

Municipal Preparedness for War and Peace in the United States

CLINTON ROGERS WOODRUFF, Philadelphia.

When our boys come home from France, will they find their city government as clean, as honest, as efficient as the war machinery which the Federal government has created in such an incredibly short time under extraordinary conditions and with such marvellous results?

These are the questions which those at home must face and answer as satisfactorily as we expect and believe those at the front will answer the demands upon them!

Every individual, and every organization is now making a war record, just as is the soldier and the company of soldiers at the front, and this record must always stand a credit or a shame. As the president of a civic league in Florida has so pertinently declared, "If there was ever a reason for the existence of such an organization as this civic league, a body of citizens working together to increase the public interest in all matters relating to good citizenship, to improve local conditions, and to promote the general welfare, if there was any reason for our banding together four years ago, does that reason not exist to-day? Is it not increased many fold when need is threatening the very existence of entire nations, and no one can tell what tax will be put upon the resources of our own fair land?"

This is the spirit of every civic body, city, state and national, of which we have record. Increased civic activities are as essential to the winning of the war, as they are to the solution of the after war problems. "Hold the home lines," "Service in the home trenches," "Prepare for the boys when they come home," are some of the suggestive slogans inscribed on the banners of our civic forces. In the word our own Winston Churchill, "for the student of history who is able to place himself within the stream of evolution the really important events of today are not taking place on the battle lines, but behind them."

What is Municipal War Work?

Is a pressing question of immediate moment claiming the attention alike of city and federal administrations, for the war has made it both a municipal and a federal question. In these days of need for vast sums to equip and maintain our fighting forces our national government has of necessity assumed through the Federal Reserve Board the Capital Issues Committee and the War Finance Corporation a supervision and control over municipal finances (insofar as municipal borrowing is concerned) that forces new definitions and delimitations.

In a letter to the Chicago Plan Commission (dated Nov. 30, 1917) the president of the Chicago association of commerce said:

I have noticed in press reports that there is an apparent tendency to discourage consideration of some of the projects of the Chicago Plan Commission because of the war. . . . It is nevertheless, unfortunate, because while winning the war must be the predominant thought with all of our people, the victory will be a barren one if we have failed to conserve present worthy objects and forward consideration at least of the plans for the future.

The Chicago association of commerce has been giving its energy to whole-hearted support of the war problem. At the same time we have not shed the burdens of encouraging local business and civic effort. We have tried to profit by the experience of our allies. I believe that any study of the municipal and national affairs of the European countries who have been through three years of intensive warfare, will show conclusively that part of the war program was the planning of large municipal undertakings and extension of foreign and domestic trade.

This is in line with the best English and French thought on the subject. In the words of a Manchester, England, councillor, "pressure should be brought to bear on public authorities, national and local, to accomplish those things now, as, after the war, money will be in demand in too many other directions. . . . Cities must be urged to use to the full their existing powers, and it would not be surprising if, before long, these are considerably extended, to cut away the red tape of the treasury."

¹Annual review of the secretary of the National Municipal League.

John Cabburn, the associate editor of the "Municipal Journal" of London, writes that public libraries have been maintained although they once were threatened. Now, he says, "the tendency is to make greater use of them, especially in the direction of increasing their use to the trading and commercial community. Already some authorities have added commercial sections to their libraries. Owing to labor difficulties many branch libraries have been closed. Many libraries have ceased purchasing fiction, and some have closed the fiction department."

That our educational facilities must be maintained unimpaired is obvious, for upon them depends the future of civilization. Thus far there has been a general acquiescence in this view, although in the early days of her war time excitement and preparation there was a sentiment in Great Britain that everything would have to be abandoned that did not pertain directly to the creation and maintenance of the army; but saner counsels prevailed and they must continue to prevail here.

Foreign War Time Precedents.

Our allies, Great Britain and France, have established many war time precedents which we should follow, and which I think it can be said with accuracy we are preparing to follow (although sometimes slow and afar off). An American correspondent, writing from London to the "Journal of the American Institute of Architects," points out that in England's program of industrial preparation visioned in the Defence of the Realm Act, there are four factors of great importance. These warrant emphasis, for three years of experience have demonstrated that it is absolutely necessary for the state to exercise the powers therein set up. Broadly speaking, the first relates to that power which enabled the state to take for its own use whatever it required. That was an arbitrary power; but it was necessary. . . . It was not until 1916 that the Defence of the Realm (Acquisition of Land) Act, which set up the mechanism for handling this phase of the problem, was passed. This important piece of legislation includes such details as:

- Continuation of possession of land occupied for purpose of the defence of the realm;
- Power to remove buildings and works;
- Power to acquire land permanently;
- Power to sell land acquired under the Act;
- Provision as to highways;
- Provisions as to water, light, heat and power companies and authorities;
- Payment of compensation and purchase-money;
- Application of building laws.

Number six of the schedule is of vital importance, in the opinion of this observer, for it provides that:

In determining the amount of compensation, the value of the land acquired shall be taken to be the value which the land would have had at the date of the notice to treat if it had remained in the condition in which it was at the commencement of the present war, without regard to any enhancement or depreciation in value which may be attributed directly or indirectly to any buildings, work, or improvements, erected, constructed, or made on, over or under the land, or any adjoining or neighboring land for purposes connected with the present war wholly or partly at the expense of the state, or, with the consent of the occupying department, at the expense of any person not being a person interested in the land.

The second factor is that the state immediately assumed the initiative in production of munitions of war, and it is interesting to note that under the broad definition of munitions there are very few things produced which are not so included. The scope, therefore, of state activities in production was very wide. There was no waiting upon individual initiative; land, factories, houses, hostels, heat, light, power, clothing and transportation were provided. This correspondent writes:—

"As yet I have had but a glimpse of this great fabric of industrial preparation, but what I have seen leads me to state without hesitation that we have in America no

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