

Clackamas County News

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ECONOMIC HIGHLIGHTS

The President's address to the International Labor organization which was attended by 250 delegates from some 35 nations was not as direct and as aggressive as some had hoped. In language very similar to that he has used in the past he again condemned what he termed the misguided few in the ranks of industry and labor "who place personal advantage above the welfare of the nation." Perhaps the most telling sentence was that in which he spoke of those in power who use their power "to force acceptance of their demands rather than use the established machinery for the mediation of industrial disputes." That certainly fits a good many labor leaders these days.

A great many authorities are convinced that labor is this country's Number 1 defense problem now. Cases where industry has refused to cooperate with the government and accept the findings of arbitration boards are few and minor. Cases where labor has taken that attitude are many and major. It is probably true that the bulk of workers are willing and eager to do their share and accept arbitration. But the fact remains that a number of labor leaders in key positions are working on the "whole hog or none" principle and seem to think nothing of virtually defying the government unless they get their own way. These leaders are in a position to call strikes which could bring the defense program to an absolute stop.

It should be kept in mind that the majority of recent important labor disputes have not concerned questions of wages, working hours or working conditions. In some instances they have simply been disputes between the two major labor unions, A. F. of L. carpenters as a theoretical example may refuse to handle lumber cut by C. I. O. workers and vice versa. The strike which delayed production for some time in a factory making transmissions for tanks, trucks and other military vehicles was of this character.

Other strikes have revolved around the closed shop issue. There is no question but what the big labor leaders have as their goal a 100 percent union shop, a shop where no man can hold a job unless he joins and pays dues to a union. Strikes have been called or threatened in plants which pay union scale or better simply because non-union men were employed. Evidence indicates that the public is overwhelmingly opposed to a closed shop, the latest Gallup poll for instance showed that those queried were more than 70 percent against it, but the union drive to achieve it goes steadily on.

Biggest labor trouble yet is the threatened strike of railroad operating brotherhoods. In this case there is a question of wages involved. The union made demands for a 30 percent blanket increase in wages. That according to the carriers would have meant an additional wage cost of \$900,000,000 a year. Labor spokesmen disputed this and placed the cost at \$600,000,000. Whichever figure is right the financial cost to the carriers would be several times as great as their total net income in any late year. It would be substantially greater than their anticipated net profit for 1941 which is a year of abnormally high earnings due to the vast volume of defense shipments.

The President delayed the strike temporarily by appointing an emergency arbitration board made up of men with solid reputations for fairness and integrity in labor mediation work. The board gave the unions an increase of 7 1/2 percent, which it is estimated would cost the railroads \$270,000,000 a year. The carriers at once accepted the findings even though their spokesmen said they regarded the increase as an excessively heavy burden on the lines. One day later the leaders of the five operating railway brotherhoods rejected the plan flatly and called for a nation-wide strike beginning December 5th.

Anyone can imagine what such a strike would do to this country. Transportation is the very backbone of defense to say nothing of normal trade and commerce. Steel, lumber, aluminum, food, wire, chemicals, all the thousand and one things which are needed for arms production could not be moved. Key munitions, airplane and tank factories obtain their raw materials from other plants hundreds and thousands of miles apart. No other kind of carrier is in position to transport more than a fractional part of this gigantic load. If the railroads stop national defense stops.

We will know soon what is to happen. No other strike of such magnitude and such infinite importance has been threatened. Here is a case where the leaders of 350,000 already highly paid key workers in an absolutely basic industry have refused a handsome wage increase made by an official board which no one can accuse of being "anti-labor". The labor issue moves swiftly on to the climatic stage.

Repeal of the provisions of the Neutrality Act, those forbidding American merchant ships to be armed and to enter belligerent waters, was certain from the beginning.

The shooting war has started. And now the important thing as the President said is who fires the last shot.

MAGNESIUM AND DEFENSE

Think of a metal that comes from salt water; that makes a fourth of July sparklers and flashlight powder flash and is today a prized material for airplanes, required in ever-growing quantities. That is magnesium and it's scarce.

In 1940 the U. S. produced 12,500,000 pounds of magnesium and then the demand really started. This year it is estimated that our production will top 30,000,000 pounds which will be some 130,000,000 lb short of the demand. In 1942 according to present plans we may turn out in excess of 150,000,000 lbs. a still be that much or more short our requirements.

Our shortage is not caused by lack of raw material. One source of magnesium is salt water and the limit to supply is the width of oceans. It has been estimated one cubic mile of sea water will provide all the magnesium we need for any purpose. But the process of extraction is intricate and calls for a tremendous amount of machinery and electric power. Increasing production is a job that cannot be done overnight.

Still the job is being done as rapidly as is humanly possible. Production capacity has been doubled but so rapidly has the demand grown there still isn't enough magnesium to go round. It's all made by the fact that magnesium alloyed with aluminum makes the best airplane material yet discovered—light and tough, and that incendiary bullets and incendiary bombs are made from magnesium.

Great Britain, China, Russia, the armed forces of the U. S. are multiplied millions of these bullets and bombs and the skies filled with airplanes with which to deliver them.

There has been until very recently only one producer of magnesium in the U. S. Acting in conjunction with the British government and defense plant corporation of the U. S. it is rushing new plants to completion that will double and redouble its capacity. It also has licensed manufacture and made technical knowledge available to other companies to produce magnesium from various sources.

The present tremendous demand is the result of years of research into the field of magnesium alloy. Alloyed with aluminum it makes a light, tough metal that the aircraft industry has proclaimed as its own. Magnesium is approximately one-third lighter than aluminum and its use in aircraft results in increased payload and improved performance.

Commercial production of this strange metal actually started in 1918 as an aftermath of World War I. It was developed originally in Germany and prior to 1916 our small demand for it was met by imports. When the war stopped importation American production was rushed and our war needs met.

Twenty years elapsed before American industry got acquainted with magnesium. Its use was just getting well started, in automobiles for certain machinery parts, and other civilian uses calling for a light, tough metal when the defense emergency arose.

Our consumption in 1938 was only 2,719,700 pounds. In 1939 it more than doubled, then increased 73 percent that peak year in 1940. For this year and next figures become astronomical. The estimated demand for 1941 is approximately 14 times that of 1940. The 1942 demand has no limit.

Seed Testing at High Level With New Weeds Noted

Approximately 6500 samples of seed from Oregon farms have been analyzed in the past four months at the federal state seed testing laboratory at Oregon state college according to figures compiled by G. R. Hyslop head of the farm crops department. About 12,000 reports on purity, germination and related information have been sent out concerning the samples.

An increase in seeds of such weeds as morning glory, and wild radish and of bulblets of wild garlic was reported this year. Any increase of these and particularly wild garlic is serious as the latter is listed as a noxious weed in the southern states as well as in Oregon Hyslop stated.

A dangerous weed has moved into the Willamette valley from southern Oregon this year with the appearance of the star thistle. While this is an annual weed it is dangerous to forage crops as its seed heads produce long sharp spines that are objectionable in hay.

Average germination of cover crop seed was generally lower than in either 1939 or 1940 the report shows. Only about one-third of the vetch samples showed above 90 percent germination and hard seed. Among reasons believed responsible for this lower germination are a drying out of top soil resulting in chive seed, some thresher injury and insect pests. Crowding larger than normal volume thru the threshing equipment as well as faulty adjustment is probably responsible for the increased thresher injury Hyslop believes.

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WHAT DO YOU SAY?

10 acres, mostly cleared, on highway, electricity, telephone, bus to both schools, good soil, no buildings, orchard. \$1000 cash, \$500 balance 6 percent or \$900 cash. Better see it.

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