

sometimes happened in American history, would be fatal to the unity of action that is so necessary for the enactment of measures for the prosecution of the war. No other President has put himself so much in direct contact with Congress, or with Congressional leaders, as Mr. Wilson. Setting aside inconvenient precedents, he has personally addressed the representatives of the people, and he has called their leaders, irrespective of parties, into consultation on the big issues of the time. He has had his reward in the very cordial support of Congress in nearly all the measures that he has proposed or approved. Occasionally, however, he has found himself out of harmony with Congress and in such cases he has not hesitated to promptly exercise his veto power. Recently he has on two occasions vetoed the action of Congress in matters of considerable importance.

The United States Government, as a war measure, took over the control of the railroads of the country, a step that has met with general approval, although it has involved a heavy cost to the national treasury. Economic considerations which in ordinary times would have much weight have to be set aside in war time. The cost is not to be counted so carefully; the only question is, can the war-work of the nation be best done in the way proposed? In the case of the larger and more important lines the value of their possession to the Government in the promotion of war organization is unquestioned. In such cases nobody is proposing the cessation of Government control. But in the general movement the Government have taken over many local lines that may not be of the same importance. The Government had the power to abandon public control and return the roads to corporation management in any cases in which, after due enquiry, it was found that their possession by the Government was not necessary for the war service. Enquiry had been made and there was a strong probability that a number of such lines would be dropped from the Government's programme. This was not an agreeable prospect in all quarters. Government management may easily be more popular than corporation management, especially in the case of unproductive branch lines. We are having some experience of that in Canada, where a number of such lines are being absorbed into the system of Government railways. A resolution, originating in the United States Senate and concurred in by the House of Representatives, declared that the Government should not exercise the discriminating power given in the existing law, but should treat all the railways alike, holding on to the smaller lines as well as to the larger ones. This resolution President Wilson has vetoed. He has assured all concerned that short lines which are useful feeders of the main lines, and in that way of public value in the general handling of the traffic, will be retained; but he has declined to oblige the Government to hold and operate the very many lines built by manufacturing or other corporations for their own convenience.

The second veto of the President to which we have referred was in relation to the price of wheat. The existing fixed price is \$2.20 per bushel. In enacting a bill for the making of appropriations for the agricultural service Congress inserted a clause raising the official price of wheat to \$2.40 per bushel, a provision that would no doubt have been very popular among the farmers of the wheat growing States. But at a time when the cry about the high cost of living was heard everywhere such an increase would have been regarded as a considerable addition to the heavy burden of the consumer. The President estimated that the

increase proposed would add no less than \$387,000,000 a year to the cost to the consumers, besides seriously disturbing the financial arrangements of the Allies respecting the supply of foodstuffs. He therefore vetoed the bill, accompanying his veto with reasons why the farmers of the country should be content with the price already established.

Probably in both the cases referred to the hands of Congress were forced by local pressure from interested quarters. The checks imposed by the President will be regarded by the general public as a wise exercise of the veto power, and as a further evidence of the sound statesmanship of President Wilson.

## The 47,000

PROBABLY the most extraordinary feature of the extraordinary libel trial that lately took place in London—the suit of the dancing girl, Maude Allan, against Noel P. Billing, an apparently crazy member of Parliament—was that which related to a certain book, said to be in the possession of the German authorities, containing the names of 47,000 persons in Great Britain who had in one way or another so compromised themselves that, under threats of exposure, they could be made to act as German agents in any way required. A retired military officer, Capt. Spencer, who was a witness for the defence, testified that a copy of the book had been shown to him in England by two men of prominence, now dead. He further testified that he had been on the staff of the German Prince William of Wied, who for a time was the ruler of Albania, and that the Prince also had the book. The names of eminent persons in England were mentioned as being found in the book as the names of parties who could be controlled in the manner suggested. The two Englishmen named by Capt. Spencer being dead, there were no means of investigating the part of the story that introduced their names.

The story was received with much disbelief by the British public. This disbelief is strengthened by a Berlin report, said to be from official sources, that Capt. Spencer never had any place on the staff of the German Prince in Albania.

While the evidence produced respecting the book is thus not of a character to command respect, it is not at all improbable that the Germans had, amongst their preparations for war, supplied themselves with such a book. It is just the sort of thing that might be expected from the campaign long carried on by the German agents abroad. There is no doubt that for some years German visitors to England, abusing the hospitality extended to them, had been playing the part of spies, and that the German authorities gladly received and gave credit to all sorts of information thus furnished to Berlin. Knowing the voracious appetite of the German foreign office for information respecting conditions in the various parts of the British Empire, these spies, whether regularly employed by the German Government or acting as voluntary agents, would send to Berlin any silly story that might be heard or could be invented. Germany doubtless received and paid for a vast amount of information which, where it was not pure fiction, was really worthless.

Before the war a lad living in one of the English towns was arrested on a charge of supplying naval information to the German Gov-

ernment. He had offered information to a German consul in England, who piously said he could not accept it, but the consul gave him the name of a person in Germany who, he said, might be interested in such things. Acting on the hint, the lad opened correspondence with the official in Germany, gave the information and was well paid for it. The British authorities discovered what was going on, and arrested the lad. Inquiry disclosed the interesting fact that all the information he had sold to the Germans for a good price was taken from a published volume relating to the navy, which was open to anybody who cared to turn its pages!

This was probably a fair sample of a large amount of information supplied to the German authorities, who were gullible enough to receive and pay for it. It is quite within reason to believe that somebody in England prepared a list of names under the circumstances stated, founding the whole thing on falsehood, and presented it to the German officials as information of importance; and that the Germans paid handsomely for it and then published it as a confidential volume to be used by them whenever the war began.

The Germans no doubt had, in the course of their long years of preparation for war, filled their Berlin pigeon-holes with alleged information respecting the affairs of the British Empire. Some of it perhaps was correct and useful. Much of it, we may be sure, was rubbish, and this may have included the book of the 47,000. But the things of real importance, the character and spirit of the British people in the United Kingdom and in the Overseas Dominions, these the Kaiser, his Ministers, Ambassadors, and agents were quite incapable of understanding. On these things they had only information which, as they discovered later, was unreliable and worthless.

## The Commercial Treaties

SEVERAL weeks ago an announcement came over the cable, apparently from official sources, that the Imperial Government had denounced—that is the diplomatic word for the purpose—the commercial treaties containing what is known as the "most favored nation" clause. The announcement was generally accepted as authoritative on both sides of the ocean, and many articles were written in the press concerning the importance of the move. The "most favored nation" clause had often been the subject of attack by a class of writers on trade questions, and the seemingly official statement that the treaties containing the provision were to come to an end was received by these with much joy. A few days ago a question on the subject was asked in the British House of Commons, whereupon Mr. Balfour, the Foreign Secretary, quietly replied "the commercial treaties have not been denounced."

It looks like a case of some of the less important members of the Government undertaking to declare a policy for the administration which the more responsible statesmen have to repudiate. There is something to be said at times in favor of the abolition of the "most favored nation" provision, but in many cases the argument in favor of it is much the stronger.