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Germany's Beet Sugar Men Say We Are Ruining Them

Concerns Unite In Memorial to the Imperial Government Denouncing the Recent Brussels Convention.

"PERIL THE GREATEST EVER THREATENED"

Overwhelming Advantages in Favor of the Cane Sugar Industry of Cuba, Puerto Rico, Hawaii, and the Philippines Are Reviewed.

Washington, May 25.—Observance of the convention signed at Brussels by the nations of Europe, with the exception of Russia, abolishing export premiums on sugar, will cause the ruin of the beet sugar industry in Germany, France and Austria.

This is the conclusion of the beet sugar concerns of Germany, which have united in a memorial to the Imperial government which closes with this declaration:

"The Brussels convention is absolutely unacceptable. The government cannot and dare not leave us in extremities. Above all else, it is necessary that the German sugar producers shall sink all minor differences and disagreements, and unite to combat, resolutely and unitedly, the greatest peril that has ever threatened them."

Effects of New Conditions.

The effect of the new conditions upon the beet sugar industry are thus described:

- (a) Reduction of the home internal price of sugar to the present price in the general foreign market.
- (b) Wholesale and general shrinkage of beet sugar production in Germany, France and Austria to one-half of its present dimensions—in brief, the ruin of that industry.
- (c) Increase of sugar production in all beet growing countries which are not bound by the Brussels convention and in all cane sugar growing countries, including the United States.
- (d) A probable slight reduction of the consumer's tax and consequently a small increase of sugar consumption in Germany, Austria and France, which will not in any important measure serve to balance the loss to those countries of their sugar exports."

Advantages to Cane Sugar.

The overwhelming advantages which the cane sugar industry will gain and derive from the enforcement of the Brussels convention are prefigured as follows:

1. The annual production of 2 1/2 to 3 tons of cane sugar per morgen (but one acre) against a maximum of 1 ton per morgen of beet sugar, with a net cost of 6 marks per centner (\$29.40 per metric ton) for beet sugar—that is, an advantage of 250 marks per centner (\$70 per metric ton) in favor of cane sugar.
2. A 2 mark per centner higher price for cane sugar by reason of its superior flavor.
3. Direct and indirect premiums, including freight rebates, import bounties and other government favors granted to native sugars at least by England and the United States—say, as an average 1 mark (24 1/2 cents) per centner. There will be therefore a total advantage of 250-24 1/2 marks, equaling 225 1/2 marks (\$130) advantage in favor of cane sugar over beet sugar from the countries bound by the Brussels convention."

Demands Made of Germany.

The memorial then enters into a discussion of what the German Government ought to do for its beet sugar interest to replace and compensate for, in some degree, the advantages which it will inevitably lose under the terms of the convention. These demands are formulated as follows:

1. Reduction of the tax (Uebertrag) not below 6 marks (\$1.43 per centner (110 pounds) of sugar.
2. Fixing of the amount to be raised from the consumer's tax on sugar at a maximum, of 75,000,000 marks (\$17,850,000) per annum, in order that, with an increasing home consumption, the percentage of tax, and therewith the retail price, shall decline.
3. The putting of inland and export sugar on an exact equality, so far as railway freights are concerned.
4. Abolition of the manufacturers' tax (Betriebs Steuer).
5. Free reimportation of sugars of proven German origin from foreign countries and the free port of Hamburg.
6. Prohibition of saccharine in pharmacies.

The document further demands the repeal of all direct and indirect favors now granted to foreign countries in respect to sugar traffic.

Confessions Highly Important.

Because of its bearing upon the legislation pending in the Senate making the United States a market for Cuban sugar, the confessions of the German sugar interests are of great importance.

Consul General Mason, at Berlin, who transmitted the memorial to the State Department, says it states that a centner (110 pounds avoirdupois) of raw sugar costs to produce in Germany 8.50 marks (\$2.92). This includes cost of 7 1/2 centners (825 pounds) of beets at 70 pfennigs (16 1/2 cents) per centner, cost of manufacture, packing, freight to seaport, interest, office expenses, etc.

The Brussels convention will bring this minimum cost of \$2.92 into conflict with the cost of cane sugar in Cuba, Porto Rico, Hawaii, the Philippines and other tropical countries, which is stated at 6.2 marks (\$1.47) per centner, with the result of inevitable ruin to the former.

He then proceeds to show by an elaborate statistical table that the aggregate beet sugar production of Germany, Austria and France, estimated at 4,815,000 tons during the present campaign of 1901-2, will decline by 10 per cent per annum under the new conditions from September, 1902, and will reach in ten years (1910-11) a total of only 1,865,431 tons, while the cane and beet sugar product of North America, which includes the West Indies and the Pacific Islands of the United States, will increase during the same period from 530,000 tons in 1902 to 8,323,550 tons in 1910-11.

Favorable Legislation Asked.

Consul General Mason says the German sugar interests will employ their efforts to save, through favoring legislation by their home government, some of the advantages which they must forfeit under the provisions of the convention from and after September 1, 1903. How far the government will go toward complying with these demands the future only can reveal.

The propositions which the Reichstag has now under discussion include the repealing of certain chapters of the sugar taxation law, fixing the revenue tax on sugar at 16 marks (\$3.80) per 100 kilograms; providing that sugar, which before the date of enforcement of this law has been admitted to a bonded warehouse, and after the said date shall be released for traffic or transferred to a factory, shall be subject to repayment of the export bountification allowed thereon, and contemplating that the amended law shall take effect simultaneously with the convention en-

tered into at Brussels, March 5, 1902.

According to Mr. Mason the announcement that the Brussels Convention had, after so many previous failures, really arrived upon a plan to abolish export bounties came to the attention of that measure with the shock of an unexpected surprise. The whole proceeding was recognized as a decisive victory for cane as against beet sugar—a conquest for the Indies, Hawaii, the Philippines and Louisiana over Continental Europe.

Irreparable Blow to Germany.

The Zuck-Industrie, the leading organ of the German sugar producing interests, hastened to say that if the convention were carried into effect the result would be a blow to the sugar industry of Germany from which it would never recover. It said:

"In the world's markets our products will be overwhelmed by colonial sugars, which enjoy important and decisive advantages. Germany will be flooded with foreign sugars because our import duty is so small; the cartel will be rendered forever impossible; the price of beets must be reduced by at least 20 pfennigs (7.14 cents) per 100 pounds; beet cultivation, and with it agricultural prosperity, must inevitably decline."

Six days after the signing of the convention at Brussels a mass meeting of representatives of the beet growing and sugar making industries was held in Berlin, at which much impassioned oratory was heard, but the general impression left by the conference was that of a merely general but vaguely defined opposition to any change in the present system, which in effect taxes sugar consumers in Germany to pay the cost of supplying Great Britain and the United States with German sugar at about half the price which, under the ministrations of the cartel, it costs at home.

In the resolution which summarized the action of that meeting it was stated that it was too early to estimate closely and accurately the full effect of the convention, but that as it had yet to receive the approval of the Reichstag and Bundesrath, as well as the Imperial signature, there still remained opportunity for resistance, and to this the meeting pledged its loyal and united efforts.

Ends Financial Nightmare.

It is recognized, however, that the agreement signed at Brussels will bring to European statesmen the end of a long financial nightmare; that it will give relief to sugar consumers everywhere, and will require the governments of France, Germany, Austria, Belgium and Holland to set the beet sugar industry back upon its own feet, to stand or fall by its own merit and in accordance with the measure of skill and foresight that may be embodied in the new legislation which will replace the present system.

This legislation will presumably be shaped to accomplish one or more of three principal results—First, to sustain sugar production by promoting its consumption at home; second, by enhancing through commercial treaties sugar exports to countries which, like Great Britain and the United States, are more or less dependent upon imported supplies; and, third, by restricting beet planting and overproduction of sugar.

Germany has heretofore exported, roughly speaking, two-thirds of her sugar product, and the problem presented to the statesmen of this country by the new conditions which are to obtain after autumn of next year is complicated and serious. Beyond the readily assumed fact that the convention will be locally carried out, nothing in the way of new legislation has been decided upon.

Appeals have been made to the beet sugar planters of Germany to restrict the area of beet planting. The production, however, is going on unabated.

From later telegraphic and mail advices it has been learned that Germany has accepted the terms of the Brussels convention in spite of the intense opposition described above.

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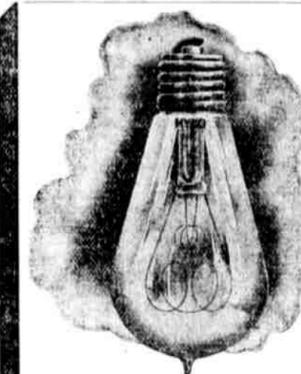
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