

WEATHER FORECAST

North Carolina—Partly cloudy to night and Saturday; colder. South Carolina—Probably local rains tonight; colder in northwest portion. Saturday, fair and colder.

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PRICE FIVE CENTS

AMERICA'S RAILWAYS MERGED INTO GREAT CONTINENTAL CHAIN

Approximately 250,000 Miles of Road Passed to Government Control

DIRECTOR McADOO DRAFTS WAR BOARD

Railroads War Board Called Upon to Unify Systems Into a Great Line—No Ceremony Observed

(By Associated Press.) Washington, Dec. 28.—As the first practical step in the government's operation of railroads which began at noon today, Director-General McAdoo...

The following five railroad executives, each a leader in the business of transportation, will work out the plans for the merging of 250,000 miles of railroad into one great continental system for warring the war.

Portia Harrison, president of the Southern.

John K. Smith, chairman of the board of the Southern Pacific.

Samuel Reed, president of the Pennsylvania.

Hale Holden, president of the Burlington.

Howard Elliott, of the New Haven.

Director-General McAdoo will issue orders or suggestions for the immediate present, but will await recommendations of the War Board before taking any measures to clear the congestion of railroad terminals and tracks in the East.

"Whatever can be done to make the roads more efficient," said Mr. McAdoo, "will be done as soon as we find out what is necessary."

The financial question was touched on lightly in the conference. The railroad executives described the situation to Secretary McAdoo and told him just what they need in the way of government guarantees and encouragement of security issues.

Operating problems were gone into at length. The railroad executives promised their fullest co-operation in carrying any measures the Director-General may think necessary.

Mr. McAdoo said he had made no commitments in regard to a staff, but the presence at the conference of John Barton Payne, of Chicago, head of the Shipping Board's legal staff, led to some speculation that Mr. Payne might become an assistant to the Director-General.

The railroad heads were visibly in a better frame of mind after the conference than they were before talking with the Director-General.

Hale Holden, of the Burlington, said that the railroad heads immediately would get about working on a plan of improved economies and the pooling of freight.

Pooling, he said, would accomplish much in relieving congested lines.

The hour of 12 passed without notice by members of the conference, and it was 12:30 before some one glanced at the clock, realized that the railroad heads actually had passed the hour.

A sign today the approximately 250,000 miles of American railway system will be merged into the great continental chain for the winning of the war.

President Wilson's decision, the government, regarded by many as the beginning of a new epoch in government operation and control of public property, passed by without any formal ceremony.

Director-General McAdoo was conferred with the members of the War Board, War Board and Robert S. Lytle, chairman of the Priority Shipping Committee.

Members of the War Board—senior executives who have been working within the limitations of law, to get the government itself now ready to accomplish, pledged their cooperation to the government administration.

They have practically every railroad in the country.

FRANCE WILL HAVE NO "BEFORE-WAR" PEACE CONDITIONS

Foreign Minister Pichon Replies to Germany's Offer Made to the Russians

ALSACE-LORRAINE A WORLD QUESTION

Whether Russia Concludes a Separate Peace or Not, France Will Continue to Fight for Rights

(By Associated Press.) Paris, Thursday, Dec. 27.—France will not accept peace based on conditions before the war Foreign Minister Pichon declared in replying to the Chamber of Deputies today to the peace terms of the Central Powers outlined to Russia. He asserted that Germany was endeavoring to involve France in its negotiations with the Bolsheviks, but that the war would go on whether or not Russia made a separate peace.

The Foreign Minister said Germany was seeking to protect the negotiations with the Russians, re-establishing commercial relations in the meantime, believing that in this way the Bolsheviks might be checkmated later. Referring to the terms which the Central Powers offered to the Russians as published today, he said: "Germany is trying to involve us in her Maximalist negotiations. After suffering as we have, we cannot accept peace based on the status quo."

By agreement with our allies, we are ready to discuss direct propositions regarding peace, but this is indirect.

"Russia can treat for a separate peace with our enemies or not. In either case the war for us will continue. An ally has failed us, an ally who in preceding years carried off great victories. It is a great success for our enemy, but another ally has come from the other end of the world, a democracy has risen against Germany's appetite for conquest."

"At the conference in Paris, a program was drawn up and in consequence, unity of action on the part of the Allies will make itself felt, even in Macedonia. Germany and her allies have undertaken the impossible task of conquering the world. The world will conquer them."

"In this war France will have played a great role, for Roosevelt has said, she will have saved humanity."

M. Pichon declared that the secret treaties published by the Bolsheviks had not compromised France. He said the German diplomats who were pretending to show indignation were the very men who sought to negotiate a secret treaty with the old regime in Russia; who attempted to draw Mexico into war against the United States, and organized plots in Argentina.

After referring to the German declaration that Alsace and Lorraine would never be surrendered, M. Pichon said:

"The question of Alsace-Lorraine does not affect France alone. It is a world question. It is not a territorial problem, but a moral problem. On its solution depends whether or not the world shall have a durable peace."

The statement was greeted with applause.

The occupation of Jerusalem, M. Pichon said, was a victory for the civilized world. He added that the city would be given an international status.

Young Women Smokers

(By Associated Press.) London, Dec. 28.—The conduct of young women who smoke in the subway, the moving picture theatres and other play-houses where it is allowed, is gradually putting smoking out of fashion among English women of refined sensibilities. It is accomplishing more than a recent semi-official treaty to women to give up smoking in order that the men at the front may have more "fags." The women declared, in reply, that they were doing as much war-work as the men do and should not be the ones to make any sacrifices.

PRIVATE BANKS IN PETROGRAD SEIZED BY THE SOLDIERS

Finance Commissioner Takes Over Banks and Arrests Many Officials

BRANCH OF NEW YORK BANK WAS INCLUDED

Manager Stevens of Branch of National City Bank of New York Detained and Bank Closed

(By Associated Press.) Petrograd, Thursday, Dec. 27.—Soldiers acting under the orders of Finance Commissioner Menshinsky today surrounded and seized all private banks in Petrograd, including the branch of National City Bank of New York. The manager, R. R. Stevens, was arrested and detained for a short time.

Several surrendered the keys to the bank vaults, but Stevens refused. J. P. Wright, counsel of the American embassy, called upon Mr. Stevens during the afternoon.

At the time for the opening of the banks detachments of the Red Guard gathered in the streets and barred the entrances. Later the banks were entered. In most instances no resistance was offered. Mr. Stevens declared his bank had no vaults but only small safes.

After his arrest he was permitted to return to the bank, which was placed under guard. The bank directors who were arrested were accused of "sabotage." Telephone service throughout the city was stopped for an hour.

In explaining the seizure of the banks, M. Menshinsky, who had charge of the work, said:

"We let it be known long ago that private banks should send reports weekly to the State bank. This was done but the reports were incorrect. It was then decided to occupy the banks, revise their activity and then see that they resumed business."

It is reported that a special committee will investigate the closed banks spending a week in the process, and that the institutions will not be permitted to resume business in the meantime. The city is facing a serious financial shortage, especially in currency of small denominations which has been unavailable for several days.

The National City Bank of New York was granted a license last January to commence business in Russia, with particular reference to the financing of railroad construction. The license given was the first granted to a foreign bank to do business in Russia since 1879.

GOVERNMENT FAVORS CONTINUING SPORTS

(By Associated Press.) New York, Dec. 28.—Representatives of nearly 200 universities, colleges and various intercollegiate athletic associations from all sections of the country attended the twelfth annual convention of the National Collegiate Athletic Association here today, at which there was a general discussion of the policy underlying college athletics during the war. Colonel Palmer E. Pierce, U. S. A., president of the organization, in his annual address, stated that the government favored the continuation of sports among the colleges.

Encouragement of college athletics on lines to benefit physically all students, instead of merely a few specialists, so as to increase the vigor of young American manhood for war service, was endorsed by both Secretary of War Baker and Secretary of the Navy Daniels in letters received by the association.

Australia's Conscription Vote.

Ottawa, Dec. 28.—A Melbourne, Australia, dispatch to the Ottawa agency of Reuters, Limited, giving the latest figures on the recent conscription referendum show that 889,000 votes were cast for the "opposal and 1,073,000 against it. The Australian soldier vote shows 25,000 for and 32,000 against conscription.

G. B. D. PARKER WEALTHY CITIZEN, OF DUPLIN, SHOT

Seriously and Probably Fatally Wounded Today By Walter Cottle

SHOOTING RESULT OF AN OLD GRUDGE

Cottle Was at Home from the Navy for Holidays—Met Parker and After Fe Words Opened Fire

(Special to The Dispatch) Wallace, N. C., Dec. 28.—Just before noon this morning, Mr. G. B. D. Parker, one of the most prominent and popular citizens of Duplin county, was seriously if not fatally shot by Mr. Walter Cottle, a neighborhood boy. Cottle, who was home upon a furlough from the Navy for the holidays, held a grudge against Mr. Parker, so it is reported, on account of the latter having had him indicted two years ago for hunting on posted grounds and shooting tame squirrels. Last fall, Mr. Parker is said to have again caught Cottle hunting on his land and ordered him off, whereupon Cottle left the neighborhood and joined the Navy.

This morning, as Mr. Parker was walking from his store to his residence, a distance of about 300 yards, he was met by Cottle who suddenly faced him with the reported words: "Are you ready to die, for I am going to kill you." Mr. Parker told him not to shoot, but immediately Cottle drew a 32 calibre pistol, sending one ball through Mr. Parker's breast and another through Mr. Parker's hip and another in the lower part of the back. Dr. J. P. Landen, Mr. Parker's physician, reached him, and his nephew, Dr. Frank Quinn, of Magnolia, was sent for, as was Drs. Carroll and Williams, of Wallace. Dr. Thos. Green, of Wilmington, was summoned to either come through the country or to have a special train put on to bring him.

The extent of Mr. Parker's injuries have not yet been determined. It was found that the ball in the back had entered near if not through the left kidney, but it is not yet known whether the lung was pierced by the ball which entered the breast or not. Mr. Parker, who is considered the wealthiest man of Duplin county, lives 14 miles east of Wallace, Chinquapin being the post office. He is exceedingly popular, being noted as a most generous and public spirited citizen.

THROAT CUTTING STORY CONFIRMED

Correspondent Says He Has a Copy of the Official Communication

(By Associated Press.) New York, Dec. 28.—In view of published statements attributed to General Tasker H. Bliss, chief of staff, to the effect that in France visiting American headquarters he had not heard of the incident of an American sentry being found with his throat cut after the German raid, when an American battalion was in the front line trenches and that no such report had reached the War Department, the Associated Press called its correspondent with the American army in France for more definite information as to the source of his dispatch on this subject. December 28, notwithstanding the fact that the original despatch stated the incident had been read from bulletins sent to certain American units.

A reply just received from the correspondent says:

"In regard to the throat cutting incident, the matter in my dispatch was copied from an official communication to the troops, issued by the general commanding the division concerned. A copy of the order is in my possession."

Dwiggins Sent to Prison.

New York, Dec. 28.—Elmer Dwiggins, arrested some time ago on charge of using the mails to defraud investors in Liberty Loan bonds, pleaded guilty when arraigned today and was sentenced to three years in Atlanta penitentiary.

PRESIDENT'S BIRTHDAY.

(By Associated Press.) Washington, Dec. 28.—Coincident with the taking over of the railroads, President Wilson today is celebrating his 61st birthday. No special ceremony is planned at the White House, as the "war-time" rush of work means impossible any deviation in the President's daily routine.

Congratulatory letters and telegrams piled into the White House all day. This morning the President played golf with Mrs. Wilson and later worked on the railroad address he will deliver to Congress next week.

GENERAL HEALTH AMONG MEN IN TRAINING CAMPS

Deaths Decrease in National Guard and Increase in National Army

NO DECIDED CHANGE FROM FORMER REPORT

Some Camps Show Improvement While Others Do Not, According to Health Summary Made Public

Washington, Dec. 28.—Deaths from disease in the National Army during the week ending December 21 numbered 118 against 97 the week before and in the National Guard 120 against 165, as shown in a summary of army health conditions made public today by the War Department. Of the National Army deaths, 77 were due to pneumonia and of those in the National Guard 87.

"The non-effective rate of the entire National Guard for the week," says the report, "was 57.8 per thousand against 48.6 for the preceding week, the administration rate for disease was 31.1 per thousand against 32.6. The non-effective rate for the National Army was 41.8 per thousand against 40.4; the administration rate for disease was 34.3 against 34.7."

In Southern camps measles has continued to spread in the 34th division at Camp Doniphan, Okla., the summary says, but in other divisions of the National Guard the number of cases is small.

Many new cases of pneumonia are still being reported from the 31st division at Camp Wheeler, Macon, Ga., and the 36th division at Camp Bowie, Texas. Meningitis has increased at Camp Doniphan and has decreased in all other divisions.

Communicable disease rates are comparatively low in all divisions of the National Army except the 81st, Camp Jackson, Columbia, S. C., 82nd Camp Gordon, Atlanta, 87th, Camp Pike, Arkansas and 90th, Camp Travis, Texas. Measles has increased at Camp Gordon and large numbers of new cases are reported at camps Pike and Travis.

Pneumonia rates have generally improved except at Camp Travis, where 80 new cases were reported.

The number of new cases of meningitis has been small in all divisions except the 81st which reported 37.

The outbreak of scarlet fever at Camp Pike still continues.

A large number of new cases of mumps are reported in several divisions of the National Guard and National Army.

HOOVER WAS NOT A WITNESS TODAY

Food Administrator Called to New York and Could Not Testify

(By Associated Press.) Washington, Dec. 28.—When the Senate committee investigating the sugar shortage finally called for Food Administrator Hoover today to give his view of conditions, a letter from Chief Counsel Lindley, of the Food Administration, was presented saying Mr. Hoover "had learned through the public press" he was to testify today but had been called to New York.

In view of the repeated attempts of the Food Administrator to be heard previously, Senator Vardaman called T. A. Ellis, of the Food Administration, to the witness chair, and under questioning Ellis testified Chairman Reed had notified him last Saturday Mr. Hoover would be heard today and that he had given the information to Mr. Hoover.

Counsel Lindley's letter, however, declared he had gone to the capitol yesterday to notify the committee Mr. Hoover would be unable to appear today, but found all the Senators at the funeral of Senator Newlands.

As Mr. Hoover did not appear today, the committee resumed investigation of the coal situation with W. B. Colver, of the Federal Trade Commission, continuing on the stand.

It is entirely likely that Mr. Hoover will be subpoenaed to testify, probably next Wednesday. Committee members believed he had been sufficiently notified and were surprised at Judge Lindley's statement that Mr. Hoover learned through newspapers when he was expected.

Colver did not believe the United States should send coal to Italy or France, and said Lord Northcliffe told him that England had enough coal above ground to supply all Europe except Germany.

"It takes five times as long to send coal from the United States to Italy as from Wales to Italy," said he.

"The Italian commission told me they expected America to furnish coal to Italy," remarked Senator Reed. "Why is it people were freezing in France last year and the American ambassador was unable to keep his Paris residence warm?"

Colver, in answer, said: "I suppose" answered "I think they could get it across the channel if England had it," said Reed.

ENTENTE TO REFUSE PEACE AS PROPOSED BY TEUTON POWERS

TWO VIEWS HELD BY LONDON PRESS ON PEACE OFFER

Some Believe Germany is Sincere, Others That There Is a Trap

OPENING WEDGE FOR SOMETHING DEFINITE

Believe That Czermin's Statement Was Addressed More to the Allies Than to Russia—Comment of Papers

London, Dec. 28.—Opinion here on the reply of the Central Powers to the Bolshevik peace terms, as far as can be judged from the editorials in the morning papers, follows two main lines. On one hand it seems to be felt that the Central Powers have made a perfectly sincere offer to end the war immediately, while on the other hand it is declared that they have set a cunning trap in which they hope, although vainly, to catch the Allies.

The former view is not confined to papers generally regarded as having pacifist leanings. It is supported strongly, for instance, by the conservative Daily Express, which stands uncompromisingly for victory over the Central Powers. In all the papers taking this view the statement of the Central Powers is regarded as being addressed less to Russia than to the Allies collectively and the offer made through Count Czernin is assumed to be an initial proposal which the Central Powers probably are prepared to modify in the course of bargaining. For nowhere are the terms of the Central Powers regarded as entirely acceptable in their present form.

The Express says:

"The terms may be taken as Germany's first bid. The proposals are, of course, wholly inadequate, but it is significant that the idea of conquest has been abandoned completely. This is the first indication that Germany has begun to realize the true position with which she is confronted."

"At the same time the demand of the Allies for reparation is ignored totally. \* \* \* There is no doubt that the negotiations are a form of camouflage by which Germany is attempting to talk to the Allies through Russia."

Czernin's words there is, we think, a perfectly sincere desire to end the war at once. The offer, for what it is worth, is obviously genuine. \* \* \*

"Germany is pledged definitely to the principle of restitution, thereby bluntly repudiating Von Tirpitz and the other Pan-Germans."

"An authoritative Allied reply to Count Czernin might be a demonstration to the German people that the Allies have no wish to contrive their destruction, hinder their development or threaten their independence. When they once understand what the Allies stand for and what really are their intentions, the German people themselves will complete the destruction of that militarism which has set out to conquer the world."

The Daily Chronicle says it is a striking fact that the Central Powers have accepted the formula of no annexations and no indemnities, and continues:

"The new peace offensive of the Central Powers is meant, not primarily for Russia, but for the Allies at large and especially the United States. \* \* \* Coming at the same time as threats and warnings of tremendous German efforts on the Western front, it is no more than a bluff."

Camp Pike Quarantined.

(By Associated Press.) Montgomery, Ala., Dec. 28.—Adjutant General C. J. Hubbard, of Alabama today received a telegram from the War Department ordering that no more selectives be sent to Camp Pike, as that camp was under quarantine. The telegram did not state the nature of the disease, but it is known here that scarlet fever exists at the Arkansas camp.

Artillery Duel in Italy.

(By Associated Press.) Berlin, Dec. 28. (via London).—Throughout the day there was increased artillery firing on the Asiago plateau and the Tomba ridge (Northern front) says today's official report from the Italian front.

The Trend of Opinion is Expressed by Lloyd-George and Pichon

FERDINAND WANTS TO HOLD CONQUESTS

Bulgaria Would Keep Captured Territory—Allies Invited to Join Next Conference Which Meets January 4

Expressions by responsible members of Entente governments are beginning to indicate the trend of official opinion of the German terms for a general peace, as laid down in the reply of the Central Powers to Russia's proposals. Stephen Pichon, France's Foreign Minister, was explicit in a statement made in the Chamber of Deputies, declaring that France could not accept a peace based on the conditions that existed before the war. The war would go on whether or not Russia made a separate peace, he said. The question of Alsace-Lorraine, the restoration of which France demands, is a world question, not a territorial, but a moral problem, he declared, and on its solution depended whether the world would have a durable peace.

David Lloyd-George, the British Premier in a letter sent to the British Labor Congress, made a statement which is regarded in London as the British reply to the German offer. In that Mr. Lloyd-George declared "it was essential to the future peace and freedom of mankind that 'the purposes for which the Allies are fighting' be achieved. The French ministerial attitude was fortified, as shown by last night's Paris dispatches, by a vote taken in the Chamber after M. Pichon's statement was made. An opposition resolution was voted down 411 to 90 and a resolution approving the declaration and expressing confidence in the ministry was adopted 584 to 0."

German terms for a general peace and the suggestion that the Entente joined the Russo-German peace conference have brought no immediate response. American, British and French leaders are silent, probably awaiting a direct message from the peace-makers at Brest-Litovsk.

The attitude of the American government has not changed, and it is felt in Washington that the present German promises of no annexations and no indemnities are insincere. An alleged view of the German peace terms in high British circles says that Germany desires a general peace and does not want a separate peace with Russia. British newspaper opinion is divided.

A recess in the peace negotiations has been taken and the conference will be resumed January 4 at a place not yet determined. Leon Trozky, the Bolshevik Foreign Minister, is said to be preparing a new appeal to peace. It is indicated in Russia despatches received in London that the Bolsheviks place most of their hopes in retaining power in the consummation of a peace which will meet the wishes of the Russian population, thus weakening the Cossack and Ukrainian opposition.

King Ferdinand, of Bulgaria, an Amsterdam despatch says, holds different views on annexations than those expressed by Count Czernin, who apparently is the German mouthpiece. A Vienna newspaper quotes the King as saying that Bulgaria would hold what she had won, which seemingly is at variance with the generalization of no forcible annexations. (Continued on Page Eight).

THREE SAMMIES KILLED.

(By Associated Press.) With the American Army in France, Thursday, Dec. 27.—During a recent moonlight night German aviators dropped bombs on a certain town and two American privates, who were in a camp in a wood, were killed. The German avian flew low and dropped their bombs accurately.

A corporal of American engineers was killed and one private was wounded Christmas eve when a German shell dropped near a party of American engineers working in trenches on a section of the French front. The engineers for several weeks had been working along the front with veteran French engineers for purpose of instruction.