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The Week

EXACTLY a year ago reports from Russia made known to the world the failure of crops over so large an area as to make the threatened famine one of the great catastrophes of history. The possibility of assistance from abroad on anything like the scale demanded centred in two men, Fridtjof Nansen and Herbert Hoover. Nansen failed in securing large resources from the nations of Europe. The League of Nations rejected his plea, and Great Britain made only a trivial and perfunctory response. Nevertheless the noble and generous words in which he urged his mission have become part of the spiritual inheritance of the world. On the other hand, Mr. Hoover had throughout, according to his own statement, sufficient funds for the work which he considered it advisable to undertake. His interim report to the President just published shows that approximately \$48,000,000 of money raised in America was expended by the A. R. A., in addition to \$415,000 on account of the Friends Service Committee. This is probably the greatest sum ever contributed on a single occasion by one nation in

aid of another. Americans who are possessed of a sense of justice will rejoice in the fact that by these contributions we have as a nation made up in some measure for the injuries we inflicted upon the Russian people by our support of Kolchak, Yudenitch and Wrangel and by our participation in the blockade.

RUSSIA apparently is safe against the recurrence of famine next year. Ex-Governor Goodrich reports that the grain crops are good and promise a yield sufficient to feed Russia, if it is properly distributed. The fact is remarkable. During the year of famine a large proportion of the working cattle must have been eaten, and the energies of the agricultural population must have been greatly impaired by undernourishment. If in spite of this condition Russia is able to grow enough food for her population, it would not be surprising if in two or three years she should again appear in the market as an important exporter of grain and importer of manufactured goods.

ACCORDING to the estimates of Stephane Lauzanne, Germany has paid toward reparations only \$1,250,000,000 in all. That is only \$300,000,000 a year for the four years of peace, an insignificant performance for an industrial nation of sixty millions of population. The French would have the best of reasons for imputing bad faith to the Germans if French policy had been honestly directed toward placing Germany in a position in which she could pay. But France has treated the recovery of indemnity as a secondary consideration and the crushing of Germany as the main object of policy. Since Germany could pay only through the exportation of goods based on imported materials, it was absolutely necessary for her to secure credits abroad. The absurd and immoral inflation of the indemnity claims and the constant threat of French invasion obliterated German credit, public and private. M. Parmentier will have difficulty in convincing America that French payments to

America must wait upon the payment of the German indemnity, so long as the French deliberately keep Germany in a condition in which she cannot pay.

THE announcement by Secretary Hughes of the plan for the withdrawal of United States authority from Santo Domingo, and the resumption of the functions of government by the Dominicans, subject to the conditions of the convention of 1907, is a hopeful sign. At least it does away with the superstition that the flag cannot be withdrawn from places where it has no right to fly. The convention of 1907 gives the United States control of customs receipts as security for certain bonds. This control is extended in time to cover bond issues of 1918 and 1922, and in space to include internal revenue. Insofar the position of the Dominican republic has suffered. It is also made responsible for the obligations contracted by the U. S. authorities during the period of occupation. Of course, the agreement contains possibilities of misunderstandings. We cannot, unfortunately, be sure that the United States will not, under pressure from business interests, use these occasions to the advantage of such interests and to the detriment of Santo Domingo. We are glad, however, to accept the present agreement as an evidence of good will and good faith on the part of Messrs. Hughes and Harding, and as an earnest of their intention to fulfill likewise the pre-election promises of the party in regard to Haiti.

THE strike of the shop crafts workers is exhibiting the usual phenomena of industrial warfare—proclamations, picketing, injunctions, strike-breaking, violence. For the moment the conflict has been localized by the agreement of the Railroad Labor Board to reconsider the grievances of the maintenance of way men; but the inevitable employment of the latter in minor repairs, which would ordinarily be made by the shop men, provides the opportunity, and sympathy with the shop men the motive, for the maintenance men to break away from their leaders and walk out. Meanwhile the Labor Board is trying hard to justify its existence by keeping negotiations open. In so doing it doubtless fills a useful function. Its earlier reaction in identifying itself with the government, and proclaiming those who struck against its decisions outlaws would have been mischievous if it had been taken seriously. The Labor Board was set up to adjust industrial conflicts. It has proved to be chiefly a process of reducing wages. It has failed to secure the enforcement of its rare decisions against the carriers. Its claim to overrule the

right of labor to dispute its decisions is ridiculous. It never had any power except public opinion behind it, and it has lost that support. In a sense, the present strike is against the Labor Board, but it is against it as an impotent deception, not as a function of government.

FROM Paris, which can always be relied upon for appropriate hot-weather information, comes news of a novel enterprise—the “spoken newspaper.” When the first number was issued not long ago, the staff of journalists and literary men were assembled on the stage in a well-filled public hall. One man delivered a “leading article” on the financial situation, the budget and the exchange rate. Another followed with a discussion of economy in government administration; while successive members of the staff talked on various subjects such as any well-rounded journal should include in its contents. News of the assassination of Rathenau arrived just as the “edition” was being completed, and some one (the foreign editor, no doubt) improvised an obituary, described as “rapid but learned.” The idea of this “newspaper” is one at which it is easy to poke fun; yet there is something in it after all. That large masses of people want to know the news of the world and are yet below the intellectual level necessary for reading, is shown (in America especially) by the enormous vogue of popular lecturers on current events. The thirsters after audible information, who are usually women because only women have the leisure to learn, would certainly be better off if they could absorb the thoughts of half a dozen persons instead of one. To start a newspaper in New York or Chicago is a matter of several million dollars; to “hire a hall” costs next to nothing, and the expense could probably be met, for curiously enough the same persons who object to paying a few cents for much carefully sifted information printed on paper, will cheerfully pay two dollars to hear far less of the same thing, badly and inaccurately delivered. Many an editor who makes a fool of himself every day in the sequestered depths of his sanctum would pause before uttering his asinine inanities face to face with three hundred fellow humans. If this idea should be tried in America, we reserve the right to make some nominations to the editorial board.

THAT no social reform can be put through without inconvenience or discomfort to some one is illustrated by the growth of the continuation school. The system has created a more complex kind of truancy. Once the boy begins to receive a pay envelope, he begins to lose his taste for class

room tutelage. It becomes harder than ever to force school upon him. Some one must be held responsible. The employer is out of the question; the father cannot take time from his job; but the mother is at the service of the law. She has answered every summons from the school in the past and it seems logical that she should now extend this responsibility. The more recalcitrant the boy, the more severe must be her punishment. It has come about that working-class mothers of working-paper sons are being sent to the Tombs because of their sons' truancy. Theoretically, the father is also responsible, but the mother only has the time to be locked up. The assumption is that she has enough influence over the adolescent youth to make him go to school against his will. The assumption seems weak, unless the boy happens to be more chivalrous than we have any reason to expect considering the example of his father and the courts. There remains one possibility. The teacher might be held responsible for not making the boy want to come to school. Surely, if the boy's non-attendance is so serious as to justify the locking up of the mother, the school might reasonably be asked to show what it has done toward the prevention of his truancy.

The Futility of the Subsidy

THE opponents of the ship subsidy proposal now before Congress are gaining ground in their attempt to have the whole question postponed at least until the next session. Some of those who favor the subsidy are aiding them, alarmed at the amount of hostility the measure has created, and fearing the political effect if it should be passed before the all-important fall elections. To the opponents of the existing bill must be added the name of Secretary Denby who in a speech a few days ago in Japan observed that while the American merchant marine needs some sort of subsidy, it should not be in the form now proposed. His opposition is the more important because a leading argument in favor of the Lasker proposal has been the usefulness of our merchant ships to the navy in case of war.

It is unfortunate in every sense that the question of subsidization for the merchant marine should have been bound up with the disposal of the government's enormous fleet built during the war and as a war measure (though, for no good reason that can be discovered, the building was continued long after the armistice). The two questions ought to be considered separately; instead, the enormous cost of maintenance of the Shipping Board's boats is used as a feverish argument in favor of a policy

of subsidization which would have little chance of adoption if considered on its merits. Clearly, the friends of subsidy hope to establish a precedent which will enable them to secure continuing legislation even after the government tonnage is disposed of—if that happy day ever dawns.

Yet it would be hard to select a worse moment to embark upon a policy of government charity to shipowners than the present. As a result of a world-wide severe industrial depression, shipping is idle in every port. The leading maritime powers have hundreds of vessels laid up, and you can buy ships anywhere at less than the present reproduction cost, though that is lower than at any time since the war began to raise wages. American shipyards are operating at about five percent of capacity, and are building none but special types. Shipyards abroad are in a similar condition. With ships going begging for cargo, sailors are out of work and wages of all types of seamen have been violently "deflated"—those of Americans faster than any other nationality, according to Andrew Furuseth, president of the International Seamen's Union.

For this replete and jaded appetite, Mr. Lasker is hopefully preparing a fine new meal. He expects to sell 3,000,000 tons of his ships to Americans, that being the amount of good tonnage in his 10,000,000. Four million tons of wooden ships are absolutely worthless; the other 3,000,000 steel tons range from fair to very poor, and he hopes to sell them abroad at bargain prices to foreign operators who will agree to keep them out of competition with the American flag. But why should foreigners buy American ships at any price when there isn't cargo enough to keep occupied the ships they already have? And why should American owners buy at a good world market price of \$30 a ton—only ten or twenty dollars less than the cost abroad of new ships of modern improved design—and then tie their new-bought vessels to the wharf? Mr. Lasker can hardly contemplate giving a subsidy so heavy that it will pay the American owner to send his ship back and forth in ballast, as was the case with French sailing vessels a few decades ago. Even if he does, he is wrong; for the interest, insurance and depreciation cost on an average Shipping Board cargo boat will exceed the cash subsidy proposed in the bill. A 5,000 ton steamer costs \$150,000, on which these fixed charges will be not less than 15 percent, or \$22,500. If such a vessel travelled 40,000 miles a year at twelve knots or less her subsidy would be only \$10,000. Even if Mr. Lasker decided out of hand to double it, it would still be less than these charges. All the other forms of subsidiza-