

Anglo-American Relations

Americans still possess their traditional sense of humor, they must be hugely intrigued to find that one of the chief spoils of war turns out to be a tiny island in the South Pacific by the name of Yap, that our government has for many months been exchanging weighty diplomatic notes about Yap with the Imperial Government of Japan, and that all the great Powers of the world are in some measure involved in the controversy. Whoever heard of Yap before? Can obscure trifles like this, lying in the files of foreign offices, suddenly emerge to confound us with international friction?

The sole reason for this impressive debate is that Yap is the meeting-point of four submarine telegraph cables. One comes from Guam, which we seized in the Spanish War. It is in turn connected with San Francisco, Tokio, and Manila. Another goes to Borneo and another to New Guinea. Our Government's fear is, crudely stated, that any nation which controls the cable station at Yap might interrupt, censor, or read the contents of messages passing between San Francisco on one side of the Pacific, and Shanghai, Borneo, and New Guinea on the other. Of course no nation could do so publicly without compromising its honor. But apparently we have reason to believe that nations are in the habit of doing so privately. If they do, they steal an unfair advantage not only in secret diplomacy, which of course still exists, but also in trade and business. That is the whole story.

There are other cables which have been in controversy. Before the war there were two cables connecting New York with Germany. In 1914 Great Britain and France interrupted our communication with Germany by cutting both these cables, and towing the eastern ends respectively to Penzance, England, and Brest, France. Two years later Britain cut the western end of the Penzance cable outside of New York and connected it with Halifax. What was a cable between the United States and Germany has now become therefore, a cable between Canada and England. We cannot communicate directly with the European continent without having our messages pass through French or British hands. We cannot communicate directly with the continent of Asia without having our messages pass through Japanese hands. The Allies have seized all the German cables and claim them as the spoils of war. Great Britain owns most of the other important ocean cables, having laid them as a result of her commercial enterprise and her virtual monopoly of gutta-percha. But the matter has not stopped here. Many of us are puzzled to read in the newspapers about what seems to be a private war between the United States Government and the Western Union Telegraph Company. The company is trying to land a cable at Miami, Florida, and the Government has prevented it from doing so by the power of the navy. The cable in question is British owned; it comes from Barbados, which in turn is connected with Brazil, and it would, if completed, give British interests control of the most important line between the United States and western South America. The Department of State was so eager to prevent this result that it actually employed arms against a domestic commercial concern.

An International Communications Conference was held in December to adjust the question of the former German cables. The American delegates urged a compromise and gained the support of the Italians for it, but the British and French delegates would not agree. Presently the latter requested that the conference be adjourned, since they wanted to be home for Christmas. The American delegates reluctantly let them go. The conferees were to meet again on March 15 of this year. They did so, almost in secrecy. You may search the newspapers in vain for the story until March 19, when an inner page of the New York "Times" carried a circumstantial account of what had happened. Nothing could be announced officially, said the article, for "technical" reasons. Yet it was understood that United States was to receive full ownership of the New York-Brest cable and of the Guam-Yap line, while Japan was to hold the Yap-Shanghai and the

Yap-East Indies wires. The question of the control of Yap itself was differentiated from the ownership of the cables, and until the mandate issue was settled, Japan insisted on operating the Yap and of the Guam-Yap cable. Official approval of the French government had to be obtained before any final announcement could be made. Since March 19 there has been a silence about cables.

Wireless is, in one sense, a substitute for the cable, but it will be a long time before wireless facilities are as well distributed or as dependable as the submarine telegraph. Besides, since secrecy is the chief desideratum, wireless is really no substitute, because there is little hope of concealing the contents of a wireless message from anyone who is willing to take a little trouble to decipher it.

While we are thus in effect questioning the good faith of other governments in the matter of cables, we are preparing to exercise bad faith in the matter of canals. The Suez Canal, owned by Great Britain, is open to the ships of all nations on equal terms. The Panama Canal, owned by the United States, is also, in consequence of an explicit clause in the Hay-Pauncefote treaty, open to all ships without discrimination. But the United States shipping interests are trying to get lower tolls for our vessels, backed, apparently, by Congress and the Administration.

These two controversies have much to teach us about international relations. They prove again, to anyone who still doubts it, that most of the quarrels between nations are concerned not with high and pure ideals like democracy and honor, but with material interests like trade and profits. They show that the Allied and Associated Governments, which only yesterday proclaimed to the world that they were engaged in a mighty crusade to crush selfish imperialism, to banish war forever, and to establish the sanctity of treaties, cannot even trust each other not to snoop or not to violate solemn agreements when there is a little money to be made by it. These difficulties are too insignificant, taken be themselves, to lead to open hostilities, but they indicate how alert peace-loving peoples must be if they are to prevent rulers who place themselves above humanity from leading them into a situation where wholesale slaughter becomes "inevitable." — "The Nation," New York.

Book Review

THE AMERICAN EMPIRE. By Scott Nearing. Publishers: Rand School of Social Science, 7 East 15th Street, New York, 266pp., paper covers, price (American) 50 cents.

SCOTT Nearing has recently issued a book savouring much of its publishers, the Rand School of Social Science, in which he ably contends that the U. S. has entered upon the stage of imperialism. Like a true pilgrim to the Rand Mecca, he delights in contrasting the earlier statements of Woodrow Wilson and other American statesmen with recent American policies, and finds the new imperialism a thing opposed, never to the interests of the working class, but of the great American "people." To him the significance of his entire studies appear to be that "Liberty is the price of empire. Imperialism pre-supposes that the people will be willing at any time to surrender their 'rights' at the call of the rulers." (p. 21.)

He gives as the characteristics of empire:

- 1.—Conquered territory.
- 2.—Subject peoples.
- 3.—An imperial or ruling class.
- 4.—The exploitation of the subject peoples and the conquered territory for the benefit of the ruling class.

He fits the first two characteristics to the American empire by the following table of conquest:

- 1.—The Indians from whom they took the land

and wrested the right to exploit the resources of the continent;

- 2.—The African negroes, who were captured and brought to America to labor as slaves;

- 3.—The Mexicans from whom they took additional slave territory at a time when the institution of slavery was in grave danger, and

- 4.—The Spanish empire from whom they took foreign investment opportunities at a time when the business interests of the country first felt the pressure of surplus wealth." (p. 29.)

To deal briefly with his extensive data on these four points:

- 1.—Three hundred years ago the whole three million square miles that is now the U. S. was the Indians; they were the American people. Today they number 328,111 in a population of 105,118,647, and the total area of their reservations is 53,487 sq. miles. p. 37.

- 2.—To meet the demand for plantation labor in the south, negroes were imported from Africa in ever increasing numbers; in 1768 the slaves shipped from the African coast numbered 99,000. p. 43.

- 3.—Texas from Mexico, 1846.

- 4.—In 1899 Spain ceded to U. S. Guam, Porto Rico, Cuba and the Philippines.

Besides these, won partially by force, we have the Louisiana purchase, 1803, the purchase of Alaska, 1868, the conquest of Hawaii, 1898, when "for the first time the American people secured territory lying outside the mainland of North America. Altogether "Between 1776 and 1853 the area of U. S. was increased more than eight-fold." (p. 161.) And the peaceful U. S. has been engaged in 114 wars since 1775. (p. 27.)

Economic Foundations of Imperialism Classifications of the Total U. S. Wealth (*) in Groups:

- 1.—Real property (land and buildings, 57 per cent.
- 2.—Public utilities, 14 per cent.
- 3.—Live stock and machinery, 7 per cent.
- 4.—Raw material, merchandise, etc., 13 per cent.
- 5.—Personal possessions (clothes, etc.), 7 per cent.

So, "American wealth is in the main designed for further production of goods rather than for the satisfaction of human wants." The way in which this wealth is held further determines its application. "Start with the total non-personal wealth of the country; subtract from it the share-values of the small stock-holders; the value of all bonds, mortgages and notes; the property of the small tradesman and small farmer; the value of homes—what remains? There are left the stocks in the hands of the big stockholders; the properties owned and directed by the owners and directors of important industries, public utilities, banks, trust companies, and insurance companies; this wealth in the aggregate probably makes up less than 10 per cent. of the total wealth of the country, and yet the tiny fraction of the population which owns this wealth can exercise a dictatorial control over the economic policies that underlie American public life." p. 92.

The only solution for the problem of surplus is foreign investment. "Surplus is to be invested; investments are to be protected; American authority is to be respected. . . . Therefore the American nation under the urge of economic necessity; guided half-intelligently, half-instinctively by the plutocracy, is moving along the imperial high road." p. 176. It is a question for them of "Eat or be eaten."

"The Great War brought noteworthy advantages to the American plutocracy. At home its power was clinched." "It gained social prestige and internal economic power." "Among the nations the U. S. was elevated into a position of commanding importance." p. 157. As a result of the war "The Japanese empire dominated the Far East; the British empire dominated Southern Asia, the Near East, Africa and Australia; the American empire dominates the Western Hemisphere. It is impossible for these three great empires to remain in rivalry and at peace. Economic struggle is a form of war, and the economic struggle between them is now in progress." It may be noted that the late reports of the friendly relations between Japan and Great Britain corroborate Nearing's conclusions as to the alignment of empires. He says: "After Sedan it was

(Continued on page 8.)

(*) Total U. S. wealth, \$187,739,000,000.