which the war must be sustained.

We shall, of course, try to determine them justly and to the best advantage of the nation as a whole; but justice is easier to speak of than to arrive at, and there are some considerations which I hope we shall keep steadily in mind while this particular problem of justice is being worked out. Therefore I take the liberty of stating very candidly my own view of the situation and of the principles which should guide both the government and the mine owners and manufacturers of the country in this difficult matter.

MEANING OF JUST PRICE

A just price must, of course, be paid for everything the government buys. By a just price, I mean a price which will sustain the industries concerned in a high state of efficiency, provide a living for those who conduct them, enable them to pay good wages, and make possible the expansions of their enterprises which will from time to time become necessary as the stupendous undertakings of this great war develop. We could not wisely or reasonably do less than pay such prices. They are necessary for the maintenance and development of industry and the maintenance and development of industry are necessary for the great task we have in hand.

But I trust that we shall not surround the matter with a mist of sentiment. Facts are our masters now. We ought not to put the acceptance of such prices on the ground of patriotism. Patriotism has nothing to do with profits in a case like this. Patriotism and profits ought never in the present circumstances to be mentioned together. It is perfectly proper to discuss profits as a matter of business, with a view to maintaining the integrity of capital and the efficiency of labor in these tragical months, when the liberty of free men everywhere and of industry itself trembles in the balance, but it would be absurd to discuss them as a motive for helping to serve and save our country.

WHAT PATRIOTISM DEMANDS

Patriotism leaves profits out of the question. In these days of our supreme trial, when we are sending hundreds of thousands of our young men across the seas to serve a great cause, no true man who stays behind to work for them and sustain them by his labor will ask himself what he is personally going to make out of that labor. No true patriot will permit himself to take toll of their heroism on money or seek to grow rich by the shedding of their blood. He will give as freely and with as unstinted self-sacrifice as they. When they are giving their lives, will he not at least give his money?

ABOUT EXCESS PROFITS

I hear it insisted that more than a just price; more than a price that will sustain our industries, must be paid; that it is necessary to pay very liberal and unusual profits in order to "stimulate" production; that nothing but pecuniary rewards will do—rewards paid in money, not in the mere liberation of the world.

I take it for granted that those who argue thus do not stop to think what that means. Do they mean that you must be paid, must be bribed, to make your contribution, a contribution that costs you neither a drop of blood nor a tear, when the whole world is in travail and men everywhere depend upon and call to you to

bring them out of bondage and make the whole world a fit place to live in again amidst peace and justice? Do they mean that you will exact a price; drive a bargain, with the men who are enduring the agony of this war on the battlefield, in the trenches, amidst the lurking dangers of the sea, or with the bereaved women and pitiful children, before you will come forward to do your duty and give some part of your life, in easy, peaceful fashion, for the things we are fighting for, the things we have pledged our fortunes, our lives, our sacred honor to vindicate and defend—liberty and justice and fair dealing and the peace of nations.

Of course you will not. It is inconceivable. Your patriotism is of the same self-denying stuff as the patriotism of the men dead or maimed on the fields of France or else it is not patriotism at all.

ASSAILS SHIP OWNERS

Let us never speak, then, of profits and of patriotism in the same sentence, but face facts and meet them. Let us do sound business, but not in the midst of a mist. Many a grievous burden of taxation will be laid on this nation, in this generation and the next, to pay for this war; let us see to it that for every dollar that is taken from the people's pockets it shall be possible to obtain a dollar's worth of the sound stuffs they need.

Let me turn for a moment to the shipowners of the United States and the other ocean carriers whose example they have followed, and ask them if they realize what obstacles, what almost insuperable obstacles, they have been putting in the way of the successful prosecution of this war by the ocean freight rates they have been exacting.

MOTIVES NOT QUESTIONED

They are doing everything that high freight charges can do to make the war a failure, to make it impossible. I do not say that they realize this or intend it. The thing has happened naturally enough, because the commercial processes which we are content to see operate in ordinary times have without sufficient thought been continued into a period where they have no proper place. I am not questioning motives. I am merely stating a fact and stating it in order that attention may be fixed upon it.

The fact is that those who have fixed war freight rates have taken the most effective means in their power to defeat the armies engaged against Germany. When they realize this we may, I take it for granted, count upon them to reconsider the whole matter. It is high time. Their extra hazards are covered by war risk insurance.

FOR CLEAR UNDERSTANDING

I know, and you know, what response to this great challenge of duty and of opportunity the nation will expect of you; and I know what response you will make. Those who do not respond, who do not respond in the spirit of those who have gone to give their lives for us on bloody fields far away, may safely be left to be dealt with by opinion and the law, — for the law must of course command those things.

I am dealing with the matter thus publicly and frankly, not because I have any doubt or fear as to the result, but only in order that in all our thinking and in all our dealings with one another we may move in a perfectly clear air of mutual understanding.

ALL PEOPLE MOBILIZED

And there is something more that we must add to our thinking. The public is now as much part of the government as are the army and navy themselves; the whole people in all their activities are now mobilized and in service for the accomplishment of the nation's task in this war; it is in such circumstances impossible justly to distinguish between industrial purchases made by the government and industrial purchases made by the managers of industries, and it is just as much our duty to sustain the industries of the country with all the materials that minister to its life, as it is to sustain our

forces in the field and on the sea. We must make prices to the public the same as the prices to the government.

MEANS VICTORY OR DEFEAT

Prices mean the same thing everywhere now. They mean the efficiency or the inefficiency of the nation, whether it is the government that pays them or not. They mean victory or defeat. They mean that America will win her place once for all among the foremost free nations of the world, or that she will sink to defeat and become a second-rate power alike in thought and in action. This is a day of her reckoning, and every man amongst us must personally face that reckoning along with her.

The case needs no arguing. I assume I am only expressing your own thoughts—what must be in the mind of every true man when he faces the tragedy and the solemn glory of the present war, for the emancipation of mankind.

I summon you to a great duty, a great privilege, a shining dignity and distinction. I shall expect every man who is not a slacker to be at my side throughout this great enterprise. In it no man can win honor who thinks of himself.

KING ALBERT WRITES LETTER TO PRESIDENT WILSON

A Washington dispatch, dated June 19, says: The personal letter to President Wilson from King Albert, delivered yesterday by Baron Moncheur, head of the Belgian mission is as follows:

"I command to your excellency's kindly reception the mission which bears this letter. This mission will express to the President the feeling of understanding and enthusiastic admiration with which my government and people have received the decision reached by him in his wisdom. The mission will also tell you how greatly the important and glorious role enacted by the United States has confirmed the confidence which the Belgian nation has always had in free America's spirit of justice.

"The great American nation was particularly moved by the unwarranted and violent attacks made upon Belgium. It has sorrowed over the distress of my subjects subjected to the yoke of the enemy. It has succored them with incomparable generosity. I am happy to have an opportunity to express to your excellency the gratitude which my country owes you and the firm hope entertained by Belgium that on the day of reparation, toward which America will contribute so bountifully, full and entire justice will be rendered to my country.

"My government has chosen to express its sentiments to your excellency through two distinguished men whose services will command credence for what they have to say, — Baron Moncheur, who for eight years was my representative at Washington, and Lieut-General Leclercq, who has earned high appreciation during a long military career.

"I venture to hope, Mr. President, that you will accord full faith and credence to everything that they say especially when they assure you of the hopes I entertain for the happiness and prosperity of the United States of America and of my faithful and very sincere friendship.

"ALBERT."

MAKES PLEA FOR RED CROSS AID

[Washington Star, June 21.]

William Jennings Bryan, former secretary of state and international peace advocate, who offered himself to the President in any capacity for war service, made a stirring appeal for a generous outpouring of money to meet the greatest humanitarian opportunity in history at a Red Cross rally at the District building at noon today. This meeting was arranged by Commissioner Brownlow and held in the boardroom. It represented the District government's message to the people of the national capital to give all they can to the cause. Representatives were present from all the citizens' associations and from all departments of the city service.

Greater enthusiasm for the proposed program of vastly increasing the yield of field crops next year would be created if it were definitely known whether any of it was to be sent to England to be manufactured into booze. The nation is tapering off itself, and it has a right to insist that her allies help relieve the strain on her powers of production.