The Nation

Vol. CVII  NEW YORK, SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 21, 1918  No. 2777

The Week

WE deeply regret that last week's issue of the Nation is detained by the Post Office Department, which is questioning, among other things, the propriety of an editorial article entitled "The One Thing Needful," chiefly a criticism of Samuel Gompers's mission abroad. The Nation, of course, has no desire to overstep the bounds of reasonable and legal criticism and had no suspicion that it had done so.

LORD ROBERT CECIL, Under Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, made some interesting remarks on September 2, at a dinner celebrating the close of the sessions of the Allied Maritime Transport Council in London, on the much-discussed subject of economic cooperation. "In order to feed our armies, apart from our civil population," he declared, "we have got to pool all our resources, we must bring together the whole economic strength of our Allies." "If we are to succeed despite our freedom"—a freedom which Lord Robert explained as a rightful claim "to decide each for ourselves what is necessary in the interests of the general cause in which we are engaged"—we must be prepared to scrap national prejudice, national sentiment, and even, I should say, national interests." This is excellent advice from which no one, we fancy, will dissent. The question immediately arises, however, why has all this not been done? What are the obstacles in the way? What nation or "interest" among the Allies is holding back or interposing obstacles? Lord Robert was unfortunately silent on this point. He admitted that in shipping and in the control of wheat a conspicuously successful scheme of cooperation has been worked out; but his hearers were left to infer that there is still a great necessity, that the Allies all recognize it, but that for some reason—or is it for no reason?—the desired unity of action is not yet attained. We agree with Lord Robert that it may not be possible "to put the whole economic resources of the Allies under the command of any one man." But it surely ought to be possible, if the Allied Governments really desire to do so, to treat other national and international "interests" with as great success as has marked the treatment of ships and food.

THE "Victory Meeting for the Oppressed Nationalities of Austria-Hungary," held at Carnegie Hall on Sunday afternoon, gave picturesque illustration of the diversity of races and peoples that have been held under the sway of the Dual Monarchy. Soldiers in striking uniforms—Czecho-Slovaks, Croatians, and Poles—girls in peasant dress, Rumanian and Slavic choruses, lent color to the occasion, which was made notable by the eloquence and grace of Paderewski and the earnestness of Masaryk. Yugoslavia had her spokesman, and Italia Irredenta was not forgotten. Only the Albanian note was missing. The audience, largely Bohemian, was roused to enthusiasm by the various addresses, whose point may be summarized in the pithy phrase of Dr. Masaryk, "the primary object of the war is the dismemberment of Austria." It is easy to understand the enthusiasm of such a group on such an occasion, and those who arranged the meeting may well congratulate themselves on its success. It must be recognized, however, that the immensely complex Austro-Hungarian problem is not to be settled by any simple formula. Our Government, by its attitude towards the Jugoslavs and the Czecho-Slovaks, has given full recognition to the principle of nationality as applied to the subject peoples of Austria-Hungary, and we stand committed to a solution in accordance with that principle. The working out of details will be one of the most difficult tasks that will face statesmen at the end of the war.

THE criticism voiced at the recent Polish conference at Detroit of the administration of Polish war relief funds lends interest to the efforts which are being made to consolidate the numerous war-relief organizations throughout the country. With the approval of the State Councils section of the Council of National Defence, a National Investigation Bureau has been formed to coordinate war-relief work, reduce expenses, eliminate waste, and get rid of useless or overlapping societies. A total of 14,855 relief organizations which have sprung into existence since the beginning of the war has already been reduced to 159, and a further reduction in the number is probable. As most of the societies which solicit funds do so under some kind of State or local authorization, the Federal Government is unable to deal with them directly so long as they do not violate Federal laws. The larger part of the abuses which the National Investigation Bureau seeks to correct are not, of course, illegal, but grow out of mistaken zeal, competition, or mismanagement. The collection of funds on commission, payment of excessive salaries, improper accounting, and duplication of effort by rival societies are the principal evils with which the business of war relief has been attended. It is greatly to be hoped that the Bureau will not stop with the investigation of private societies, but will insist upon carrying its inquiries into the State Councils of Defence, not a few of which have long ignored charges of bad administration and political partisanship. If the continuance of these bodies is regarded as necessary by the Federal Government, there is no reason why they should not at least make public their accounts and salary lists and conform to approved business methods in the conduct of their affairs.

THE smooth working of the machinery whereby more than 13,000,000 men were registered under the new Draft Law has excited little comment, so accustomed have we become to doing things on an enormous scale at short notice. The mere physical proportions of the task are remarkable, but yet more striking is the comparative ease with which the necessary machinery has been set up in every part of the country, and the fashion in which the men have presented themselves for registration. One of the striking facts brought out by the recent slacker raids was the extremely small proportion of men who had made any attempt to evade the provisions of the earlier Draft.