

Our Mutual Interdependence

One of the supreme lessons of this war will be that the nations are members one of another, and that they are mutually interdependent.

A policy of isolated selfishness will not pay any more than war does, and those who advocate policies of national selfishness will find themselves mistaken.

Some interesting facts bearing out this theory will be found even in so conservative a financial paper as the "Economist," of London, England.

Trade is Exchange

Readers of the "Economist" are probably familiar with the oft-forgotten fact that the finished articles of one industry are the raw materials of another. In the complexity of modern industry this is a vital fact.

"No nation is, or can be, independent of another.

"All international trade consists of exchange, and when war cuts the exchanges universal suffering is bound to ensue.

"So we find on reading the American newspapers that one of the first thoughts that occurred to the American newspapers and officials, as it did to our own, was that the home and export trade would benefit by the cessation of exports from Germany and France, where conscription and war conditions have practically closed all the factories.

Sudden Consternation

"But this first feeling was followed by a sudden consternation when the newspaper men heard from one home trade after another—to quote the New York "Evening Post"—that some one essential raw material of its manufacture, produced in Continental Europe and now cut off by war, would presently be unobtainable, thereby bringing the home manufacture itself to a standstill. The subject is so interesting that we venture to quote at length the details furnished by our New York contemporary:—

"At first it was only the steel trade and the textile industry; the one had been buying ferro-manganese from Germany; the other had relied almost entirely on the German chemists for the dyes which gave the requisite colors to its fabrics. But the startled outcry from these two trades was only the beginning. The electrical industry was presently heard from, with the word that the platinum supply from the Ural Mountains was cut off, and that certain carbons and metal filaments, made by German manufacturers and essential for the arc-light, could not be obtained after existing supplies on hand in the United States were used up.

Potash Blockaded

"The drug and chemical trades were as quick in coming into view: an astonishing number of indispensable materials for these industries appeared to have their single source of production in Germany. Emphasizing the situation, one large retail firm in New York received notice from a German wholesale drug distributor doubling the price on 1,000 articles supplied by it. Drug dealers here trebled their prices of such products as citric acid, tartaric acid, carbolic acid, gum camphor, and dandelion root, and warned consumers of an impending failure of supplies. In quick succession the same word came from manufacturers of glass, soap, matches, artificial fertilizer, gunpowder. In all these industries potash is an essential war material. Natural potash is a German monopoly, and with war begun, the supply was necessarily absolutely blockaded.

They Depended on Europe

"Misgiving spread after this to the manufacturers of photographic materials, because of the prospective embargo on German-made oxalic acid. Then the glove, shoe, and hat trades had their turn: nobody outside the trades had suspected to what extent they depended on Continental Europe for their particular kinds of material. Even certain kinds of felt-roofing were drawn into the dilemma, for the curious reason that the rags from which it has been made are imported from Belgium.

"As a highly interesting climax, London raised the alarm over the Transvaal gold mines—the last of all places to be suspected in this case. These, like our own Rocky Mountain gold mines, extract the precious metal by the cyanide process, and cyanide of potassium, again a by-product of German potash, was about to be cut off."

The Lesson

"The moral drawn is that in spite of all this American manufacturers must not relinquish this opportunity of expanding business in neutral markets. The experts point out that the raw materials above mentioned are not an absolute monopoly of Europe. Dye stuffs and acids can be extracted from American coal tar as well as from the coal tar of Europe. Manganese ores are in sufficient supply in this country, in India, and South America to keep the steel trade going; already the per-ton price of this commodity has fallen from \$150 to \$100 a ton, after rising in a week from \$38 to \$150. Potash is manufactured in this country, tho it costs more than the natural product. Cyanide may be extracted from it here, and as for hats, shoes, gloves, and rags, substitution of domestic for European material is easy, if not convenient. Carbons we are perfectly able to make at home."

"Nevertheless, there is alarm over this embargo on raw materials. It is due not merely to the presence of German cruisers on the ocean, or to the deadlock in foreign exchange. The obstruction of access to Central Europe is, in fact, a heavy direct loss; it does, as a matter of fact, stop manufacturing in all directions.

Two Lessons

"Our contemporary thinks that the war will teach American business men (1) how to provide their own shipping facilities, and (2) how to utilize their own products so as to provide those accessories of manufacture on which they have hitherto been dependent on Germany. The United States, it is said, has hitherto allowed its chemists to be distanced by the patient experts to whom the German Government, which is now so recklessly diverting its energies from construction to destruction, had for years given every possible encouragement."

Decline in Consumption

"All this, of course, is capable of application to Great Britain," adds the "Economist." "Dislocation is one source of trouble. Innumerable industries depend upon the Continent for some one process or article, just as Continental industries depend on us for some other. But a deeper and irremediable trouble is the general decline in consumption at home and abroad, for which no natural remedy can be provided. And every month of war must make the mischief worse. It is, however, upon the rapidity of economic exhaustion that the probability of an early peace depends, and the world at large may therefore draw a certain comfort from its very extremity.

Germany, too, is finding out how dependent its trade is on foreign supplies, and that no nation can live today unto itself unless it is content with the humble products of its own fields. But unfortunately the world has got beyond the possibility of that, hence the disasters of this war.

Germany's Internal Danger

Germany's serious position is pointed out by the Socialist paper, "Vorwarts." "It is wise not to underrate the danger of the war's lasting a long time. With regard to food, one or two years do not matter, but the supply of raw materials for our industry is not a thing to be regarded lightly. Germany needs an enormous import of wool, cotton, silk, flax, timber, oil, copper, lead, zinc, leather, and rubber if a great part of the country's factories are not to stand still. The English have not dared to blockade our harbors for fear of our mines, torpedo-boats, and submarines. But the international law of maritime

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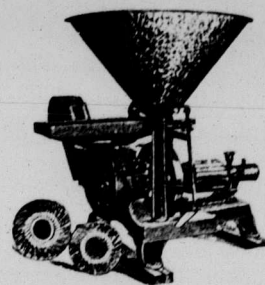
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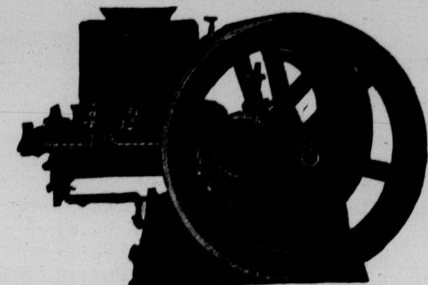
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