

ing standards a matter of patriotism, the pressure upon the children, our second line of national defense, will grow steadily heavier as the war goes on unless the women take effective steps to protect them. How can this be done?

Not by inventing new and untried activities, but by the extension and reënforcement of the existing machinery. New York City, especially, has developed a system of child conservation which, as a system, is the equal of the best that war has created in Europe. The first school nurse was employed by the city almost a generation ago. To-day, the Bureau of Child Hygiene employs more than three hundred nurses, one hundred and eighty-seven medical inspectors, ten dentists, two surgeons, fifty-eight nurses' assistants and almost one hundred men and women of other ranks. It operates fifty-nine infants' health stations for the feeding and medical supervision of babies and the instruction of mothers. It coöperates with scores of day nurseries, settlements, clinics and hospitals. And in recent years, its work has been reënforced by the School Lunch Committee, which with the aid of a municipal subsidy sold over two million penny portions of food last year to ten thousand children at thirty-four school kitchens. As a result of all this work, the infant death rate fell from 200 per thousand in 1898, to 125 in 1910 and 93 in 1916—the lowest in the country. The death rate among children under five years has undergone a corresponding decrease. But the morbidity among children of school age—that is, the proportion in a subnormal state of health and physical resistance—has apparently increased. This is principally due to the fact that the service of the school lunches has not kept pace with the decline in the purchasing power of wages. And the lunch rooms ought now to be run throughout the year, instead of the school months only. The danger is that at this time when the need of the children grows daily more acute, it will be difficult not only to extend the present service, but to keep it intact.

There is already a shortage of trained nurses. This will be aggravated as our army is mobilized into action. Europe is calling for doctors; our army will call for them in increasing numbers. The trained assistance needed to operate the school lunch rooms will be in growing demand. The infant health stations and the school kitchens will need volunteers. As soon as the woman's registration bureau of the Mayor's Defense Committee is in effective operation, Dr. Baker plans to institute a six weeks' training course for women qualified to replace or supplement her present staff. If the women of the city had been alive to their opportunity, this auxiliary service would be in training now. Stewpans and nursing bottles are so re-

pellently unromantic! Unless the children are to bear an increasingly disproportionate part of the war's burden, every infants' health station, school lunch room, day nursery, settlement, kindergarten and Sunday school must be organized in coöperation with the Bureau of Child Hygiene and run to capacity, at least for the duration of the war. It is for the women to say whether the end of the war shall find our children broken in health.

Overplaying the News

NEWSPAPER readers who are accustomed to take all Washington dispatches literally must be wondering why the government has made no provision for quartering the prisoners we shall take. That, apparently, is the only circumstance connected with our going in which has not been anticipated, discussed, and quite adequately prepared for. Other developments have been coming rapidly. It was only two days after the declaration of war that most of our journals reported that definite arrangements had been made for the full coöperation of the British and American fleets. Since then it has been announced that a censorship bill, drafted by the War Department, was about to be made law; that the General Staff had prepared its plan for raising a new army, and had sent it up to Congress; and that the War Department had ordered three million trench bombs, with a complete outfit of gas masks and grenade throwers. In the face of so much already accomplished, who will say that the quartering of prisoners was not a matter to be forehanded about?

To people who live in Washington much of this information comes as a surprise. They wonder how so much that is important has missed them. They go to Secretary Daniels, and ask if it is possible to indicate in any general way the nature of the arrangements for naval coöperation—and he denies (April 9th) that such arrangements have been made. They go to the Army censor—Major McArthur—and inquire whether the censorship bill as drafted by the War Department follows the outlines of the British act—and are told (April 12th) that the War Department has drafted no censorship bill, and has at present no intention of drafting one. They go to the military committee at the Capitol, in search of the bill which raises a new army and which, on April 6th, the General Staff was about to submit to Congress—and they find, as late as April 16th, that no such bill has yet been introduced. Of the trench bombs and the outfit of gas masks they can not learn so authoritatively. They are matters of military detail, and not open for discussion on a wide scale. Sceptics can only note that

at the time their purchase was announced the Army Appropriation bill had not been passed, and that government departments, even in critical periods, do not buy on credit.

This tendency on the part of many newspapers to overplay the news is the result, of course, of the competition which forces a reporter to assume that when something seems almost certain to happen it has as good as happened. If it did nothing more than occasionally nettle first-hand observers, there would be no reason for concern in the matter. Unfortunately the effect is much wider. The policy of giving the impression, not that a thing has been thought of, but that it is nearly consummated, may actually jeopardize the success of American participation in the war. For, no matter how sincerely in accord with the President's address, or how firmly convinced that this must be a war for ultimate liberal principles, the average man requires that when his country is at war there be something happening to keep his interest alive. It need not be adventure but it must be progress. To go through a period of at least six months in which American participation must almost certainly be limited to food and shoes, drilling and crops, loans and wooden ships, will be a tax on the most philosophical patience. But to treat an undramatic situation so that it also becomes an anticlimax is shortsighted in the extreme. Slowly developing plans and preparations are to be the only signs of activity through a period that will be unusually trying. Yet the impression is being given that plans are complete and preparations speeding. It is actually difficult, at this early point, to imagine a form of coöperation or a branch of participation in which the government has not been announced as having a definite policy and being on the way to its achievement. Remarkable ingenuity will be needed, if the present program is followed much longer, for the newspapers to keep from repeating themselves. And when they do—what will happen? The administration will be accused of dallying. People will ask why nothing has been happening since the first few weeks of activity. Unintelligent criticism will be made of executive heads and their methods. Charges of incompetency, demands for resignation, recriminations—all these will be seasonable. Useful men and valuable groups will be estranged.

If it seems regrettable that one phase of the conditions in Washington should be overplayed, it is equally unfortunate, for a proper understanding of the situation, that another phase should be almost wholly ignored. There is much discussion of the daily activities of the War Department and the Council of National Defense, but little of the ordinary difficulties that hamper them. One of these is the commonplace matter of interruption. The of-

fices of the Council, spread out through the Munsey Building so as to be particularly accessible, are constantly filled with volunteers who have come, patriotically, but often importunately, to put their services at the disposal of the government. Through much of the day, busy officials listen to the protestations of one volunteer after another that in thus offering himself to his country he has no ulterior motives. Amateur plans for conserving food, for destroying submarines, for taking censuses, for standardizing bolts, for utilizing vacant lots—earnest but inescapable conversations that prevent the members of the Council from progressing as the press informs them they have progressed. Quite as discouraging to accomplishment are the conditions in the War Department. If a newspaper correspondent were not constrained to develop a cheerier outlook than his competitor, he might not follow the set lines of reporting. He might not write: "It was learned in high administration circles tonight that the Secretary of War devoted the day to a series of conferences with members of Congress, who came to discuss the issues of the war." Instead he might say: "The Secretary of War, by working sixteen hours, devoted as much of the day as was possible to the issues of the war, and the rest to a series of conversations with members of Congress who came to urge the appointment of their sons, uncles and nephews to positions of importance in the war organization." As a general statement, that would be nearer the truth. An observer sat in the outer office of the Secretary of War from nine in the morning until noon, last Wednesday, and in that interval a line of thirty-four Congressmen filed past him into the inner office. With perhaps one or two exceptions, these men did not come to confer with the Secretary on any issue of the war; conferences for such purposes are being held in the committee rooms at the Capitol. They came because they wanted to urge Lexington, Ohio, or Huron, Missouri, as a mobilization point that would excite great local enthusiasm; or to seek the Secretary's backing for a proposed half-million-dollar military road; or to argue the availability of some relative who accompanied them, and who was usually convinced that he could do his best work in the censorship department. At one time there were so many Senators waiting on the benches that Senator Chamberlain, entering genially, demanded whether "there was a quorum present." And these men, who will be perhaps the first to cavil if there is time wasted in the country's mobilization, filed in to interrupt the Secretary of War—not because he desired in each instance to consult them—but because a congressman claims it his special privilege to see a Cabinet officer when he chooses, and to offend him would be to alienate support from

this war for the establishment of liberal principles that we are about to wage.

It would be an excellent thing if people in various parts of the country could realize that government officials are not different from individual business men in being subject to interruptions, held back by a code of procedure, and dependent upon many circumstances over which they have no control. In the crisis that comes to every war organization it will be desirable to have as general a realization as possible that what was heralded as accomplished, in the early weeks of the war, may not even have been conceived. Progress is being made, but it is rather progress towards progress. Those people who are casting about for a way to aid their country will perform one definite service if they will keep a sensible view of the size of the task ahead.

Rational Use of Our Shipping

ONE of the important issues to be decided in the conferences between the British War Commission and our government is the application of our existing tonnage in such manner as best to meet the general need. Our ocean-going tonnage, although small in volume as compared with that of Great Britain, is by no means negligible. At the end of 1916 we had over 2,000,000 tons registered for the foreign trade, and in spite of submarine losses, we have a considerably larger tonnage afloat to-day. Besides, we have a number of vessels in the coastwise trade that would quite satisfactorily meet the requirements of trans-oceanic freighting. Very little of our shipping is now employed in the North Atlantic trade. In 1916 American vessels represented only six per cent of the clearances for Europe. The bulk of our ocean-going tonnage has been employed in trading to the West Indies, Latin America and Asia.

In making common cause with the Entente Allies, we assume joint responsibility for keeping the North Atlantic trade adequately supplied with tonnage, no matter what the submarine losses may be. It no longer becomes us to hug the western shores of the Atlantic or to seek safety in the Pacific while British, French and Italian ships run all the risk of the seas infested with submarines and floating mines. Some of our shipping would be withdrawn from other trades to relieve the strain upon our Allies, at least until our Shipping Board has begun to launch its wooden ships. But we have no right to yield to a generous impulse and sweep all our shipping into the North Atlantic trade. We must avoid a disorganization of our import of materials of industry from South America. We

must also avoid unnecessary dislocation of commercial connections that will be of extreme value to us after the war. It is worth bearing in mind that the British themselves are not altogether sacrificing their remote commercial connections to the immediate need of supplying their home population. British ships are still plying to all the ports of the world not closed by the war. No more dislocation of commerce is permitted than is absolutely necessary. British shipping, as is natural and right, gives preference to British freights. In view of this fact, however, our commerce with neutral states ought not to be wholly deprived of ships flying our own flag.

In the conferences to be held between our government and the British, it is to be hoped that the whole ocean shipping situation of the world will be subjected to a thorough survey. It is for statesmanship to decide what sacrifices of shipping should be made to the common cause, but statesmanship will be more secure in its action if it has availed itself of all information in the possession of our ocean shipping experts. We need to know precisely what ships we have that are suitable for the hazardous North Atlantic trade, and what ships we can best withdraw from their present routes. We ought to estimate carefully the amount of shipping we shall need for admiralty purposes, and to assure ourselves that we are not handicapping ourselves too severely by risking and losing tonnage in the North Atlantic. We ought to make sure that we are not assuming an undue burden of commercial dislocation. What our Allies have a right to expect of us is that we should be ready to pool issues with them in ocean transportation, assuming our fair share but not more than our fair share of the losses and inconvenience attendant upon the common enterprise of war.

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