

LOOKING AT WASHINGTON

By HUGO S. SIMS, Washington Correspondent

Settlement of Lend-Lease Debt Calls For Straight Thinking

President Truman has placed the cost of the second World War, to the United States, at \$280,000,000,000. He points out that, fifteen per cent of the total was involved in Lend-Lease operations and that any effort on the part of the Allied nations to pay a debt approaching the magnitude of \$42,000,000,000 would have a "disastrous effect upon our trade with the United Nations and hence upon production and employment at home."

If we are to avoid bad feelings between the victorious United Nations, the people of the United States must be prepared to do some grave thinking upon what is called the Lend-Lease debt. Payment of such a sum in gold or U. S. dollars is an impossibility, thoroughly established by the

inability of other nations to pay us in gold after the first World War. Some form of settlement might be negotiated if the United States is willing to accept goods and services, but, after the first World War, the nation was utterly unwilling to adopt this method, preferring to erect higher tariff walls and to retire behind the ramparts of isolation.

We should bear in mind that the tremendous debt represents book-keeping entries, reflecting the shipment of tanks, planes, munitions, food, materiel and the thousand-and-one products needed in the prosecution of warfare. Moreover, the bulk of the goods so shipped abroad have been fully utilized in the common struggle against the enemy. To require payment now would be to compel our allies, in a critical financial condition because of war strains, to make payments largely for expend-

able and expended goods.

The only justification for the Lend-Lease policy was that it assisted our allies to fight enemies which this nation had to defeat. Obviously, if Great Britain or Russia had collapsed like France the task of the United States, in money and in blood, would have been much larger. In brief, every article that we provided the British and the Russians, which was used in the interest of the United States as much as in the interest of other nations and resulted in the saving of the lives and bodies of American men.

If we survey the situation in a realistic frame of mind, we discover that the United States spent \$238,000,000,000 to arm, equip and sustain 12,000,000 fighting men. The nation also spent approximately \$42,000,000,000 to assist Great Britain and Russia to keep in the field, actively fighting the enemy, armies and navies that approximated the size of our own. By lending assistance to our Allies, we strengthened the common war effort, shortened the duration of the war and saved the lives of thousands of American young men.

It is safe to say that if the nation faced a similar situation today, cognizant of the financial cost and the possible saving of American lives, the people of the United States would enthusiastically vote to give munitions of war to allies ready to fight in the common cause. Not only would we save American lives but we would increase the weight of blows against the enemy.

The cold truth is that Lend-Lease saved the cause of the democracies, lightened the burdens of the United States, preserved the lives of thousands of Americans and saved us considerable sum of money which we would have had to spend if the war had continued longer. Without the active participation of Great Britain and Russia, it is not disputed that the United States, fighting alone, would have had a much longer struggle against Japan.

Following the statement of President Truman, in his report on Lend-Lease operations, that any effort to attempt the collection of \$42,000,000,000 from the United Nations would threaten their political stability and help to "sow the seeds of a new world conflagration," Secretary of State Byrnes denied that the debt was to be cancelled or that this country would require settlements only for goods not used or not delivered at the end of the war.

Mr. Byrnes said that although this country will not seek "paper contracts to pay dollars, which will not be available to our debtors," settlements will be negotiated and he infers that what the United States will seek is "attainment of the long-range security and economic objectives of the United States."

While Mr. Byrnes did not go into details as to what he had in mind, it is not hard to guess, from President Truman's prior statement, that we want "political and economic conditions which are the foundation of freedom and welfare among the nations of the earth."

In the recent past, in reference to an enduring peace, the nation has insisted upon freedom and economic welfare for self-governing men, with full industrial production and employment in all nations. As Mr. Truman declared, "We have sought and will continue to seek high levels of commerce and stable monetary exchange relationships." Moreover, this nation seeks to expand its foreign trade and investment abroad, without running into insuperable barriers created through international commercial rivalry.

From the statements of President Truman and Secretary Byrnes, it seems clear that the United States will not attempt to collect dollars, but that it will expect the United Nations to cooperate in the establishment of world conditions that will promote the freer exchange of goods and services.

Congressmen Should Support Military Leaders In Demobilization

The military leaders of the nation have a difficult task before them, as they seek to maintain the armed strength necessary to make certain that our victories over Germany and Japan shall not be whittled into temporary successes.

In this task, the military leaders face considerable public protest as interested relatives demand the immediate release of Tom, Dick and Harry, regardless of points and regardless of whether they have seen active service or not. While such a demand on the part of the public is more or less inevitable, it makes the job of our leaders more disagreeable and more difficult.

Under such conditions, it would seem to be logical to expect members of Congress to throw their support to the military leaders of the nation by attempting to explain to constituents the facts of the world situation, the necessity that thousands of men remain in service and the correctness of procedure which permits men with active service to be relieved by men who have not been overseas as long.

There is no indication that many congressmen have caught this point of view or recognized such a responsibility. In fact, in practically every state Senators and Representatives have taken up various "protests" from relatives and service men, put in their spokes in an effort to change the order of demobilization and thus added to the difficulties of our lead-

ers and increased the discontent on the home front.

Truman Adopts Middle Course On Army-Navy Recruiting Problem
President Truman has adopted a middle course in regard to filling the Army and Navy's requirements for men.

While not willing to depend on voluntary enlistment to provide men for the armed forces and to keep them at "safe levels," the President has opened the way for campaigns to secure voluntary recruits. Naturally, if there are enough volunteers, there will be no necessity for continuing the draft.

This move seems to answer the contention of some congressmen that the draft should be abandoned because the nation can get sufficient men through the volunteer method. Obviously, if this is correct, the armed forces would prefer to have volunteers who go into service of their own desire, rather than to draft men who, in many cases, are unwilling to serve.

Eisenhower Declares That We Must Feed The Germans

General Eisenhower expresses the opinion that American forces of occupation in Germany will be reduced to around 400,000 men before the winter is over and that, if the Germans do more for themselves, the number may be further decreased. It is interesting that the American

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can commander confirms the report that American food must be imported to feed the German people. He does not believe in pampering defeated Nazis but he favors a ration that will prevent disease.
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