

A COMMUNICATION

To the Honorable Charles E. Hughes

SIR: The whole world is coming to realize your ability in promoting efficiency in our diplomatic relations with the countries represented at the Limitation of Armaments Conference in Washington. Your remarkable success in this respect leads me to call to your attention a few examples of the deplorable inefficiency of our foreign service, and particularly our diplomatic service, in the hope that you may find time, before the end of the summer, to turn your thoughts to bettering the machinery for establishing contacts with other nations abroad—i. e., our diplomatic agencies.

I am sure, Sir, that some of the facts which I am offering (which are based either on my own experience or on the testimony of other diplomatic secretaries) have never reached you. I am equally convinced that when the Administration, the Congress, and the American public become aware of the ridiculous light in which our great country is presented to the world through our inefficient representatives and inadequate equipment, a spontaneous movement will make itself felt toward bettering our diplomatic service. Why should the tax-payers support a moribund institution which not only fails too often to help the American citizen in foreign parts, but makes the whole nation a laughing stock? The worst failures are in the smaller countries where the light of American publicity shines but dimly, although the post may be most important internationally. Congress is chiefly to blame, because from year to year it neglects to vote for adequate appropriations for the Department of State. Our diplomatic service should be remodeled into a "going concern" or else close its doors, as a bank does when it fails.

While I am conscious that my experience in the service is limited (I was under orders slightly less than four years, including two and a half years at the Embassy in Paris during the war, and a year in Mexico) I feel that, having been stationed at two of our best foreign missions as well as at two of our most dilapidated, I have had exceptional opportunities for comparison and detailed investigation. If my opportunities of observation were unusual, my freedom to make friendly suggestions is equally so. Few diplomatic officers still in the service dare criticize it, even verbally.

I have nothing to gain personally from making this exposé, but I hope that it may result in a great good—the thorough making over of the diplomatic service.

I invite your attention to the following facts:

1. During the summer of 1921, the Department of State had done away with the regular mail-pouch service, for official mail, in the whole region of the Balkans, if not in all Europe. There was no official mail-pouch between the Embassy at Paris and the Legation at Bucharest, Rumania, where I was serving as Secretary. Confidential official letters, therefore, had to be sent by open mail to and from the legation, *and were regularly opened and inspected by thieves*. I am informed that the American

Minister at Bucharest called this breakdown in the mail service to the attention of the State Department, without result.

2. There being no pouch service to the Legation at Bucharest, the representatives of the government there (supposedly its "eyes and ears") were nearly as ignorant of happenings in every quarter of the globe, including the United States, as if they had been in Central Tibet. Our chief source of world news was the Paris edition of the New York Herald, which arrived from France irregularly, and several days late. Although the department's "Instructions to the Diplomatic Officers of the United States" (which has not been revised since President Cleveland's Administration—1897) provides for the sending of newspapers to foreign missions, the State Department in 1921 had ceased complying with these regulations.

3. The only confidential means of communication between the Legation and the State Department was the cable. The allowance for official cablegrams had been cut to \$166 a month, for the fiscal year ending June, 1922. Cables to the United States from Rumania cost in August, 1921, thirty lei a word, equivalent to forty-two cents at that time. Thus the monthly appropriations for cablegrams,—that is for all confidential messages—with Washington, "Permitted Sending" four hundred words, or about one-third of a newspaper column. Any official cables passing this limit had to be paid for each month from the American Minister's pocket.

We read in the press that the department has set aside \$1,171,982.64 as "estimated savings" for the fiscal year ending June, 1922. We believe, however, that our government would have done well to listen to the advice of former Secretary of State Colby, who called attention, in 1920-1921, to the positive loss in efficiency which would result from the cutting of funds for departmental cable communications.

4. The letter files at the Legation at Bucharest, though greatly improved during 1921, were still in an extremely unbusiness-like condition (through no fault of the present staff) last summer. Chiefly to blame for this is the State Department filing system in use at the Legation, which is antiquated and decidedly inferior to the decimal system employed by the War Department, "Described in" the "War Department Correspondence File—Revised Edition, 1918."

5. Congress steadily refuses, moreover, to vote enough money to enable the State Department to own its offices and official residences abroad, as all other nations do. The result in Bucharest has been that the only building rentable as home and office for the present American minister was so uncomfortable and in such a state of disrepair that no one has cared to live in it recently. As a result of the disorganization in the legation building, the present American Minister was last August facing the prospect of paying the following items personally, as no provision was made for them from the official funds: doorman for the Legation; private stenographer, to supplement the work of

the official staff; five hundred dollars towards the annual rental of the Legation, not covered by the official stipend; two hundred and eighty dollars (twenty thousand lei) to repair heating apparatus, etc., in order to render the Legation barely habitable for the Minister's wife and children; Legation automobile and running expenses; wages of Legation chauffeur; water-tank on Legation roof, and new plumbing, to be added in order to obtain running water inside; new furniture for servants' quarters.

The honor of representing the United States abroad is indeed dearly bought at the present time.

6. The Legation at Bucharest, having waited in one case ten months, and in the other longer for the arrival of two typewriters requested from the Department of State, was last August obliged to borrow two machines from the local representative of the Baldwin Locomotive Works, these being delivered at the Legation the day on which my voluntary resignation from the service took effect.

7. The fund appropriated by Congress, to enable the United States government to buy its own embassy in so important a capital as Paris, is entirely inadequate for the purpose. "Twice as much as we have *might do*," said one of the older secretaries at Paris last summer.

Most of the evils mentioned above are due to insufficient funds, for which the lack of interest displayed by Congress, and the apathy of the American people behind Congress, are chiefly responsible. But how can the public be expected to call for a reform when it has no inkling of the abuses to which the diplomatic service has sunk?

A second series of evils, those attaching to the quality of the diplomatic service personnel, may also be attributed to inadequate appropriations and insufficient salaries.

The salaries are at present so low that only secretaries and chiefs of mission with private means, irrespective of their ability as men, can accept diplomatic appointments. A more undemocratic arrangement, or one better calculated to assist the survival of the unfit, can hardly be imagined. As a consequence of these conditions, the State Department is run like a mediaeval court. Kissing goes by favor, almost always to the well to do, occasionally to the well fitted.

There are strange rumors—and I give one merely as such—that tend to illustrate the depths of inadequacy to which our representatives may sink. Many secretaries now in the service will know the story of an American Minister who served for years under both Republican and Democratic administrations, and developed an extraordinary reputation, as a result of which many men wanted to hit him—and some did—and all good looking women avoided him like a plague. I do not know whether this individual is still (January, 1922) misrepresenting the United States. I do know that a full account of his more notorious escapades, in writing, was given in 1918, or 1919 to an Assistant Secretary of State, who apparently failed to take action to have this Minister immediately recalled. For years, it is said, this detested person degraded the name of the United States, without receiving, so far as I can discover, so much as a rebuke from authorities in Washington.

Examples of this sort of hard-boiled "diplomat" could be multiplied, but space does not permit.

It is difficult to determine whether this type of repre-

sentative, or others having more agreeable qualities, but limited mentality, may do more harm to our country abroad. Both types could be eliminated from the State Department personnel by the adoption of the following changes:

Pay higher salaries to both diplomatic secretaries and chiefs of mission. Establish compulsory preparatory training of at least one year, prior to an entrance examination of the severest sort, to be required before diplomatic secretaries are appointed by the President (that the present examinations are a farce is proved by the fact that but three weeks' preparation suffices in order to pass with flying colors). Promote the ablest secretaries to be Ministers and Ambassadors. *Establish consultative examinations for each secretary on his return from each foreign post.*

The difficulty of paying higher salaries may seem great, but it is of fundamental importance. We read that the government plans to spend the money saved by not building certain battleships in reclaiming swamp lands. It appears to many of us more important to drain the muddy water out of the diplomatic service. Diplomats are the government's agencies for preserving peace. They should be properly supported unless a substitute for them is set up. Present salaries are too low. A married secretary's remuneration in Bucharest today is about \$2,800 per annum. A recent estimate for the lowest living wage in New York City for a day laborer's family is \$2,600. Even considering the apparent advantage from the exchange in converting dollars into Rumanian lei, these figures are far too close together.

A modern ship of war of the largest type costs \$40,000,000. The same sum devoted to preventing war, through the establishment of a competent diplomatic service, would double the salary of every secretary on the pay-roll for one hundred years, and leave a substantial surplus. What could be more fitting than that the diplomatic service, supposedly the government's organ to assist in insuring peace, should profit by the decisions of the Conference for the Limitation of Armaments? Only by paying larger salaries and insisting on adequate training can we take the service out of the hands of amateurs, and make it attractive to men whom we can be proud to claim as our representatives. There is no dearth of able young Americans who are anxious to serve their country in this way. They simply lack the means.

In the future, let us hope, we shall not hear from American army, navy and business men, as I heard from a United States military attaché the other day, "I have served at seven legations and embassies in Europe, and I have never yet met an American diplomatic secretary who could have graduated from West Point." Of course, there are diplomatic officers and missions which are brilliant exceptions to the general rule. The Embassy in Paris during the war, and the Embassy in Mexico under the Honorable Henry P. Fletcher, are cases in point. There is no reason why this arm of the administration should not, if properly encouraged, rival the best of similar services in Europe; but in too many parts of the world at present, the following statement of a clerk of legation, written last summer, holds true.

"Before coming here I considered an American legation a business organization existing for the purpose of furthering the interests of the American government and its citi-

zens in the country where it is located. I have found it to be an institution hide-bound by regulations and red tape, which hinder the execution of the smallest service which an American citizen has a right to expect and demand. Its entire motto seems to be, 'We will serve you if we cannot find a regulation which forbids it.'"

In short, with its unprotected mails, its almost non-existent cable service, its filing system musty with age, its inadequate and decaying buildings, its aged equipment and miserly funds, and above all, its unrepresentative and mediocre personnel, the diplomatic service is anything but a going concern. We feel that if it is not materially and immediately improved, it might as well be eliminated, in whole or in part. As has been well said, and as this Administration obviously realizes, as a nation "we are provincials no longer." We must begin to deal with foreign governments on an equal footing. The time has come for action. I am, Sir,

Your obedient servant,

HENRY R. CAREY,

Formerly Secretary

New York City.

United States Diplomatic Service.

Again the Chauve Souris

MR. BALIEFF, Director of the Chauve Souris Theatre of Moscow, and Mr. Morris Gest, producer of the enterprise in America, are astute, one would say, as well as artistic. Both have realized and subtly advertised the caviar quality of their offering. Uniqueness has now been enhanced by transferring the show (and this is what the thing is—a show just as a circus, a miracle play and all essential drama is show) from an ordinary playhouse to a more recondite setting on top of the Century Theatre. The roof auditorium has been re-decorated by Mr. Remisoff, scenic artist of the Bat Theatre, in the riot of hues characteristic of Russian art and of a steppe-ridden people nostalgic for movement and color. In the frescoed fairytale, princes rise on magic carpets over impossible mosques and towers, the note of fantastic exaggeration which is the charm of the Chauve Souris is struck, and one sits there enclosed in an alien kaleidoscope. Outside, in the lobby, arched windows present glimpses of a blue, gold-pricked night city which seems part of Mr. Balieff's little game, rather than familiar stone and asphalt.

Mr. Balieff, the calm conjuror, his pale clown's face imparting to us a dispassionate consciousness that most of the world is best taken as foolery and none of us so grandly important after all, pulls out from his hat a new series of surprises. This second bill is well up to the first one. From the first have been carried over *The Wooden Soldiers* and *Katinka*, both permanently enchanting. In *The Wooden Soldiers* there is rhythm and consummate mimicry; in *Katinka* droll joie de vivre enough to set us up for a year.

Vitality is really the great stock in trade of these Russian artists—vitality and a happy abandon which Anglo-Saxons would be apt to suspect and would certainly never approximate. In their instinct for play these actors are of course arch-artists. It is because they are really amusing themselves that they are able so vividly to grimace, so gracefully to dance, so whole heartedly to sing. And yet back of this freedom there is in all of them a critical aesthetic mind, a natural taste, ever watchful of effect, emphasizing a note here, exercising restraint there.

Mr. Balieff's method is consistently suggestion. He takes, for instance, an old French ballad like *The King's Drums are Beating* and stages the story of it; this is a slight thread to hang a scene on, one would think. But the legend becomes poignant drama through a beautiful use of light, through significant grouping and economical but portentous gesture; what is more, the spirit of the folk-song is conserved so that we have a tragedy of criminal love and death saturated with the naïve pomp dear to the popular and child-like imagination. There is almost always a touch of sophisticated humor in the Chauve Souris' approach of any subject, a gentle smiling at the human puppets,—Love we may, sing, weep, hope, dance, and even hate and kill. But still we are puppets, infinitely small against a gigantic back-drop, one moment gilded in the impersonal blaze of the foot-lights, tomorrow thrown quaintly sprawling into the roomy darkness of the wings.

Giant fate versus pigmy man—Aeschylus and Sophocles discovered this combat to be the authentic subject of drama; to emphasize the generality of the conflict the tragic actors masked themselves apart from personal attention. Gordon Craig, pursuing the same idea, preaches the return to the puppet—conventionalized man, a symbol moving in the pageant of life and death. The Chauve Souris approximates Craig's ideal; its actors are painted away from themselves into bright or lurid dolls. Of egomania there is no trace among these artists; they are willing to sublimate themselves into playthings. They are brilliant dramatic masks lifting us gratefully aloof from the marcel wave of Miss Elsie Ferguson, or Miss Billie Burke's favorite color. The puppet idea is carried out very literally in various numbers where we see actual dolls—wooden soldiers, jerkily moving figures on a music-box, Dutch boys and girls that slide off a blue Delft plate to go through a little pantomime of awkward love-making and jealousy. Manikins they are, rather than men; through them we are dragged down to healthy earth as by the laughter of Rabelais or Molière, and our souls are purged by a sense of insignificance. Always, except in the glimpses of Russian life such as the drinking song of the Black Hussars (a tableau of admirable emotional lighting) the protagonists of the series of playlets are abstractions.

There are several notable features in this second show. One, a peasants' dance—seven jolly kerchiefed women and an impossibly swaggering soldier stamping and waving arms in an always graceful and controlled delirium. Another, a weird song chanted by curious hooded black forms outlined in Daumier massivity against a bright doorway. Part of Mr. Balieff's genius is that we never know who or what these figures are, nor, odder still, do we want to know; mystery, the strangeness which is part of beauty is a too neglected portion of the dramatic as well as of every other kind of art.

The gem of the evening is called *The Clown*, a creation which seems the top-notch of the Chauve Souris' achievement in this country. Absent from it is the sketchiness, the slight thinness of subject matter or setting that is apparent in some of the Russian improvisations. Improvisation is the mainspring of art, but in the Chauve Souris one has occasionally been aware of a slap-dash adaptation of means to ends a little reminiscent of those clever charades the So-and-So's organized over the week-end.

The Clown is a triumphant justification of the compressed drama of rapid evocation. The curtain goes up to a mournful and passionate Chopin mazurka, disclosing a dark velvet scene, set on each side with the bizarre