

Unity at Washington?

TO say that the administration is grinding on the rocks is surely palpably far from true; but those who say (and who say it often because they wish it and plan it) are now every day fortified with fresh arguments, such as the protracted and really quite aimless delay in arriving at a national policy with regard to the highly immediate question of the price of steel, and such as the recent congressional elections in the first district of New Hampshire and in the sixth district of Indiana—elections in which the Republican candidates were returned to the House of Representatives with doubled and trebled Republican majorities and in which disaffected persons like Mr. Hearst are slinkingly but effectively laboring to persuade their followers to see a repudiation of Mr. Wilson and of the Allies and of the war. In such circumstances, with the enemy always at our gates in the persons of his friends, it may be useful to observe certain broad reasons for public confidence, or for lack of public confidence, suggested by the administration's general conduct of war affairs at Washington.

The spirit of that general conduct, as distinguished from its mechanism, has deserved public confidence convincingly and even touchingly. It speaks with an eloquent tongue in those petty details of daily routine which necessarily are beneath the notice of the Division of Public Information. A young man closes his desk in New York, resigns his salary, repairs to Washington, appears at the War Department and offers himself for service in the medical corps in France as an orderly. The officers who interview him find that he has been occupying an important administrative position in an important business house. They immediately, of their own motion, suggest that he take an officer's commission and attach himself to them in their central administrative task of organizing our medical corps for its tremendously enlarged and difficult service both at home and abroad. Incidents of a contrary type are numerous. Incidents of this type are ten times more numerous. The veils of red tape have been rent and the temple of the bureaucracy has been laid open to the tread of unclean outsiders in a manner almost miraculous and with a hospitality utterly impossible except under the spell of a great devotion.

The final proof of the existence of this purpose and of this devotion is seen in the continuance of the relations established between, on the one hand, the General Munitions Board and the Aircraft Production Board of the Council of National De-

fense and, on the other, General Crozier's ordnance section and general aviation section in the War Department. Commercial civilian advice in the persons of Mr. Scott and of Mr. Coffin, bureaucratic military execution in the persons of General Crozier and of General Squier, and political civilian ultimate control in the persons of Mr. Baker and of Mr. Wilson are here bidden to lie down together in the same fold anomalously and preposterously. That it continues to be done with a high degree of friendliness and with a very considerable degree of effectiveness is an event to confound the cynics of yesterday. It would have blown away long ago in storms of its own spontaneous internal generation if it had not been sustained by a spirit unknown to us before the war. In evidencing such a spirit, a spirit ample, open, receptive, reciprocal, the administration, throughout its departments, is in process of becoming a genuinely national administration in all those matters of daily routine in which the politician and the bureaucrat and the outside expert must unite to give us a sound and swift handling of the detailed business of warfare.

It is when we turn from its spirit to its mechanism and from the details of its mechanism to the large structure of it that we begin to see the reasons why the administration deserves, and is getting, less public confidence than formerly.

This war is a war to which certain elements in our population are hostile and to which certain other elements yield an only formal support, coerced perhaps permanently but perhaps only temporarily by a formal sentiment of patriotism or by a formal loyalty to the government. We are, at bottom, a divided country. In any divided country, in time of war to-day, one of two things, as a rule, happens. If it is an autocratic country, the government jails and otherwise suppresses the malcontents. In Austria-Hungary the government, being the most fiendish of all civilized governments, has executed the malcontents by thousands and has confiscated their property in order to torture their dependents and intimidate their accomplices. In a democratic country, as in Great Britain and France, which are much less divided, after all, than the United States, the government attempts to combine within itself, by personal representation, all important elements favoring the war in order to present a front as solid and as extended as possible to the various minorities which, for reasons conscientious or for reasons factious or for reasons venal, are opposing the war and are doing

their best to thwart even its military operations.

In the United States we still have a government by one party. One might almost say that we still have a government by one wing of one party. The consequences begin already to show themselves. The war is a war brought on not by Congress but by the irresistible influence of the leaders of the Democratic party. Republican victories at the polls set up in the minds not only of certain Republicans but also of certain Democrats the suspicion that perhaps the leader of the Democratic party was permitted to do too much leading. The Republicans, in particular, both Old-Guard Republicans and Progressive Republicans, are in the position of spectators. No one in whom they have been trained by personal party experience to have confidence is close enough to the throne, is deep enough in governmental office, to give them satisfying information and steadying counsel in the sense in which Lord Curzon and Bonar Law can give information and counsel to the Conservatives of England, and Lord Milner information and counsel to the Liberal Unionists, and Arthur Henderson information and counsel to the Laborites under the Home-Rule Liberal Premiership of Lloyd George. The progressives of America (who are still an element though no longer a party) and the Republicans of America are outsiders in America's war in a manner in which no elements containing pro-war members are outsiders in Britain's war or in that of France or in that of Italy.

In Britain, even before the days of "Coalition" and "National" governments, there was at least an agreement among all political parties that whenever a vacancy occurred in any constituency it would be filled by a candidate of the party previously representing that constituency in the House of Commons without contest by candidates of other parties. With us not even that degree of party truce has been reached. In both the first district of New Hampshire and the sixth district of Indiana the congressmen who died were Republicans. The Democratic party made every effort to replace them with Democrats. Party warfare continues. Party advantage is still sought.

From such soil it is not in human nature that mists should not rise of suspicion and of intrigue affecting even the war itself. Party victories achieved with increased majorities against the party that initiated the war provide not only the disaffected but the wavering and the weak of all parties with an insinuating hint that possibly there might be popularity in an anti-war or in a pro-weak-war program. Administrative misfortunes (such as defective shells), which possibly no wisdom could have prevented, are taken, even by the strong, in their ignorance, to be evidences of administrative

imbecility. Remoteness, political remoteness, from a President who is also personally a remote man, is now every day widening the gap of misunderstanding between the government and a large part of the population of the United States.

The last touch of danger is added to this situation by the fact that Mr. Wilson is now not only a remote man personally but also a remote man intellectually. If ever the charge of a failure in originitive leadership could have been urged against him, the day for doing so has gone by. Since January 22nd of this year he has been further ahead of his people than any other responsible statesman in the world.

In committing the United States to a membership in an International Society, in demanding actual complete war instead of mere romantic "defense" against German violence, and in forcing conscription for service in foreign lands, he carried the people of the United States to a point of development with which they have not even yet thoroughly familiarized themselves; and then, not satisfied, he almost immediately moved out beyond them again—and this time into wide ultimate fields only vaguely discernible to the popular eye—by announcing that permanent peace must be preceded by the revision of the "status quo ante" in Central Europe. That vision of the disruption of Austria-Hungary is to those whom it convinces, as it convinces the writer of these lines, magnificent. To many of those whom it does not convince it is monstrous. To most of the members of the House of Representatives and of the Senate it is a strange glimmer which has suddenly and rather unaccountably begun to flutter on the horizon of the President's mind and which may conceivably turn out to be an oasis of perpetual peace but which may also quite conceivably turn out to be a mirage of sinister unsubstantiality luring the people to adventures of destruction.

The conscientious reporter of opinion at Washington, no matter how devoted he may be personally to the idea of the democratic reconstitution of Central Europe, will find it hard to deny that the President's ultimate and perfected war policy does not command even the comprehension of a majority of even that relatively interested part of the population that dwells in public life.

Remoteness caused by a suddenly expanded war policy, remoteness caused by a continuation of party warfare, these remotenesses constitute one of the two main reasons for the apparent gradual cooling of popular confidence in the administration. The need is acute and instant for a massing of leaders of all political elements into the government in some such fashion as will enable them to transmit to their followers, with authority and with success,

the full meaning of the administration's purposes and the full spirit of its actions. Till such a massing is accomplished we shall lack one of two indispensable parts in the large structure of the mechanism of a democratic government conducting a war opposed directly or surreptitiously by minorities which it must not jail and must not massacre: we shall lack a unity of national non-party pro-war political understanding and decision.

One of the most experienced and most pro-war politicians in the United States visited Washington the other day and reported that in his judgment a certain western anti-war senator was 100,000 votes stronger in his state now than two months ago. Unity of political decision to-day is not being consolidated. It is rather being disintegrated.

One other sort of unity is indispensable in order to maintain public confidence—unity of administrative decision. This unity we certainly have not reached to the full, unless, indeed, we content ourselves with reflecting that Mr. Wilson, being an individual, is a unitary solution of all administrative problems. The difficulty is that no individual unit, if gifted with Mr. Wilson's extraordinary powers of accommodation, can solve all the major administrative problems of a national capital with a sufficiently impressive promptness.

We have a Council of National Defense. But when Mr. Denman thinks one thing about ships and General Goethals thinks another, they go running alternately to the White House to find out what our national policy about ships may after all be. No national policy is laid down for them beforehand. It is developed only through assaults on the White House succeeding riots in the newspapers and brain-storms in the shipyards.

We have a Council of National Defense. It has a Committee on Coal Production. But the Council of National Defense has no national policy about coal. A member of the Council—Mr. Lane—ventures at last to do something. The Committee on Coal Production ventures also to do something. The price of coal for everybody in the United States is lowered. It is lowered enough to satisfy Mr. Lane's desire for some measure of immediate practical relief. It is not lowered enough to satisfy the desire for a full measure of ultimate scientific relief apparently felt by another member of the Council—Mr. Baker. The coal policy of Mr. Lane is one thing. The coal policy of Mr. Baker is another. The coal policy of the Council of National Defense (and therefore presumably of the Cabinet) is nothing. Mr. Baker publicly repudiates Mr. Lane and thereby kills the authority of the Council and of its committees in the minds of the producers of raw materials, and there is one more job for the overworked under-

taker and reconstructor of administrative corpses in the White House.

The price of copper is not settled. Mr. Bernard M. Baruch, as Chairman of the Committee on Raw Materials of the Advisory Commission of the Council, let it get fixed too low, for governmental purchases for munitions, and now he is sorry. The price of steel is not settled. Mr. Baruch let it get fixed too high, for governmental purchases for ships, and now he is sorry again, or ought to be. And there is no prospective authoritative settlement of our national policies regarding either of these prices until they at last wend their tired and tedious way along the *Via Scandalorosa* to the White House.

This is concentration in government unknown at Berlin. The Kaiser would not tolerate it for one imperial instant. That is why he is alive.

Politically and administratively Mr. Wilson needs decentralization. He cannot give us political unity or administrative unity any longer in his own one person. Politically he needs, somehow, in a manner consistent with our native politics, a "Coalition." Administratively he needs an authoritative Defense or War Council. The "Coalition" would bind the nation together. The Council would bind General Goethals and Mr. Denman and Mr. Baker and Mr. Lane and Mr. Baruch and all our other administrators together by policies determined compositely beforehand and then enforced throughout all departments and committees harmoniously.

With those two unities Mr. Wilson's administration would begin to be able to project and deliver an offensive against our enemies, our too numerous enemies, open and secret, at home. To-day, for the first time since Mr. Wilson formed his administration, it is being forced, slowly but manifestly, toward a mere defensive. And the stake is the freedom and safety of the world.

WILLIAM HARD.

Organizing Democracy

"DEMOCRACY will come into its own," said Governor McCall of Massachusetts in his opening address to the constitutional convention of that state, "not when the world is made safe for it, but when it has made itself safe for the world. It can be made safe by endowing it with the necessary organs. . . . Without appropriate organs it would be, as it has so often been, the easy prey of organized privilege; it would tumble about itself and be as helpless with all its strength as the blind Polyphemus."

The opinion that the safety of democracy is dependent upon the organization of democracy is not held in Massachusetts alone. Throughout the