Unprovoked Aggression

Everyone is still swallowing hard on the proposed French alliance. When first rumored, it was flatly denied; the rumor having been confirmed, Americans with practically no exceptions tried to forget about it. A project which should have excited great discussion has been discussed hardly at all for the obvious reason that it put everybody in an awkward dilemma; nobody really wants the alliance, and few seem to say no to France, or know how to say it.

Mr. Wilsons' own reluctance is written all over it, and it must be admitted at the outset that if words can make an alliance innocuous the words of this alliance have been carefully chosen. Under it we are bound to go to war in two eventualities. First, if Germany violates any provision of the treaty of Versailles concerning the demilitarization of her western borderland; second, if she commits "any act of unprovoked aggression directed against" France. Even these obligations can be annulled by a majority of the league's council. If accepted by a majority of the council they can be abrogated later, if the United States for example should request it, by a majority of the council.

This new triple alliance is in itself a majority of the five powers who are the real masters of the league. No member of the league not on the council has any voice whatever in regard to this alliance. By what right do we make a treaty which says how the league may comfort itself in the face of it? This treaty, instead of subordinating itself to the league makes its own terms superior to those of the covenant. If France, Britain and America can say: "Our alliance is not subject to revision by the league except on terms defined in our alliance," what is there to prevent Japan or Italy from doing the same? Why shouldn't they form alliances with anybody they please, and write into them a clause saying: "These alliances are in conformity with the covenant so long as two members of the league approve of them. We are those two members and we approve. Therefore the league's competence is at an end." This alliance violates the covenant in a most fundamental way. It is as if New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania made special laws for each other's benefit, and then said that the constitutionality of these laws could not be reviewed except by a tribunal in which those three states were a strategic majority.

As the first fruit of the labors of the alleged father of the league, this document shows a strange lack of acquaintance with the covenant. But the befuddlement of thought does not end with a flat contradiction of the covenant. We pass over lightly the fact that it flatly contradicts Mr. Wilson's own promises. Everybody remembers the address of Sept. 27, 1918, in which Mr. Wilson stated "authoritatively" this "government's interpretation of its own duty with regard to peace":

> Third, there can be no leagues or alliances or special covenants and understanding within the general and common family of the League of Nations.

The reason why these cannot be, said Mr. Wilson the same day, is that "Special Alliances and economic rivalries and hostilities have been the prolific source in the modern world of the plans and passions that produce war. It would be futile to secure as well as an insecure peace that did not exclude them in definite and binding terms."

Painful as it is to quote Mr. Wilson these days another quotation is necessary. It will be recalled that in December, shortly after Mr. Wilson's arrival in France, M. Clemenceau made a speech in the chamber of deputies which revealed with admirable candor his antipathy to the Wilson program. The speech as delivered was so rough and so frank that it was expurgated before it was finally published, about thirty-six hours late in the Journal Officiel.

To this Mr. Wilson replied in a speech at Manchester on Dec. 1918, saying:

> If the future has nothing for us but a new attempt to keep the world at a right poise by a balance of power the United States would take no interest, because she will join no combination of power which is not a combination of all of us.

Yet Mr. Wilson is bringing home an alliance which is a combination of three of us that can be rejected only by the two least important of us, among the powers aided by three among the small ones of us; that the rest of us cannot alter before it is effected, and only the three of us can alter after it is effected.

How do we get around the fact that the alliance violates the address of Sept. 27, the terms of the armistice, the address of Dec. 26, and the spirit of the covenant itself. By the invention of one of the most extraordinary phrases in the ingenious language of diplomacy, "unprovoked aggression." The New Republic is prepared to offer anyone, including Mr. Wilson, a handsomely bound set of Mr. Wilson's speeches for a consistent interpretation of this phrase. If there is such a thing as an unprovoked aggression there must also be such a thing as a provoked aggression. Who under this treaty decides which it is? And having decided, what do we do in the case of a provoked aggression. Do we not come to the aid of the victim? In other words do we tolerate some kinds of aggression? Does the league have anything to say as to whether the aggression is provoked or unprovoked? Do we go to war under the treaty if it is unprovoked, and under the covenant if it is provoked?

The words are sound not meaning. They are put together not to signify a diplomatic reality but as propaganda for the alliance. They are a phrase like black black or noisy noise. Their purpose is to neutralize American objection by seeming to obligate us only to the very quintessence of sterilized innocense. They betray a lamentable confusion of mind and a gross exploitation of the gullibility of the American nation. If Mr. Wilson is simple enough to find comfort in them, to believe that they are not the traditional military alliance of European politics, he is indeed pure of heart. If he used the words to sugar-coat the truth, well—there is no use going into that now.

Let us examine this treaty by itself. It violates the covenant, it violates Mr. Wilson's promises. All right, what if it does? There may be more important things in the world than documents and speeches. What are they? The safety of France. That is more important perhaps than the covenant and certainly more important than Mr. Wilson's reputation. The safety of France from a repetition of the horror she has just suffered is a major interest of civilization. The question is whether this treaty promises greater security for France.

Before that question can be answered it is necessary to abandon the false picture of France which exists in America today. The French people are terribly hit by the war. They have suffered enormously, and their dread of another invasion is sick. But there is another "France," the France of the bureaucrats and the politico generals which movies behind the thickest censorship in the world. It is all nonsense to say that the people of France, the French nation, and the present French government are one and the same thing. The French nation knows what the censorship wants it to know and lets it know French opinion is not in contact with the facts. It is in contact with a governmental press, and it is manipulated by that press.

One method of manipulation is this: The real dread of the nation is agitated and prolonged by suppressing news which confirms the utter collapse of the German power and by emphasizing and inventing incidents which suggest that Germany may at any moment repeat the aggression of 1914. Everything that the government wishes to do is then explained as prudence, or simply not mentioned at all.

The French government, absolutely cynical about the league, is engaged in constructing a system of alliances designed to make France the diplomatic and military master of the European continent. The keystone of that system is Czecho-Slovakia. This little state, so hopeful in its democratic promise, has been nursed by the Quai d'Orsay until it is making demands which in the end mean disaster for it. The official Czecho-Slovak representative in Paris was urging in August and September, 1918, that German Austria must join Germany in order to stabilize peace in that part of the world. That obviously sensible application of the principle of nationality is rejected in the treaty on France's insistence and with Czecho-Slovakia's approval. Before the war ended the claim in the Slovak territory followed ethnic lines; by the time the peace conference was under way the conference was offering President Masaryk more Magyars than he felt he could digest. Why? Because Czecho Slovakia is conceived as a pown in the diplomatic game, and according to the calculations of the old-fashioned diplomats in M. Pichon's office the larger the territory the more military strength.

After Czecho-Slovakia Poland. The present Polish regime is in the most intimate relations with the French foreign office, and Poland is today the most aggressively expansive state in Europe. It is at war or on the verge of war with every one of its neighbors and it has more neighbors than any other nation on the continent. How many people know the connection between the French general staff and the Polish army? Not many, for the censorship is rigorous, but the fact is that Poland is conceived by the French foreign office as the advancing member of the new series of alliances.

If M. Pichon succeeds, as he undoubtedly will, Poland will have a common strategic frontier with Rumania in defence of all principles of reactionarity. For Rumania is the third in the system. Finally, there is Jugoslavia. The orbit of that new state is not yet clear, for French diplomacy is torn between the desire to patronize Jugoslavia, thus keeping Italy busy, and the fear of antagonizing Italy too much. M. Clemenceau supported the president on Fiume and then proclaimed his fidelity to the secret treaty. The Jugoslav issue cuts two ways, and that is why a decision has been so difficult. At the critical points from Warsaw to the Danube, from Mainz to Odessa, there are French officers as busily engaged in diplomacy as General Mangin is on the Rhine.

The whole elaborate maneuver has two motives—a public motive which is to build a barrier against Germany and bolshevismfff an official motive which is to make French diplomacy supreme in Europe. It is this second motive which is the real one, because the French staff knows perfectly well that Germany is prostrate and disarmed, that only extreme provocation and continuing humiliation can cause national resistance. Of aggression there is no question. The utter ruin of the German steel industry and of German sea power make another 1914 beyond the realm of possibility. The Germans cannot overrun France with wooden sticks and razors.

The purpose of this treaty is not to protect France against a German invasion. The French government is not so unrealistic as all that. French diplomacy is seasoned, and it is not as sentimental as it may look. The French are not asking Mr. Wilson to sign this alliance to protect them against Germany. They know perfectly well that the league is every bit as good protection as this treaty. Whatever their other skepticism they know that America would resist "unprovoked aggression" under the covenant just as readily as under the treaty, and with their control of the press they could just as easily as not make this plain to the French people.

The object of this treaty is to create a clique within a clique, a governing body within the council, which is itself a governing body within the league. The object is to create a Franco-British-American bloc for diplomatic purposes. For the Quai d'Orsay knows, though Mr. Wilson may not, that the words of an alliance mean nothing, that the fact of the alliance is all important. With such a treaty signed the Quai d'Orsay believes that it can pocket American influence in the league, leaving Britain supreme overseas and France supreme in Europe. French diplomacy know that such a combination is diplomatically invincible.

It knows something more. It knows how utterly incompetent and inexperienced American diplomacy in Europe is, how easily it is hoodwinked, how bad its sources of information, how ignorant of history, how tender-minded. Once America is "grouped," as the diplomats say, the Quai d'Orsay will speak to Europe for the group. That is the purpose of the Quai d'Orsay.

But there is another aspect to the matter. The United States is bound to go to war if Germany makes any military move west of a line fifty kilometers east of the Rhine. Now it is an avowed object of General Mangin, the French commander on the Rhine, to separate the left bank of the Rhine from the body of the German republic. There is no doubt whatever that this is one of the principal objectives of French official policy. Under Article XLIII of the treaty of Versailles and under this proposed alliance, Germany is forbidden to put down insurrection in the Rhineland. There is nothing whatever in either of the treaties to prevent France from using coercion, bribery or intrigue to create a secession government on the model of that recently attempted by Dr. Dorten. The use of military force by Germany to put down rebellion, no matter how engineered is forbidden. It would not come under the head of "provoked aggression," for the demilitarization of this area is absolute. The "unprovoked aggression" clause, whatever it may mean, does not operate within fifty kilometers of the Rhine.

It is no answer to say that congress would interpret our obligations under the treaty. France will have her interpretation, and if we fail to act as she will expect us to act, once this treaty is signed, we shall appear to the French people as a faithless nation. America cannot afford to make indefinite promises, to involve itself in this sea of intrigue. For the whole project has nothing to do with the defense of France against invasion or with the assumption of our share of the burden in maintaining the peace of the world. This treaty is in every respect the typical war-breeding alliance which has cursed Europe for centuries; it is on its face and in all its ramified meanings exactly the kind of entanglement against which every American statesman from Washington to Wilson has repeatedly warned us. It repeats every folly that ever cursed diplomacy from the grouping of hostile alliances to the dismemberment of nations.

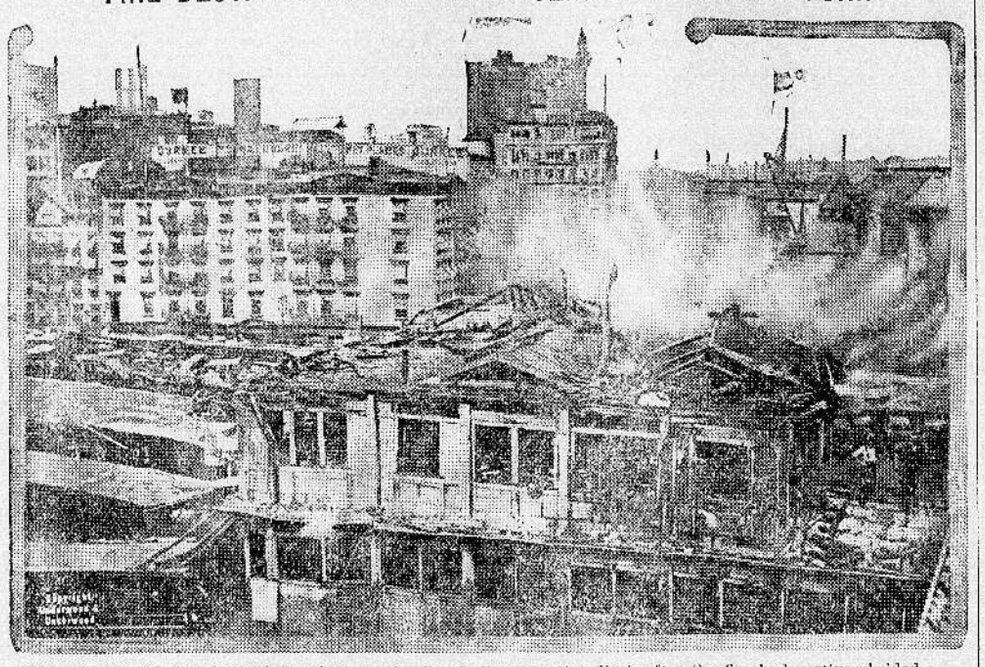
It is the old diplomacy bursting through the shell of the league. Whatever promise there may be in the league this plan defeats. There is nothing here but pain and misery for the French nation. France has less than 40,000,000 people and she cannot hope for, she must not seek, mastery of the continent. The salvation of France lies in an orderly Europe of democratic nations acting openly and together. France can be safe only if she is content with equality of prestige and influence. Her present diplomacy is a mad adventure which will hurt no one so much as the French nation itself.

In so far as this treaty is part of the adventure it should be rejected. It has no real connection with the defense of France. It violates the covenant. It violates America's "authoritative" statements. It will inflame jealousy. It will encourage counter alliances. It will create cliques within the league. It will discourage moderate administration of the treaty, and encourage the involved diplomatic intrigue of eastern Europe.

It is on the face of it absurd. To make a military alliance with the strongest military power in Europe against the only power which is disarmed has no military meaning whatever. It has only a diplomatic meaning. If we want to protect some nation in a special way, why in heaven's name do we not offer the alliance to Belgium? That would protect France just as well, and could not be made into a diplomatic combination. An alliance with Belgium, assuming that we have no faith in the league, would symbolize the meaning of the war, would have no serious diplomatic consequences, and would bar the only feasible road into France.

We suggest that this alternative will test the sincerity of the plan. Let the senators who are in doubt about this alliance propose instead a guarantee to Belgium, and see what reaction there is.—The New Republic.

FIRE DESTROYS SOUTH FERRY TERMINAL IN NEW YORK



General view of the elevated terminal at the South Ferry in New York after the fire had partly subsided.

Our Washington Letter

Washington D. C.—There is great, although carefully concealed, apprehension in Washington over the outbreak of social revolution in Italy, for that is the interpretation placed here on the serious food riots in Florence, Bologna, Ravenna and other cities of northern Italy, with consequent assumption of supreme power by "chambers of labor."

The importance of the situation to this country was pointed out to your correspondent by an officer of the federal trade commission. He emphasized the fact that food profiteering, hurting the farmers and the wage-earners alike, is responsible for the outbreak and observed that food profiteering, probably more flagrant than that in Italy, is today going forward uncontrolled in this country.

Menace of Food Sharks.

Just how much the international manipulations of the American packers are responsible for the present upheaval in Italy is still a matter of speculation. As yet there is no data available to show their full grip on the food markets of the world. In this country, however, it is certain that the grim monopoly of the "Big Five" is busily fanning the embers of unrest. Squeezing producer and consumer, and floating the government in their sordid race for gain, the packers, officials here believe, are doing more to bring the perils of revolution to this country than any other element.

Widespread recognition of this condition, and widespread fear of food riots and worse in this country as a result, is abroad in Washington now. There is actual apprehension of what might follow if the facts of the food monopoly were ever spread before the American people in their true colors. As Senator La Follette said the other day: "If some great playwright would dramatize the evidence collected against the packers it would cause a revolution."

Progressives See Danger.

And Senator Kendrick of Wyoming, cattleman by profession, comments on the admission of the packer combination that theirs is the biggest commercial enterprise in America, as follows:

"The startling significance of that fact is realized when we consider that this huge industry, dealing in the food supply of the nation and rapidly extending its interest to trans-Atlantic and South American fields, is dominated by a few private citizens who are wholly free from governmental supervision."

To check this situation before it brings the inevitable result now seen in Italy the progressive and liberal group in congress, regardless of party lines, are now uniting to put through legislation regulating the food monopolists and restricting the packers to that one industry. Bills for this end have been introduced by Senators Kenyon and Kendrick, and Representatives Anderson of Minnesota and Lever of South Carolina.

Mexico Against Brewers.

Mexico, while expecting considerable profit from the advent of prohibition in the United States, will not welcome American distillers and brewers whose business is now outlawed at home and who have lately been casting longing eyes across the Rio Grande as a fertile field for the perpetuation of a profitable calling.

At the Mexican embassy here it was explained that the nation requires all her cereals for purposes of food consumption, and that there is not disposition on the part of the government to increase the existing number of distilleries and breweries. As Mexican law provides that federal licenses must be secured before launching any new commercial enterprise one of the few possible avenues of escape appears to be cut off for the harassed liquor men of the United States.

However, it is said there is every likelihood that the California wine growers, a majority of whom are of Latin extraction, will find a haven of welcome in Lower California and other northern Mexican states. The government sees in a more intensive cultivation of the grape a source of income to the state, a profit to the people, and an industry with considerable export value to the Central and South American trade.

It is believed that the probable exodus of the California wine growers will prove a serious obstacle to Senator Ashurst's scheme for annexing Lower California to the United States. Sentiment in this section is said to be decidedly anti-prohibition and averse to coming in under the Stars and Stripes, for this reason, if for no other.

Land Value Monopoly.

Convincing propaganda for a revision of federal taxation laws is being made by the Farmers National Single Tax league over the recent sale by Vincent Astor for nearly $4,000,000 for a plot of ground 200 by 207 feet on Broadway and Forty-third street, New York city.

"Here is a 'farm' of less than an acre, 41,575 square feet, selling at $84 per square foot, or about $4,000,000 an acre," writes Carl Brannin, executive secretary of the Single Tax league.

"It has been said that there is a conflict between the interests of the farmer and the city dweller. From these figures it would seem that there is some justification for the charge, but the conflict is between the holders of the big land values who are able to cut down the purchasing power of the city worker by high rents based on high speculative land values, and the working farmer who has produce to sell and finds his market restricted by the above-named factors. The worker in the city and the working farmer in the country have a common enemy in the landowner speculator.

Employment Service Hit.

After a sharp struggle in both houses of congress, during which it seemed for a time that the United States employment service would be forced out of existence by denial of any appropriation, this branch of the department of labor has been allotted $400,000 to continue its work during the current fiscal year.

John B. Densmore, director general of the employment service, states that only a skeleton organization can be maintained on this figure, but hopes that the Kenyon-Nolan bill, providing for the establishment of the service on a permanent basis, will soon go through. In the meantime the work of the service must be greatly curtailed. Orders have been issued to close all but 26 of the most important branch offices and it is apparent that the organization will be able to do comparatively little in furnishing men for harvesting the wheat crop in the north central states.

Political Economy.

Under the excuse of "economy," which is trotted out in congress now wherever the interests of big business are threatened, the senate appropriation committee last week attempted to wipe out the United States tariff commission and reduce the appropriation of the federal trade commission by $100,000. This attempted action was taken at the behest of Senators Smoot and Warren, than whom it would be hard to find two more hardened reactionaries.

The vicious attack on these two bureaus, both of which have won unbridled hostility for their brave fight in behalf of the people, was happily defeated by the outspoken stand of the progressive group, Senators La Follette of Wisconsin and Kenyon of Iowa being particularly active in combating the tories. The National Consumers' league, the representatives of the farm organizations, and a small section of the press threw their weight into the breach and the appropriations of $300,000 for the tariff commission and $1,000,000 for the federal trade commission are now secure for another year.

The hollowness of the pretense that the federal trade commission's appropriation should be cut $100,000 "because of the necessity of economy" is seen in the fact that this sum is just about one one-hundredth of the cost of a modern battleship. Billions for defense, but not one cent to stop internal aggressions on our people seems to be the slogan of a very large and powerful element in congress.

North Dakota Victory Alarms.

The Review, a new and ultra-conservative weekly published in New York city, is much worried over the sweeping referendum victory won by the Nonpartisan league in North Dakota.

Being, apparently, very uncertain as to what the Nonpartisan league is about anyway, except that it is "some sort of state socialism," the journal contents itself with being bitter at the expense of Mr. Townley.

"The political methods of A. C. Townley," it says, "are so well known that one is right to be suspicious of proposals from him which centralize authority. * * * To offset his irregular methods Townley has long used the arts of the spellbinder, and he has succeeded in capturing the imagination of the state."

The purpose of the Review, in its own words, is "to resist the unthinking drift toward radical innovation." The eight issues which have appeared so far indicate that any alteration whatsoever in the status quo is "radical innovation" to its editors.

Come to the Free Press band concert at the ball park tomorrow (Sunday) evening at 7:30.

ACCEPT LEAGUE OR DRAW SWORD

Henry Ford on Witness Stand Says American Nation Must Make Its Choice Now.

"NATIONAL BURGLARY"

"There Is Better Way Than War," Says Fighting Pacifist—"Educate People and Teach Them to Think for Themselves."

Mr. Clemens, Mich., July 15. — A league of Nations or preparedness up to the hilt. That is the situation which faces the United States as Henry Ford sees it and as he expressed himself on the witness stand in his $1,000,000 libel suit against the Chicago Tribune. He hammered that out home throughout his testimony, no twist or turn that opposing counsel could give their examination diverted him from his point. He permitted no false interpretation. His statement stood out as the salient feature of the most remarkable day since the Ford-Tribune case opened, over three weeks ago.

Against Only Over-Preparedness.

Tribune counsel attempted to bring from Mr. Ford an admission that he had adopted a new attitude in that he had once denounced preparedness and was now advocating it.

"I was denouncing over-preparedness," said Mr. Ford.

"Want do you mean by over-preparedness?" asked Tribune counsel.

"Preparedness for aggression and conquest. Anything that contemplates more than defense is over-preparedness."

"What do you mean by aggression?"

"Burglarizing a country," shot back Mr. Ford.

"Did we ever want an army to burglarize anybody?" asked opposing counsel.

"Yes," said the witness, dryly. "Some people wanted us to burglarize Mexico."

Admires Wilson.

Repeated efforts were made to show a division of ideas between Mr. Ford and President Wilson. Amidst continuous objections, Tribune counsel pressed the question of whether Mr. Ford still thought the president a great man, and while the legal battle raged, Mr. Ford cut through the storm and said, "I think President Wilson is a still greater man now than he was before. I always thought him a great man."

Some of the now famous quotations attributed to Mr. Ford were brought into the case again.

"Do you think men who go to war are murderers?" asked counsel.

"No," replied the witness, "not when they are pressed into war or fight for release, but I think the professional soldier is a murderer."

"What do you mean by murder?"

"I mean killing people."

"Killing people to protect the interests of the public?"

"Killing anybody for anything. I don't know what else war is. War is murder. There is a far better way."

Would Educate People.

"What is the better way?"

"Why, to educate people. To teach them to think for themselves."

The examination turned to the science of government. Tribune counsel attempted to force an admission from Mr. Ford that established forms of government cannot be attacked and changed over night without revolution.

"How can congress be changed between elections?" asked the examining attorney.

"Well," the witness laughed, "Mr. Newberry might be changed."

This reference to the senatorial scandal in Michigan in which the present junior senator from the state is accused of having spent $176,000 to procure nomination over Mr. Ford in defiance of the law limiting campaign expenditures, brought laughter from the audience, and the attorneys.

"Well, you haven't proceeded very far with that," smiled Tribune counsel.

"Well, I haven't quit," said Mr. Ford, instantly.

"Famous" World Flag.

The famous world flag, of which so much has been said, was brought into the case for a brief period during the session. The flag was very striking, a white globe banded by red resting on a field of blue.

"Do you like that better than the Stars and Stripes?" asked Tribune counsel.

Mr. Ford shook his head. "It isn't the same flag at all," he said.

"Is it complete as it stands?"

"Never saw it before," said the witness.

"I saw a design like it once. Dean Marquis had it in the cathedral three or four years ago."

And this was the end of the famous flag, to which the Tribune counsel has referred so often, as though it were a thing of mystery.

Two Kinds of Patriots.

There are two kinds of patriots, Mr. Ford told the jury just before adjournment for the day: The man who will work for his government during the war without pay, and "munition-patriots."

"Did you say," asked Tribune counsel, "that ammunition patriots were for war because they wanted to enrich themselves?"

"I probably did," said Mr. Ford; "that sounds like me."

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RAILWAY CRAFTS MAKE STATEMENT

The affiliated Railway Crafts of Spokane, representing 15,000 members, present to the public the following facts which we believe you, as an American citizen, have a right to know.

The United States government in the year 1918, in order to bring the roads up to operating efficiency expended, exclusive of salaries, $573,334,119.

Advanced to the New Haven railroad alone $43,000,000 to discharge notes that had matured, constructed extensions, branches and other lines at a cost of $17,564,920, expended for equipment $289,802,068; built additional main, yard and industry tracks at a cost of $93,352,300.

The government has guaranteed and is paying the private owners an annual net income amounting to $950,000,000. This amount representing the yearly dividend plus $117,358,135 economized by the government in six of the seven regional districts will under government ownership automatically reduce rates which will ultimately lower the necessities of life to the public as the government operates with a view to service and efficiency and not to profit. Under government ownership the people numbering approximately 98,000,000 will share in the benefits of the greatest known public utility and not merely a few thousand, as is the case under private ownership.

Our waterway transportation will develop, a progress which the railways have always bitterly opposed because of competition to their own interests.

When the railroads came under federal control, transportation was paralyzed; there were 148,110 carloads of freight being delayed short of their ultimate destination; the congestion intensified by the most serious winter known in railroad history and shortage of skilled labor was practically cleared up by May 1st. From January 1st to the armistice there was transported 6,496,150 men requiring 12,879 trains. The great purpose was to win the war and the roads were operated primarily to that end.

The $200,000,000 deficit charged against the railroads last year can properly be construed as a war necessity. It cost $60,000,000 a day to prosecute the war and it can be seen that three days pays the bill approximately. Empty cars had to be rushed to grain states to take rush loads of foodstuffs in order to feed starving Europe and win the war. Troops and war material had to move in preference regardless of expense.

It cannot truly be said in the midst of a great war there has been a fair test of government ownership under which the railroad workers in normal times will be able to give the best and most efficient service on account of unifications and reforms not possible under private ownership. England, Switzerland and other European countries own their railroads.

Daily Bulletin rally at 7:30 Sunday, July 20, at the ball park.

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