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GOVERNMENT HAS RETURNED VESSELS

United States Restores to Dutch Ships Taken Over During War.

SEVERAL DESTROYED BY ACTION OF ENEMY

War Trade Board Announces That Bottoms Will Depart for Holland at Conclusion of Present Voyages—Liberal Rates to Be Paid for Use.

Washington, Feb. 2.—Dutch ships requisitioned by the American government during the war and now operated by the shipping board will be unconditionally returned to Holland as rapidly as they can reach American ports at the conclusion of their present voyages. This announcement was made today by the war trade board, which has reached an agreement on the subject with the shipping board.

The Dutch ships were seized in American ports last March 20 by order of President Wilson, acting in the war emergency. There were 87 of the vessels with an aggregate of 589,000 dead weight tons, but several of them were destroyed by enemy action or storms while in the service of the United States.

Under the agreement reached with the Dutch ship owners vessels destroyed were to be replaced either by money or by ships at the option of the Dutch owners and liberal rates for the use of the vessels were allowed. There was no information as to the exact number of the ships that had been lost or whether payment would be in money or in American tonnage.

War Emergency Passed.

The war trade board's announcement said the release of the craft has been decided upon because the war emergency had passed and because of the wish of the board to return ships and trade to normal channels and conditions as quickly as possible.

Return of these vessels will mark the conclusion of protracted discussions and procedure relating to the question, which began soon after the United States entered the war. When President Wilson issued a proclamation on July 9, 1917, authorizing an embargo on shipments of essential materials to all countries, many Dutch ships were in American ports and they either had loaded or were ready to load materials against which the embargo was declared.

Permission for the vessels to depart was denied and soon afterwards Holland was informed why the American government had declared the embargo and asked to furnish detailed information as to her needs for food, fodder and raw material. In the following October the Netherlands government sent a commission to the United States to negotiate an agreement.

THE WEATHER.

The South is making up this year for its "bad behaviour" of last year and we are having lovely weather. The jonquils are in bloom and violets are making the yards fragrant with their sweet odors.

The plumbers have had only one good chance at the town while last year it was a continuous performance.

THE COTTON MARKET.

Cotton sold on the public square on yesterday for 28 cents per pound. New York futures were up from 75 to 100 points at 2:30.

WAR COTTON TAX SHOULD BE REPAID

Frank Clark Reports for Congress Committee—Big Amount Involved. Five Million Dollars South Carolina's Part of Illegally Collected Fund.

Washington, Jan. 31.—Congressman Frank Clark of Florence, from the house committee on war claims, has reported the bill for the return of the war cotton tax illegally collected from the people of the South many years ago, aggregating millions of dollars. He recommends that this tax, which was wrongly assessed against the cotton growers in aid of the federal government, be returned to them without further delay. Georgia is due in round numbers \$11,000,000, South Carolina \$5,000,000, and Florida \$1,000,000.

Mr. Clark said that measures similar to this have been introduced in many congresses during the past 50 years and the subject matter has at different times been considered by committees but for one reason and another justice has been delayed until now. No good reason exists or has ever existed to prevent the passage of a measure of this character. Governments should be as scrupulous in dealing with its citizens as it demands one citizen shall be in dealing with his fellow man.

"This committee is firmly of the opinion that this money should be returned by the government of the United States to the people who paid these taxes. We believe that any impartial, conscientious man who will take the time to examine the record and the law must come to the conclusion that the four acts of congress mentioned were illegal, unconstitutional and void, and that after a lapse of more than 50 years surely the principal without interest should be refunded, all of which is respectfully submitted."

NO DIVISION OF GERMAN COLONIES, SAYS WILSON

President of United States Uses Plain Language in Supreme Council—Refuses to Countenance Any Policy of Loot

Paris, Jan. 31.—The crisis in the peace negotiations over the disposition to be made of Germany's colonies seems to have passed, momentarily at least.

It is too early to say President Wilson's view has prevailed in its entirety, but in American quarters there is confidence that a compromise plan, which has been accepted in principle, will be worked out with details which will be acceptable to the American viewpoint.

When the supreme council of the peace conference meets today it will have before it the very plain statement made by President Wilson at Wednesday's late session. So particular was Mr. Wilson to have an exact record of what he had said that soon after entering the meeting he summoned one of his personal stenographers and kept him at his side during the discussion.

What he said did not appear in the official communique, nor has it been disclosed with any official authority, but it may be stated that it was a very clear reaffirmation of the principles for which the President had previously contended. In phrases stripped of diplomatic niceties, it is understood Mr. Wilson told the members of the supreme council he would not be a party to division of Germany's colonial possessions among the powers which now hold them and become party to a league of nations which, in effect, would guarantee their title. There are inferences that the President even referred to a peace of "loot". The net result of the past two days of discussion on the colonial question, in the opinion of many Americans has been to clear the atmosphere generally and to force a clear definition of aims on all sides.

CONTROL OF FOOD GREATLY RELAXED

Restrictions on Margins of Profit Removed—Few Under License—Cottonseed Products and Eggs Still Subject to Regulations of Administration.

Washington, Jan. 31.—Removal of all restrictions on margins of profit on foodstuffs, except cottonseed products and eggs and cancellation of most license requirements on importers and distributors, effective tomorrow were announced today by the food administration on authority of a proclamation signed by President Wilson at Paris.

The following, only, remain under license:

Importers and distributors of wheat, corn, oats, rye, barley and elevators and warehouses storing these grains and rice.

Importers, manufacturers and distributors of fresh or canned beef, pork or cotton, cotton seed, cottonseed products, lard, butter and eggs and sugar.

Importers and manufacturers of rice, rice flour, wheat flour, and wheat mill feeds, and cold storage warehouse men.

The margins still allowed are: Retail cold storage and fresh eggs, seven to eight cents a dozen; cotton seed lard substitutes at wholesale, one and quarter to two cents a pound, on more than 50 pound packages, 8 to 10 per cent., on less than fifty pound packages, and five to six cents or 18 to 22 per cent. at retail. Wholesale margins on eggs differ according to the number of services performed by the wholesaler or jobber.

In addition to the regulations cancelled by the proclamation, all the remaining special regulations governing manufacturers and distributors of butter were repealed.

In making its announcement the food administration warned dealers that the provisions of the food control act, prohibiting profiteering and unfair practices would be rigidly enforced.

This act by the president virtually brings to an end the activities of the food administration except for the continued control of the excepted commodities which, officials explained, is necessary either because of contractual obligations of the government or because of determination to maintain stabilized prices. It is predicted by these officials that most remaining functions would cease before March 1.

AMERICANS NOT GOING TO TURKEY

The United States Has Never Been at War With Ottomen.

Paris, Jan. 31.—Whatever forces may be sent to Turkey for garrisoning purpose there will be no American troops among them, it developed today. It is pointed out that their use for this purpose would be inappropriate, as the United States has never been at war with Turkey.

The military committee of the supreme council expects within two days to report a plan for the allotment among the various nations of the troops to be retained on the western front. From the data available it appears by April 1 there will be fifteen American divisions remaining on the lines, with five divisions ready for embarkation home. A month later it is expected this aggregate will be reduced by five divisions, of which ten will be on the lines and five ready to return.

Of these ten divisions depends upon the time of the signing of the general peace treaty. It is said that as soon as that is done all the American troops probably will be withdrawn.

DISTINGUISHED VISITOR.

Mrs. M. W. Pratt, of Lexington, Va., is in the city on a visit to her son, Rev. H. Waddell Pratt.

CHANGE TO COME IN COAL PRICES

Control by Fuel Administration Ceases—Under Blanket Order—Regulations Pass Out of Existence and Reductions Should Follow Soon.

Washington, Jan. 31.—All price control exercised by the fuel administration over anthracite and bituminous coal and coke will cease tomorrow under a blanket order signed by Fuel Administrator Garfield and made public tonight. Zone regulations and practically all rules for the distribution of fuel as well as most regulations concerning oil and natural gas, promulgated under the Lever act as war measures, also are rescinded.

Very little work for the fuel administration will remain when the order goes into effect but officials said it would continue in operation until peace was formally declared and would keep a close watch on the fuel situation and if the necessity arises, restore any and all the regulations which are now rescinded.

Announcement that regulations governing bituminous coal and coke would be abolished tomorrow was made some weeks ago and officials said then that there should be a drop in price of both commodities. The order affecting anthracite was not announced until tonight and there were conflicting views as to its effect on prices. Some officials expected practically no change while others said the price of the lower grades should drop from 25 cents to \$1 a ton and that certain higher grades would cost more than heretofore.

Regulations not affected by the order include those requiring that all contracts be made subject to maximum prices if reinstated and to cancellations and to requisition or diversion of the coal by the fuel administration prohibiting reconsignments of coal and requiring shipments to tide water to go through to the tide water coal exchange. The last two regulations were retained at the request of the railroad administration to avoid congestion at seaboard.

LESTER CANN WOUNDED.

Deputy Sheriff Shot in Arm and Face By Negro Saturday Night.

Saturday night Lester Cann, Deputy Sheriff of Abbeville County, was shot and badly wounded by a negro named Mark Smith. Smith used a shotgun.

Deputy Cann accompanied by Tom Finley and John Beauford, who had been appointed for this purpose, went to the home of Smith to search for liquor. Complaints had come to the sheriff's office that the negro was selling liquor, and an effort was being made to catch him.

When the officers arrived, they put Smith, who was at home in charge of Mr. Beauford while Mr. Cann and Mr. Finley made search for liquor supposed to be stored on the premises. While they were searching the negro made his escape from Mr. Beauford. The officers remained for awhile, talking to parties who had appeared on the scene for the purpose of buying liquor as it is supposed.

While they were still in the house, Mark Smith appeared in the dark on the outside, suddenly shoved the door open and fired on Mr. Cann twice. One load from the gun struck the left arm, badly shattering it just above the elbow, while shots from the second barrel struck him in the face.

Mr. Cann pulled his pistol and fired in the dark at the fleeing negro, and from reports which come to the sheriff's office, it seems that three of these shots struck the negro. Two fingers of one hand are said to be shot off, and the negro has a flesh wound in his back.

Smith has not yet been apprehended, but likely will be very shortly.

BIG BUILDING PLANS APPROVED FOR NAVY

Administration Program Favored by House Committee is Unanimous Decision Unless Armament of Nations is Reduced by Action of Peace Conference.

Washington, Jan. 31.—The administration policy of vast naval expansion unless world disarmament becomes a certainty through international agreement at Paris was approved today by the house naval committee in unanimously recommending a new three year building program of ten great battleships and ten scout cruisers.

Four democrats and two Republicans were understood to have opposed the program as originally outlined, but their approval was given after an amendment was accepted providing that work on the new ships should not begin until after February 1, 1920. Administration leaders said the vote was an indorsement of the program announced by Secretary Daniels for an American navy second to none, unless limitations are imposed on all nations by the peace conference. Should an agreement for such limitation be reached, the bill provides that the president may stop construction at his discretion.

While the program as recommended does not authorize the six battle cruisers and 130 other smaller craft asked for by the department, it was explained that it had been decided to postpone construction of these vessels until naval experts could reach agreement as to their designs based on experience gained in the war.

The agreement of the committee was reached at a long executive session, after which Chairman Padgett smilingly announced that decision has been unanimous. Mr. Padgett said the completed naval bill would carry a total of \$750,000,000, of which sum \$169,000,000 would be for ship construction.

Work of completing the bill for introduction in the house was expected to be finished by tomorrow when Mr. Padgett said he hoped to get the measure before the house next week.

Besides proving for the new building program the bill authorizes for a temporary naval force of 225,000 men, exclusive of officers, and carries an amendment by Representative Oliver, of Alabama, directing that men who enlisted in the navy during the war for the regular term of four years shall be regarded as having enlisted for the period of the war, if they apply for such change of status before next July 1.

After the committee's decision it was learned that the navy general board, headed by Rear Admiral Fletcher, is studying the question of military characteristics of new ships closely, but has not as yet reached definite conclusions.

The one point on which there appears to be substantial agreement is that no very radical departure in battleship or battle cruiser design has grown out of the great struggle. The engagements of heavy craft were too few to afford any clear-cut lessons, it was said, and the development of these vessels continues to be largely on theoretical lines.

The last American battleships authorized were designed for a displacement of 43,000 tons, carrying 12 16-inch guns in their main batteries and having a speed of 23 knots an hour. The six battle cruisers for the navy authorized in 1916 constitute the most radical departure in naval design made by any nation, it was held, because of their great speed and heavy batteries. They were designed for a speed of 35 knots and to carry eight 16-inch guns.

BUYING LAND.

Mr. O. L. McMahan, of the Lowndesville section, was here Monday He came down to close a trade with Mr. W. L. Peebles for the purchase of a portion of the estate lands of Bud Lee Clinkscales. Mr. McMahan knows the value of real estate in his neighborhood, and he is buying it before the advance comes.

MANY PROBLEMS ARE TO BE MET

British Parliament Has Important Work to Be Taken Up.

DOMESTIC TROUBLES DEMAND ATTENTION

Lloyd George, Master of "Personal House," Faced With Urgent Claim of Workmen for "Better Life"—Bolshevism Feared Among People.

London, Feb. 2.—No British parliament in a century, except the parliament of Premier Asquith, which had on its shoulders the heavy responsibility of deciding whether or not Great Britain would enter the European war, ever met with more important work to be dealt with than the house of commons of Premier Lloyd George will find when it holds its first meeting on Tuesday.

All the problems of the new house may be summarized in the one word—reconstruction.

This is peculiarly a one man and a personal house, since its ruling power is not a political party but a coalition group whose members represent widely different schools and which depends for its guidance upon the personal leadership of the premier rather than the putting into effect of any party platform.

Premier Lloyd George is in Paris and he must stay there. No one expects him to leave the peace conference. He has the double burden of directing Great Britain's destinies in foreign and imperial affairs and in keeping a hand on the domestic policies.

Leadership in the two houses of parliament therefore for the time being will fall upon Earl Curzon and Andrew Bonar Law, both of whom are Conservatives and before the war stood for almost everything that was opposed to Lloyd George and his present program. That seems to mean that parliament will mark time until the prime minister can return and take charge in person.

Reconstruction Problems.

Meanwhile the problems of domestic reconstruction are not marking time and refuse to wait even until the more urgent business of world reconstruction has been settled in Paris. Many people predicted that there would be labor troubles in the United Kingdom, after war, but very few if any, foresaw that they would be thrust upon the country so quickly and so sharply.

The working classes and the plain people were told that after the war there would be "a better life" for the masses. Apparently they expect and demand that "better life" sooner than the government is prepared to take in hand the business of constructing the new era.

There are as many explanations for the present industrial unrest as there are points of view. Some say that the working men are uneasy and restless and that the strikes are merely a sort of holiday effervescence and are not to be taken as serious symptoms of any labor policies. Another and extreme point of view is that the British people are infected by the general world movement, which is roughly described as Bolshevism, and that the foundations of society are threatened.

HERE FROM HARTSVILLE.

Mrs. R. E. Caldwell came up from Hartsville Saturday and will spend two weeks with her sister, Mrs. Wm. M. Barnwell. Her friends are always glad to have her come back.

T. L. Clamp was here on Saturday looking after business matters. He is one of the farmers of the county who lives at home. Things about him are prosperous looking.