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# The midwestern press and American neutrality: Study of the editorial attitudes of three Omaha newspapers toward the European War 1914-1917

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**THE MIDWESTERN PRESS AND AMERICAN NEUTRALITY:  
A STUDY OF THE EDITORIAL ATTITUDES OF THREE  
OMAHA NEWSPAPERS TOWARD THE EUROPEAN  
WAR, 1914-1917**

**A Thesis**

**Presented to**

**the Faculty of the Department of History**

**Municipal University of Omaha**

**In Partial Fulfillment**

**of the Requirements for the Degree**

**Master of Arts**

**by**

**Harl Adams Dalstrom**

**August 1959**

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H. A. D.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

On Sunday morning, June 28, 1914 an obscure Serbian student named Gavrio Prinzip in the almost equally obscure city of Sarajevo in the Hapsburg province of Bosnia fired the shots which ended the lives of the heir to the Austro-Hungarian throne, Archduke Francis Ferdinand and his wife, the Duchess of Hohenburg. Thus a chain of events was set in motion which a few weeks later plunged most of Europe and parts of every other continent in the world into the greatest war yet recorded in human annals. Of all the powerful nations of the world, only the United States managed to avoid, for any length of time, participation in this conflict.

One of the greatest sources for observing the nature of American attitudes toward the war can be found in the periodical literature of that time. How a small segment of the American press, namely the three daily newspapers of the midwestern city of Omaha, Nebraska, viewed the great conflict as it was related to the United States, is the subject of the present work. The publications under consideration in this study are the Omaha World-Herald, the Omaha Bee; both of which were morning, afternoon and Sunday papers, and the Omaha Daily News, published in the afternoon and on Sunday mornings. The methodology utilized was a day by day examination of the editorials of these three papers during the period June 29, 1914, to April 7, 1917, or from the day following the assassinations

at Sarajevo to the day following the declaration of war upon Germany by the United States. Cognizance was also taken of the news articles in the papers during this period and also advertisements which were related directly or indirectly to the war. The news section was quite useful in supplementing factual information on this period derived from other published sources, while in several instances the advertising in these newspapers was significant with respect to editorial utterances.

While it is not within the scope of this project to ascertain the effects of the editorial expressions of the Omaha papers upon the neutrality question and the war in general, they undoubtedly exercised a significant influence upon public opinion in the Omaha-Council Bluffs metropolitan area, and perhaps some influence upon the reading public in outstate Nebraska and southwestern Iowa, as this region was also within their circulation area. Since each of these papers possessed a different political complexion, this study gains significance in that the question is raised as to the relationship between political orientation and regional location in formulating the attitudes of the midwestern press. Since Omaha has been taken as a typical midwestern city and its three daily newspapers had clear-cut Republican, Democratic, and independent editorial policies, the study of the attitudes which these papers expressed is made more meaningful and many sided.

A question also arises as to how important the daily press of the interior states was when considered as only a part of the large media of mass communication which was one of the wonders of

twentieth century America. Although this question cannot be answered conclusively, one of the key figures on the international scene during the years 1914-1917 has indicated that the expressions of mid-western newspapers were not to be discounted easily. Count Johann Heinrich von Bernstorff, German ambassador to the United States during this period wrote as follows:

It must be remembered that public opinion in the United States is seldom so homogeneous as, for example, in England. Particularly in questions of foreign politics, public opinion in the Union, stretching as it does, over a whole continent, reacts in widely varying ways in different localities, and to a very different degree. . . . It is true that the New York Press is certainly the most important mirror of American public opinion on European questions. Nevertheless, this importance should not lead to the erroneous assumption that the American Press and the New York Press are synonymous terms. The perusal of the latter does not suffice for the formation of a reliable judgement of American public opinion with regard to certain questions which concern the whole nation; rather it is necessary to study the leading papers of New England, the Middle Atlantic States, and particularly the West. <sup>1</sup>

Thus, there were strong indications that the press of the Middle West was of definite importance as a factor in determining the role of the United States during the period under consideration.

In order to gain a better comprehension of the nature of the three publications with which this projects deals, a brief biographical sketch of each paper and its editor during the years 1914-1917 is included herein.

The oldest of the extent Omaha dailies was the Omaha Bee, founded by Bohemian-born Edward Rosewater in 1871. Rosewater,

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1

Johan Heinrich von Bernstorff, My Three Years in America, ( New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1920 ), p. 32.

who served as a Union Army telegrapher and who later came to Omaha as western manager of the Pacific Telegraph Company, began his journalistic career when he started the Omaha Daily Tribune in 1870. With his newsgathering experience acquired in the telegraph business, Rosewater furthered his position in the field of journalism by gaining practical knowledge in politics through his election to the Nebraska Legislature, also in the year of 1870. As a legislator, Rosewater acquired some notoriety for his institution of impeachment proceedings against David Butler, first Governor of Nebraska. After disposing of his interests in the Omaha Daily Tribune, Rosewater founded his Omaha Daily Bee, on June 19, 1871, which ultimately became one of the most prominent Republican journals in Nebraska and the West.

During the years 1914-1917, Victor Rosewater, son of Edward Rosewater, was editor and chief stockholder in the Bee. Possessing an excellent education, Victor Rosewater had graduated from Omaha High School in 1887, had pursued studies in economics and history at Johns Hopkins and Columbia Universities, receiving his baccalaureate degree from the latter institution in 1891. Two years later he received a Ph.D degree in political science, serving in the meantime as a University Fellow in this subject. After his return to Omaha, Victor Rosewater became managing editor of the Bee in 1895 and editor following the death of his father in 1906. A staunch Republican like

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2.

J. Sterling Morton, Illustrated History of Nebraska ( Lincoln: Jacob North and Company, 1907 ), I, pp. 744-746.

his father, Victor Rosewater was elected National Committeeman and in 1912, as Chairman of the National Committee, he opened the Chicago Convention which nominated William H. Taft for the  
<sup>3</sup> presidency.

The Omaha World-Herald was the outgrowth of two Democratic journals. The Omaha Daily Herald, was established on October 2, 1865 by Dr. George L. Miller, who had come to Nebraska in 1854, and entered territorial politics as a Douglas Democrat. In 1887, Miller sold his paper to John A. McShane and in 1889 the Omaha Daily Herald was purchased by Gilbert Monell Hitchcock, owner of the  
<sup>4</sup> Omaha Daily World.

The second of the newspapers which led to the creation of the Omaha World-Herald was the Omaha Daily World, established by Gilbert M. Hitchcock, Frank J. Burkley, W. F. Gudey and Alfred Millard, of Omaha, and W. F. Rooker, of Indianapolis, on August 24,  
<sup>5</sup> 1885, as an independent publication. Later, Gilbert Hitchcock, son of Phineas W. Hitchcock, who had served as a delegate to Congress from Nebraska Territory and ultimately as United States Senator, acquired full ownership of the World Publishing Company, which printed the Omaha Daily World. During the 1888 presidential campaign, Hitchcock led his paper into the Democratic ranks, thereby

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<sup>3</sup> J. Sterling Morton, and Albert Watkins ( ed. ) Illustrated History of Nebraska ( Lincoln : Western Publishing and Engraving Company, 1913 ), III. pp. 571-572.

<sup>4</sup> Omaha Sunday World-Herald, May 28, 1916.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

abandoning the independent status of the publication. This combination of the two rival Democratic organs was achieved when Hitchcock purchased the much-older Omaha Daily-Herald and united the two papers under the name of the Omaha Daily World-Herald which began publication on July 31, 1889.

Gilbert Hitchcock, who late in life won national fame as one of the leaders in the Senate in the unsuccessful fight for the ratification of the Treaty of Versailles and the Covenant of the League of Nations, had no journalistic training; hence, he made Richard L. Metcalfe of Omaha editor of the World-Herald. Upon the persuasion of Hitchcock and Metcalfe, William Jennings Bryan, a rising young Nebraska politician, accepted the position of editor of the World-Herald in 1894, a position which he held until his Democratic nomination for the presidency in 1896. With Metcalfe again raised to the position of editor which he held until 1905, the World-Herald backed the political fortunes of Bryan and Hitchcock, with the latter being elected to Congress in 1902.

With the owner in Congress, Harvey Ellsworth Newbranch served as acting editor of the World-Herald during the years 1905-1910. Newbranch, a native of Iowa and a graduate of the University of Nebraska, had joined the World-Herald staff as legislative reporter in Lincoln in 1899 and ultimately rose to the rank of full editor in 1910, the year which Gilbert Hitchcock was elected to his first term in the United States Senate.

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid., February 3, 1934.      <sup>7</sup> Ibid.      <sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> "Newbranch, Harvey Ellsworth", Who's Who in Nebraska (Lincoln: Nebraska Press Association, 1940), p. 367.

The newest of the three Omaha dailies extant during the years 1914-1917 was The Omaha Daily News, a politically independent mass-oriented publication, which sold for a penny as contrasted to the two-cent price of the Bee and the World-Herald. The Omaha Daily News began publication October 9, 1899, under the ownership of James E. Scripps of Detroit, founder of the Detroit Evening News and his brother, Edward W. Scripps of the Scripps-McRae Telegraph Service. Also associated in this venture was F. W. Kellogg, who came to Omaha as manager of the Daily News Publishing Company.

Soon after the founding of the paper, its editorship passed from E. D. Butler to Joseph Polcar, a native of Philadelphia and an 1895 graduate of Princeton, who had served briefly as city editor of the News. After becoming full editor, a position which he held during the years under consideration, Polcar was associated in the ownership of the Daily News Publishing Company and served as president of the organization.

The region served by these papers was as variegated as was the political complexion of the Omaha Press. With a metropolitan population of over 200,000 people in the Omaha-Council Bluffs area circulation figures indicate that a majority of the families in the area were in daily possession of one of these publications. The "melting

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The Omaha Daily News, October 9, 1899.

11

Addison E. Sheldon, Nebraska: The Land and the People Chicago: The Lewis Publishing Company, 1931, III, p. 482.

12

During July, 1914 to March, 1917 the lowest monthly circulation average was 52,328 for the Bee in July 1914, while the highest was 82,883 obtained by the News in March, 1917.

pot" concept of America could be applied to the people who were within the coverage area of the Omaha papers. For example, in Nebraska, with a 1920 population of 1,292,372, there were 7,695 people born in England and Scotland, 5422 from Ireland, over 33,000 born in the Scandinavian countries, 40,969 born in Germany and 15,818 from Czechoslovakia.<sup>13</sup> The fact that much of the population of the area had strong roots in the belligerent nations is of no small importance in considering the editorial expressions of the Omaha newspapers during the many months prior to America's entrance into the great crusade. Such then was the background of the Omaha press and the people which it served.

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13

Sheldon, op. cit., I, p.1087.



## CHAPTER II

### IMMEDIATE REACTIONS: SARAJEVO AND THE OUTBREAK OF THE WAR

Omaha: Sunday, June 28, 1914 and After

Sunday, June 28, 1914 was a quiet Sabbath day in Omaha. The papers that morning heralded no new and vital information. There were issues of primary importance that summer Sunday—the attempt to soothe United States-Mexican relations, the conclusion of anti-trust legislation in Washington, an ugly coal miners strike in Colorado, prohibition, the suffrage issue in America and Britain, and Irish home rule.<sup>1</sup> Yet most of these matters had been wearing on for many weeks or even years and were not really new.

If the eyes of Omaha, and indeed the rest of civilization, had not been focused primarily upon Europe that summer, the newspapers of Monday June 29 precipitately cast the attention of the world upon the Balkans. Readers of the Morning World-Herald were caught by the head line "Austrian Heir Apparent and Wife Assassinated," and glaring from the front page were photographs of the Archduke Francis Ferdinand and his morganatic wife, the Duchess of Hohenburg. Ominously emblazened at the top of the page was a stately photo of the uncle of the late heir apparent to the Austro-Hungarian crown, the aged Emperor Francis Joseph.<sup>2</sup> Such then, coupled with the front page

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<sup>1</sup>  
Sunday World-Herald, June 28, 1914.

<sup>2</sup>  
Morning World-Herald, June 29, 1914.

telegraphic reports which were current for four of the next five days,<sup>3</sup> was the local introduction to the unfolding European drama.

Editorial comment upon the Sarajevo assassination by the Omaha press was quite meagre. The only paper which made any comment at all was the Bee which condemned the incident as being "...most deplorable as viewed in the light of a blow at constituted authority."<sup>4</sup> Since there was very little front page comment upon the assassination or its consequences between July 4 and July 25, editorial attention remained focused upon the usual range of domestic affairs.

### The Great War Begins

The portent of possible conflict was not apparent until the papers of July 25, carried the news of the Austro-Hungarian ultimatum delivered at Belgrade demanding that Serbia suppress all anti-Austrian propaganda designed to incite the Slavic elements of the Dual Monarchy to rebel against Teutonic domination and that Austro-Hungarian officials be allowed to participate in trials of any Serbians suspected of being implicated in the Sarajevo tragedy.<sup>5</sup> Showing a definite distrust of Russian championship of the long-standing Serbian desire to unify the slavic people of the Balkans under authority centered at Belgrade, the Bee advised that "Servia [sic.] seek friendly relations with Austria to gain these ends..." and urged that the great powers of Europe me-

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3

Ibid., June 30, July 1, 3 and 4, 1914.

4

Editorial in The Omaha Daily Bee, June 28, 1914. Hence forth editorial citations will be designated by an "ed.", following the title of the publication.

5

Morning World-Herald, The Omaha Daily Bee, and The Omaha News, July 25, 1914.

diate to keep the threatening situation under control.

The seriousness of the European crisis did not stir the Omaha editorial writers to sound alarm until the telegraphic report from London under a July 28 dateline told of the Austrian declaration of war upon Serbia following the rejection by the Vienna authorities of Belgrade's reply to the ultimatum of July 23. As the World-Herald put it, "With the formal declaration of war by Austria comes a situation that in portent eclipses the troubles in Great Britain, the recent Balkan wars and even the war between Japan and Russia. . . ."<sup>7</sup>

Taking a dim view of the Austrian role in the crisis, The Omaha Daily Bee commented that "The principle at stake. . . is the right of a great imperialist power to dominate a weaker people struggling for nationality; for the right of one race under one flag."<sup>8</sup>

While all the papers hoped that war could yet be averted, The World-Herald summarized local press sentiment when on July 31, it realized the magnitude which the beginning conflict could attain. "A world War! A war the most frightful, the most ominous, the most destructive of life and property and all the fragile fruits of peace and civilization the world has ever known or dreamed of! . . . And yet it is the truth. . . . How thin the veneer of a thousand years of civilization!"<sup>9</sup> Yet even the next day, as Germany was declaring war on a mobilized

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<sup>6</sup> The Omaha Sunday Bee, ed., July 26, 1914.

<sup>7</sup> Morning World-Herald, ed., July 29, 1914.

<sup>8</sup> The Omaha Daily Bee, ed., July 29, 1914.

<sup>9</sup> Morning World-Herald, ed., July 31, 1914.

Russian Empire, The Omaha Daily News offered the fleeting hope<sup>10</sup> that international socialism would prevent a general war. But within the next three days, the worst fears of the Omaha press were realized as all the major European nations plunged into war.

As the conflict got under way, the Omaha journals saw little chance of armed equality between the Entente on one hand and Germany and the Dual Monarchy on the other. Pointing to internal weakness in the Dual Monarchy, the World-Herald stated that "Germany is left, single handed, to deal with the combined power of both Russia and France, which, on a war footing is double Germany's own. Should Great Britain be drawn into the holocaust, as still seems probable, and the war be one of the navies as well as armies, then Germany will face on the sea odds even more overwhelming than<sup>11</sup> on land."

As the weeks moved by and the German armies advanced across Belgium and northern France, but were finally held by the great battle of the Marne, the local papers reconsidered earlier statements as to relative military strength between the two sides and began to view the conflict as a draw. The Omaha Daily Bee, for example, solemnly proclaimed that the "European balance of power" which<sup>12</sup> it had previously viewed as merely a theory did truly exist in fact.

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<sup>10</sup>

The Omaha Daily News, ed., August 1, 1914.

<sup>11</sup>

Morning World-Herald, ed., August 5, 1914. Since London dispatches announced that England was at war with Germany, it can be seen by the above that editorial comment was on occasion based upon information received prior to the latest telegraphic reports.

<sup>12</sup>

The Omaha Daily Bee, eds., September 23, October 26, November 10, and 27, 1914; The Omaha Daily News, ed., November 27, 1914.

The immediate editorial judgments as to the causes of the war were quite close to those pronounced by scholars writing at a much later date. The Omaha Daily News, which advertised itself as "the people's paper" and therefore had little use for crowned heads of Europe, stated as early as August 5, that "It has looked as if a few kings forced this war. But a deeper view is that it came inevitably, as a flood of small hates accumulated till no barriers could hold [them]." <sup>13</sup>

The World-Herald made the following statement pertaining to the causes of the European conflict:

Indeed we are convinced that the American people can make no mistake if they declare that no one person. . . that no one nation, can be justly be held responsible for the war. The chess board of war has been set for years. The players were seated. Their pawns, to the number of millions of men, were in position. The horrid game was to be played soon or late [sic.]. It is purely a technical question who made the first move. It was European militarism. . . entangling alliances. . . race hatred, commercial jealousy and rival ambitions, clearly fostered for years in every European country, that caused the war. "

A similar attitude was shown the Bee, which held that the war guilt would probably be viewed in historical perspective as being divided between the belligerent nations. <sup>14</sup>

Late in August, The Omaha Daily News made a sweeping denunciation of the secret diplomatic negotiations made prior to the start of the war as partially revealed in documentary collections dealing with the origins of the conflict which were published by Germany and Great Britain. As the News put it,

. . . the thing that to Americans is hardest to understand is the

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<sup>13</sup>

The Omaha Daily News, ed., August 5, 1914.

<sup>14</sup>

Morning World-Herald, ed., August 10, 1914 ; The Omaha Daily Bee, ed., August 7, 1914.

pitiable part taken by the people who must now pay with all their property and lives. During the whole period of the [diplomatic] exchanges they were not once consulted. A mere handful of men in power under the antique claim of divine right, moved them as pawns... to misery or death. 15

A significant reason why the local press did not levy blame upon any single nation was a realization that cable service between the Central Powers and the United States was no longer direct, but passed through Allied hands, and that all belligerent powers had instituted censorship. Hence, the Omaha papers admonished their readers to be careful in evaluating information from Europe, particularly stories of German atrocities.<sup>16</sup>

The Omaha newspapers showed very little trust in the war aims of three of the belligerent powers; namely Russia, Japan and the Ottoman Empire. The World-Herald, for instance, heartily agreed with the English playwright and war critic, George Bernard Shaw, who had denounced the Anglo-Russian war alliance. Said the World-Herald, "... England, if by her assistance, Russia and France are enabled to crush Germany, will have raised up in the Bear that walks like a man a far more dangerous menace to western European civilization than Germany's worst enemies ever accused that power of being."<sup>17</sup> Two weeks later, the World-Herald, cogitating over the possibility of an Anglo-French defeat of Germany, followed by a Russian triumph over

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The Omaha Daily News, ed., August 27, 1914.

16

Morning World-Herald, ed., August 10, 1914; The Omaha Daily Bee, ed., August 16, 1914; The Omaha Daily News, eds., August 10 and 24, September 1, 1914.

17

Morning World-Herald, ed., August 14, 1914.

the Central Powers, elucidated its distrust of the Czarist Empire when it posed the following query: "But who would there be left on the continent to say 'Halt!' to Russia? What power would remain to prevent Russian autocracy from making over the map of Europe about as it wished-and making it more cossack than republican?"<sup>18</sup>

After the Japanese order to Germany to evacuate its Shantung colony in China by August 23, The Omaha Daily Bee doubted Japan's sincerity in indicating that she planned to turn the German ruled area back to China, and viewed this ultimatum as merely the pretext for further Japanese territorial expansion.<sup>19</sup> Likewise the World-Herald asked "Why expect the pagans ( Japan and Turkey ) to hold back when all the most Christian nations are engaged in the dreadful work of slaughter?"<sup>20</sup>

After the Turkish entrance into the war on the side of the Central Powers on November 2, 1914, the Bee criticised this action as "...going off half-cocked," while the World-Herald raised the spectre of the Afro-Asian peoples as an "awakening giant," long under European domination, going forth to conquer a torn and bleeding Europe.<sup>21</sup>

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18

Ibid., ed., August 29, 1914.

19

The Omaha Daily Bee, ed., August 21, 1914.

20

Morning World-Herald, ed., August 17, 1914.

21

The Omaha Daily Bee, ed., November 5, 1915; Morning World-Herald, ed., November 10, 1914.

## Effects Upon The United States

Upon the official proclamation of American neutrality on August 4, by President Wilson and his later speech requesting the nation to be "impartial in thought as well as action,"<sup>22</sup> the editorial response of the Omaha newspapers backed the position of the Chief Executive. The Omaha Daily News in urging its readers to be neutral warned them that there existed in the United States "... professional jingoes... among the manufactures of war munitions and among the higher-ups of the army and navy." The News persistently expounded the doctrine that American arms and munitions manufactures not only were anxious to sell their wares in Europe, but had a nebulous desire to further their business by having the United States abandon its<sup>23</sup> pacific nature.

The News also urged its readers to be calm when considering the World War as it unrolled in the Far East. Concerning the possibility that Japanese ejection of Germany from Kiau-Chau was a harbinger of Japanese expansion which would conflict with the Open Door, the News said that "the most that we owe China is an earnest attempt to convert her from heathenism, and there's doubt about even that being our natural mission."<sup>24</sup>

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22

Woodrow Wilson, The New Democracy; Presidential Messages Addresses, and Other Papers, 1913-1917 (New York; Harper and Brothers, 1926) I, pp. 151-159.

23

The Omaha Daily News, ed., August 21, 1914 et. seq.

24

Ibid., ed., September 7, 1914.



The World-Herald brought the neutrality question home when it pointed out that the natural feelings engendered by the European War would put the American "melting pot" to its severest strain. The paper cited Omaha, a city with 22,573 of its residents being of German, Austrian or Hungarian birth and a figure of 21,508 having been born in the Entente nations, as a place where the success of Americanization would be tested. The World-Herald summarized the sentiments of all the Omaha papers when it said that,

it is plainly apparent that the time of great strife and war in Europe calls for self-restraint, forbearance, magnanimity and a respect for the opinions and even the prejudices of others here in America. . . . We condemn race hatred and jealousy as one of the 25 causes of the war. We should ourselves beware of exhibiting them.

That the Hitchcock journal stood for neutrality "in thought as well as in action" and would not tolerate anything else was manifested by a small incident in October. In a page-long two column editorial, the World-Herald quoted Professor Fred Morrow Fling of the Department of History of the University of Nebraska as having said in an on-campus convocation that "Germany is the country which has been forcing up the size of the armaments of the world. In the present struggle Russia is on the right side. She is standing for the best interests of civilization." The editorial then stated that Professor Fling had spoken critically of American neutrality. Armament figures from the World-Almanac for 1914 were then cited by the World-Herald which indicated that the Entente had spent \$1,292,000,000 for defense purposes in the past year while the Germany and Austria-Hungary had spent only \$418,000,000 for the same purpose. Fling was then editorially condemned as guilty

"... of a most unscholarly degree of bias and unfairness." The World-Herald concluded its barrage with the observation that "in the pockets of the professor [Fling] jingled, perhaps, a few dollars, a part of the salary paid him by the [German-American] taxpayers of Nebraska..."<sup>26</sup>

This did not close the incident, for four days later a letter from Professor H. B. Alexander of the University of Nebraska appeared in "The Public Pulse" charging the World-Herald with seeking to infringe upon academic freedom. Alexander stated further that the Fling lecture was merely the first in a series of talks designed to set forth various view points on the war and that attendance at them was not obligatory.

The editorial rebuttal to this was another two column discourse which further quoted Professor Fling as having said that "no one can be neutral or should be neutral in the present European struggle. Not to take sides would be to condemn ourselves." The World-Herald concluded by saying that "Professor Fling had descended from his professional dignity to enter the lists as an ardent partisan in the issue created by the European war.... He had preached partisanship... Academic freedom does not depend upon professional immunity from reply or criticism -- not even, for that matter, from unfair attack."<sup>27</sup> Concerning this brief, but vitriolic exchange the Bee and the News remained silent.

Thus did the Omaha press from the opening months of the war

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26

Ibid., ed., October 9, 1914.

27

Ibid., ed., October 13, 1914.

onward praise the security of the "old moorings" <sup>28</sup> of non-entanglement of the United States in the affairs of Europe.

The Omaha press did not take long to realize the commercial significance of the war to the United States and particularly to the West. The Bee piously observed on July 30, that in the event of a general war "... we would be called on for vastly increased exportations of food and other such supplies. But the United States covets no such melancholy advantage. It would prefer... to combine its share in the results <sup>29</sup> to a successful exercise of its offices for peace. "

Two days later the World-Herald pointed out that some fifty million dollars in gold had recently left the country due to a sudden flurry of European selling of American securities. Readers were told that the July 31 closing of stock exchanges at New York, Philadelphia, Boston, Chicago and other cities need not occasion panic, and that the American farmer would profit from the war as would the whole nation by a reorientation of trade to Latin American and Far Eastern ports. The World-Herald did not fail to mention that agricultural trade with Europe might be considerably modified by wartime control and contra- <sup>30</sup>band declarations.

It was the World-Herald which gave the clarion call for confidence in Western agrarian economy during the war. Contrasting the economy

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28

The Omaha Daily Bee, ed., October 23, 1914.

29

Ibid., ed., July 30, 1914.

30

Morning World-Herald, ed., August 1, 1914.

of the West with that of the East at the outset of the war, the Hitchcock paper said,

Nebraska is not a producer of stocks and bonds, representing industrial investments. Such properties in a crisis, are thrown on the market for whatever they will bring. That is why the stock exchanges of the great industrial centers have had to close. But Nebraska is a producer of wheat and corn and oats; alfalfa and hay; of pork and beef—of foodstuffs.

NEBRASKA'S MARKET AND NEBRASKA PROSPERITY CANNOT BE DESTROYED BY WAR IN EUROPE... THE DEMAND FOR FOOD IS CONSTANT. IT IS NOT DIMINISHED BY WAR. Nebraska, Iowa, Kansas, the Dakotas—all the states of this vast region, produce food. THE DEMAND FOR THEIR PRODUCTS WILL BE GREATLY ENHANCED BY THE WAR... Think what it means to Nebraska!... NEBRASKA IS IN THE HEART OF THE GRANARY!

The Omaha Daily News also preached the doctrine of prosperity. It urged that American businessmen expand their foreign markets, particularly into South America in anticipation of European exports to these nations falling off due to war exigencies.

While the News echoed the earlier warning of the World-Herald that the belligerent nations would not allow freedom of neutral trade with their enemies and prophetically stated that "the nation whose warships command the seas will be the nation which can say which country may eat and which may starve..." it pointed joyously to rising agricultural export figures. The News proclaimed that a million and a half bushels of wheat were being sent daily to Europe from east coast ports and that these exports would stem an outgoing of American gold in payment for European-held American securities.

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31

The Omaha Daily News, eds., September 3 and 4, October 17 and November 9, 1914.

32

Ibid., ed., August 19, 1914.

33

Ibid., ed., September 14, 1914.

As war trade with the Allies increased, the News rejoiced that in September, 1914, as compared with the same period the year before, the United States had exported twice as much wheat, three times the oats, ten times the rice and barley, and seventeen times as much sugar for an export value in foodstuffs of sixty-eight million dollars as compared to thirty-eight million dollars the previous September.<sup>34</sup>

Later the News cited government figures showing breadstuff exports ( wheat, flour, corn and oats ) to have been \$38,247,570 for October, 1914 compared to \$13,326,748 for the same month in 1913.<sup>35</sup> After proclaiming that the total exports for November, 1914 exceeded those of November, 1913 by \$70 million, the News summed up local press feeling when it said that "these figures show that the IMPROVEMENT IN BUSINESS CONDITIONS IS STEADY AND SURE."<sup>36</sup> Indeed the citation of monthly export figures as promulgated by the Bureau of Foreign and Domestic Commerce became a happy function of the Omaha press during the period of American neutrality.

The Bee also spread the gospel of economic confidence in admitting that the war had hindered the well-being of the cotton states, but held that "... it is folly for us to allow the most appalling temporary disaster to destroy our confidence in our own agricultural, commercial, and industrial abilities which are equal to the severest test and afford

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34

Ibid., ed., November 9, 1920, The Bee, ed., November 20, 1914.

35

The Omaha Daily News, ed., November 20, 1914.

36

Ibid., ed., December 3, 1914; see Morning World-Herald, ed., November 26, 1914 and The Omaha Daily Bee, ed., December 1, 1914.

us a complete guaranty of national stability." It was the News,<sup>37</sup> however, which put forth the greatest pleas for faith in America's economy when it said that "the surest way to stop industry, paralyze trade and build up a goblin of despair and fear in this country would be for us all to go thrift-daft."<sup>38</sup>

The local press endorsed the commercial nationalism inherent in the "Made in America" campaign of the fall of 1914, which aimed at aiding sagging southern cotton prices and encouraging American manufacture of chemical, dye, and luxury goods formerly obtained almost entirely from Europe. The Bee, for example, charged American women to give up their "foreign gods of fashion."<sup>39</sup> Later the Bee editor condemned the practice of sending raw materials to Europe in order to buy back the finished product. As he put it, "our toadyism is a very costly luxury to sustain, and the war will teach us that it is by no means indispensable."<sup>40</sup> Likewise the News urged the consumer to back the "Made in America" Movement, especially with regard to cotton products.<sup>41</sup>

During this period of American commercial readjustment the Bee utilized war-time conditions as a means of pointing out the need for a

37

The Omaha Daily Bee, ed., October 15, 1914.

38

The Omaha Daily News, ed., October 25, 1914.

39

The Omaha Daily Bee, ed., September 11, 1914; see also December 8, 1914.

40

Ibid., ed., October 24, 1914.

41

The Omaha Daily News, ed., October 20, 1914.

return to a Republican high tariff, such as had been abandoned by the lower Democratic Underwood measure adopted by the Wilson administration the preceeding year. The Bee claimed that American manufactures would be afraid to enter upon expanded chemical and dyestuff production in order to fill the void in the American market caused the nearly complete trade stoppage between the United States and Germany resulting from British war restrictions since they feared post war German competition in the event that low tariff stayed in effect.<sup>42</sup>

The World-Herald, being a thoroughgoing Democratic journal, said tariff restrictions had been one of the causes of the war and that if the United States expected to have a great war and post-war trade she would have to be reasonable in allowing belligerent nations to sell their products upon the American market.<sup>43</sup>

In the early days of the war a rapid consumer price rise was a matter of considerable concern to The Omaha Daily News. As early as August 14, 1914, the News listed the increase in Omaha retail grocery prices during the several weeks which had elapsed since the conflict began. These increases, listed below were attributed to the European war:<sup>44</sup>

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42

The Omaha Daily Bee, ed., September 25, 1914.

43

Morning World-Herald, eds., August 26 and September 18, 1914.

44

The Omaha Daily News, August 14, 1914.

COMMODITY	PRICE PER POUND BEFORE WAR OUTBREAK	PRESENT PRICE AUGUST 14, 1914	INCREASE
Rib roast	.22	.25	.03
Loin steak	.25	.30	.05
Round steak	.25	.28	.03
Porterhouse	.35	.40	.05
Spareribs	.14	.15	.01
No. 1 Ham	.22	.24	.02
No. 1 Bacon	.28	.30	.02
Pork chops	.22	.25	.03
Swiss cheese	.35	.55	.20
Sugar	.05	.08 $\frac{1}{2}$	.03 $\frac{1}{2}$
Flour (48# sack)	\$1.00-\$1.10	\$1.10-\$1.15	.05
Butter	.30-.35	.35-.40	.05
Eggs	.25	.28	.03
Coffee	.35	.40	.05

The News was most pointed in denouncing rising prices. Under an editorial entitled "Halt The Robbery!", the independent journal asserted that "the big trusts are calmly trying to corner the food supply..." and urged governmental action to stop this alleged situation. 45

A few days earlier, the News had charged the meat packing interests with unjust price manipulation using the war as an excuse. 46 What-  
ever the justice of the attacks upon "the big trusts" by The Omaha Daily News, the paper did show its readers that the European conflict was having its effects upon their daily lives and was by no means unrelated to their well-being.



### Chapter Conclusion

The Omaha press, in dismissing the Sarajevo assassinations as being not much more than another unfortunate incident in the reign of Francis Joseph helped give rise to the general feeling of shock and astonishment which seized many Americans upon the commencement of war a month later. When the fast moving events in Europe during the last days of July led to an outbreak of hostilities, the local press did not blame any particular nation or group of nations, but held the great powers in general responsible. Short term causes were discounted while responsibility was placed upon the long-standing alliances, militarism, secret diplomacy, trade rivalry, and vestiges of autocratic government. Significantly, there was no editorial consideration of German violation of Belgium neutrality, although sympathy was expressed for the war-time hardships of the Belgium people.

While the Omaha press was "neutral in thought as well as in action" as far as Britain, France, Germany, and Austria-Hungary were concerned, an inherent distrust of Russia, Turkey, and Japan was manifested. As far as Russia was concerned, the autocratic nature of the Czarist regime, coupled with an almost traditional occidental fear of Cossack hordes destroying western European civilization stood at the heart of this distrust. The fact that Japanese and American interests had often clashed was a primary reason for the doubt cast upon justice of the war motives of Japan. Since the Ottoman Empire and Japan were both "heathen" nations, the Omaha newspapers were further assured that these nations would not hold themselves to a high

standard of moral conduct.

From the first days of the conflict, the Omaha papers realized that the United States and more important, the Midwest, would make money through the war. While they continually denounced the war as an outrage to civilisation and Christianity, they realized that Europe and the rest of the world would need American goods and that we rightfully should satisfy their needs.

### CHAPTER III

#### SENATOR HITCHCOCK'S

#### PAPER WAGES A CRUSADE

#### The First Munitions Embargo Bill

During the fall of 1914 American exports increased at a rate which during 1915 and 1916 led to unprecedented figures in United States foreign trade. As the British Navy tightened its control over the North Sea, the United States rapidly lost contact with the German Empire. Up to the outbreak of the war, Germany had been America's second best European customer, whose purchases from this country were exceeded only by those of the United Kingdom. By 1915 the value of American exports to Germany had fallen to ten per cent of the 1914 level and in 1916 our exports to Germany were one-tenth of one per cent of their value two years previous.<sup>1</sup>

While trade with Germany fell to almost nothing as was also true in the case of commerce with Austria-Hungary, American exports to France, Italy, Russia, and the United Kingdom rose from \$890,108,598 in 1914 to \$2,094,751,571 the following year. In 1914 our exports of arms and ammunition were valued at \$15,184,454, but for the year of 1915 their value reached \$201,136,374. These items went almost exclusively to the Entente nations owing to the aforementioned Allied blockade of the Central Powers.<sup>2</sup>

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1

Alice M. Morrissey, The American Defense of Neutral Rights, 1914-1917, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1939), p. 99.

2

Ibid., p. 151. Figures compiled from Monthly Summary, Bureau of Foreign and Domestic Commerce.

It was with this growing traffic in arms and munitions in mind that Gilbert M. Hitchcock, owner of the Omaha World-Herald and a member of the United States Senate, introduced a measure ( S. 6683 ) into the Upper House on December 7, 1914, which provided that

... it shall be unlawful and treated as a breach of the neutrality laws of the United States for any person, partnership or corporation to sell, or to contract to sell, or deliver, or contract to deliver during the existence of war between nations with which the United States is at peace, any arms, ammunition, artillery, and explosives of any kind whatsoever to be used against a country or nation with which the United States is at peace. . . .

This measure put the burden of proof of ultimate use upon the shipper of any exports of the above articles and provided a fine of up to \$100,000 for violators and liability to a three year prison sentence. <sup>3</sup>

On December 4, 1914 the World-Herald, undoubtedly aware that its owner had an arms embargo bill ready for introduction, ran a two column lead editorial entitled "Our Share In The War" which admonished the government to put a halt to arms and ammunitions sales to the belligerents. Moral reasons for such action were put forth in the remark that "Americans of what ever descent who place their Americanism and their Christianity ahead of their inherited sympathies and prejudices should join in the demand that the United States stop its citizens from furnishing for a profit the guns and ammunitions that

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<sup>3</sup> Congressional Record 63 Cong., 3rd sess., p. 6. Actually the Hitchcock Bill was not the only such measure introduced during the short session. Senator John D. Works of California put forth a similar bill ( S. 66862 ), while in the House of Representatives, C. O. Lobeck of Omaha introduced H. R. 19548, Richard Bartholdt of Missouri provided House Joint Resolution 378, and Iowans Henry Vollmer and Horace M. Towner introduced House Joint Resolutions 377 and 395 respectively. All sought to forbid, or empower the President to forbid, the export of arms, munitions or other war materials to the belligerents.

keep Europe running red with blood."<sup>4</sup>

In this first of many editorials on this subject, the World-Herald admitted that practically all exports were of definite value in promoting belligerent war efforts, but that "... foodstuffs and wearing apparel are a wholly different class. Their sole purpose is to preserve life [and] add to the sum total of human happiness."<sup>5</sup>

The World-Herald at first admitted that a law forbidding exports of arms and munitions to warring nations would constitute a radical departure from international precedent, but held that "... righteousness, sincerity and common sense are greater than precedents."<sup>6</sup> A few days later, however, the Hitchcock organ jumped upon a nebulous phrase in the Anglo-American Treaty of Washington of 1871, which said that "a neutral government is bound [to prohibit departure from its ports of vessels] for the purpose of the renewal or augmentation of military supplies or arms..." and that the contracting parties would adhere to such a restriction and seek to get other nations to adhere to the agreement. The World-Herald felt that this agreement transcended the Alabama claims levied against Great Britain for the depredations upon Union vessels by an English-outfitted Confederate raider and

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<sup>4</sup> Morning World-Herald, ed., December 4, 1914.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., ed.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., ed., December 6, 1914. Most recent international agreements justified such an admission. For example, Article 7 of the Hague Convention of 1907 stated that "a neutral power is not called upon to prevent the export or transport on behalf of one or the other of the belligerents of arms, munitions of war, or, in general, of anything which can be of use to an army or fleet." See Congressional Record, 63.3rd. sess. p. 3191.

could logically be applied against American arms and munitions exports for use by the belligerent land forces in the European War. <sup>7</sup>

The World-Herald found more recent and clearer precedents for an embargo on arms and munitions exports when in a long, two column argument entitled "European Neutrals Have Prohibited The Trade In War Materials: Why Should Not The United States Do Likewise," it pointed out that Italy, Holland, Switzerland, Denmark, Norway and Sweden had all banned the trade in question. The World-Herald asserted that such action "... has not entailed any degree of political or international embarrassment..." for these European neutrals and was done with the consent and urging of Great Britain. The editorial quoted from an Associated Press dispatch indicating that the above-named neutrals constantly revised their embargo so as to agree with the British contraband enumeration. The conclusion was that the United States would stand ostracized in the face of <sup>8</sup> Christianity and western civilization unless it followed suit.

The World-Herald proclaimed that the Hitchcock Bill was not only a moral necessity, per se, but was a practical means of terminating the war. In disapproval of Allied plans to bring Germany to knees through hunger blockade, the Hitchcock organ asserted that

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<sup>7</sup>  
Morning World-Herald, ed., December 10, 1914. Treaty quotes by World-Herald from Harper's Encyclopedia of United States History, X, p. 192.

<sup>8</sup>  
Morning World-Herald, ed., January 8, 1915. This editorial failed to point out, however, that owing to their proximity to Germany, these European neutrals were in a highly advantageous position to supply war materials to that nation and that it was to England's best interests to exert her influence in favor of arms embargo declarations by these countries. This reasoning could not hold true for American arms shipments, which owing to increasing British control of the North Sea, would only go to the United Kingdom or her allies.

...no one who addresses that argument (of a starvation policy) to a neutral nation can find left in his mouth an argument to urge against the Hitchcock bill which would end the war not by starving to death men, women and children indiscriminately, but by taking the weapons out of the soldiers' hands!.... 9

Thus S. 6688 was heralded as the panacea that would end the Great War.

If the Hitchcock measure would end the warfare abroad, it would also prevent the spectre of "militarism" at home. In an editorial entitled, "Do We Want Kruppism At Home," the World-Herald stated that an open arms and munitions market from which nations could purchase war materials which they themselves could not produce, or produce in adequate volume was "...a direct and powerful ally of war," whose very existence threatened to honeycomb the Republic with a "militarism" alien to our shores.

In support of the arms embargo measure, the World-Herald held that the sale of these war materials put an undue strain on the "melting pot." It was pointed out that in the United States there were as high as twenty-five million people of German birth or recent descent and that they would not take very kindly to the fact that in November, 1914, American manufacturers supplied the United Kingdom with \$1,231,235 in ammunition. As the editor put it,

...How could it be otherwise than that German-born or German descended Americans should resent the furnishing of the instruments

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9  
Ibid., ed., December 31, 1914.

10  
Ibid., ed., December 19, 1914. The World-Herald failed however to define the term "militarism."

11  
Ibid., ed., February 15, 1915.

of death by this, which is now their country, to be used to slay their brothers and cousins on Europe's bloody fields? 12

Cautioning its readers that America was not so isolated that it could not be drawn into the war, and that military experts had indicated that some 200,000 troops could be landed on either our east or west coasts by a nation or group of nations controlling the seas, the World-Herald warned that if arms and munitions exports were allowed to continue, they might eventually be used against this country. Thus it was argued, that national self-interest required that the trade be ended. 13

#### The World-Herald Answers the Critics of the Hitchcock Bill

Naturally the Hitchcock Bill and those measures similar to it had their press critics. From December, 1914 through February, 1915 the World-Herald engaged in journalistic forensics ( the use of such a lofty term is debatable ) with such newspapers as The New York Times, the Springfield ( Massachusetts ) Republican, The New York Sun, The New York World, and the Lincoln Journal.

When the above mentioned New York papers warned that the Hitchcock Bill would throw 100,000 men out of work and would cause economic disorders at home, the World-Herald answered by saying that "so far as the commercial argument is involved...it is purely trifling and more or less despicable" and that men who lost their jobs in an

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12

Ibid., ed., January 4, 1915. See also issue of April 9, 1915 in which a full page advertisement by 400 American foreign language newspapers ( none German ) was printed condemning arms and munitions exports.

13

Ibid., January 21, 1915.



arms and munitions trade stoppage could be absorbed in producing  
 14  
 steel products for domestic consumption.

When the New York press, which was often quoted at length by the World-Herald, attacked the Hitchcock Bill as being without precedents and a tool whereby the Allies would be deprived of an advantage honestly gained, thus compromising American neutrality, the Omaha paper replied in a manner which impugned the motives and the patriotism of  
 15  
 these opponents of the arms embargo measure before Congress. As a World-Herald editorial viewed the situation, the New York papers ( the Sun and the World being specifically mentioned ) were

... interested in America in a way-but principally in that portion of America that offices in the lower extremity of Manhattan island and that is greedy for... profits wrung out of the suffering people of Europe... And they are interested furthermore as violent partisans of Great Britain and speak for British interests quite as soulfully as for American interests. 16

While there was nothing in the World-Herald editorial comments which would indicate that the paper was pro-German, its tone was far from being that of an anglophile. For example, when the World-Herald cited a dispatch to the New York American as saying that Britain, in the event of the passage of the Hitchcock Bill, would not interfere to prevent a Japanese attack on the United States, the Omaha paper made the following comment:

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14

Ibid., eds., December 14 and 21, 1914.

15

For extracts and reprints of the criticisms by the New York papers, see editorial page, Morning World-Herald, December 12, 14, 21 and 29, 1914, et. seq.

16

Ibid., ed., December 21, 1914.

Shall the foreign policy of the United States be influenced or actually determined by British threats to turn loose a yellow race in armed warfare upon our people if the United States does not do as England wishes? If so, then we might as well dissolve our own government, repeal the Declaration of Independence, and pray for autonomy as a dependency of the British Empire. 17

The Hitchcock Bill was significant in that it resulted in the World-Herald giving a clue as to how it viewed the status of Belgium in the war. The Hitchcock paper, in quoting editorially from a feature in the New York Times which condemned the German attack upon Belgium, a nation long "absorbed in the arts of peace," and which said that an arms embargo would be unneutral and an aid to Germany, replied that:

to say that "Belgium absorbed in the arts of peace" has made "no provisions against Germany's attack" and no provisions for war material is fatuously to overlook the splendid new forts constructed at Liege, Huy, Namur and elsewhere along the German border, not to mention the defenses at Antwerp. Likewise it is to overlook the great plant for the manufacture of arms in Liege, one of the largest in Europe.

The World-Herald concluded that the American nation "... is not willing that we should become [war] partners with Briton or Slav or Teuton by continuing to replenish his arms chest..."<sup>18</sup>

Interestingly enough, neither the Bee nor the News uttered a word concerning the proposed arms embargo legislation pending before the short session of Congress.<sup>19</sup> The only major Nebraska paper having

17

Ibid., ed., December 28, 1914.

18

Ibid., ed., December 12, 1914.

19

Relations between The Omaha Daily Bee and the World-Herald had never been cordial. This can be attributed to their different party alignments, and the fact that they were, along with the News, business rivals. While the News had backed Senator Hitchcock for election under the Oregon pledge law in 1910, it had since differed with his position on domestic matters and was destined to oppose him in the 1916 campaign. While there were no indications at a later date as to how the News viewed the munitions embargo bills, it will be seen that The Omaha Daily Bee opposed them. Infra pp. 39-40.

the temerity to do so was the Lincoln Journal which condemned S. 6688 and a resolution before the Nebraska Legislature to petition Congress to enact the Hitchcock Bill as involving "...a departure<sup>20</sup> from the traditionally correct policy of a neutral state..." Such a stand drew an editorial excoriation from the World-Herald.<sup>21</sup>

Locally there were strong indications that the editorial pleadings of the World-Herald in favor of an arms embargo were having their effect. On January 8, 1915 some 700 Douglas County citizens met at the city hall in Omaha and indorsed the Hitchcock Bill. Dr. Eugene Kuhnemann, a Harvard exchange professor from Breslau Univerity spoke at this meeting presided over by Judge W. W. Slabaugh and attended by several members of the Nebraska Legislature. The evening was marred however when tempers waxed warm between some of the more vociferous pro-German and pro-Allied citizens making it necessary for Judge Slabaugh to remind the gathering that a "neutrality" meeting was<sup>22</sup> in progress.

Earlier, on January 5, Senator E. E. Howell, a Democrat from Omaha, introduced a joint resolution into the Nebraska Senate which would petition Congress to enact S. 6688 and would also request other state legislatures to make the same plea to Washington. By a 19-13 vote the measure passed the Senate, but on April 8, was sent back to the upper house after the State House of Representatives had post-

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<sup>20</sup>  
Lincoln Journal as quoted by Morning World-Herald, ed., January 18, 1915.

<sup>21</sup>  
Ibid., ed.

<sup>22</sup>  
Ibid., January 9, 1915.

poned action indefinitely upon the Howell Resolution.

Although the Hitchcock Bill and its equivalents never were reported from committee, Senator Hitchcock did secure a vote on his measure by offering it as an amendment to the Government Ship Purchase Bill. By a 51-36 vote, the Senate tabled the Hitchcock amendment, but in doing so a show of strength on the arms embargo question was obtained. <sup>24</sup> The World-Herald editorial reaction was that

the significant aspect of this [vote] is not that the amendment was defeated, but that it polled so large a vote as it did. . . . The entire power and influence of the national administration were against the bill, and President Wilson and Secretary Bryan had publically placed it under the ban of their disapproval.<sup>25</sup>

#### Comments Upon Secretary Lansing's

##### Reply to Austrian Arms Note

On August 12, 1915, the United States replied to a note from Vienna in which the Austrian government had charged that large American arms and munitions shipments to one camp of belligerents compromised the neutrality of this country. Secretary of State Robert

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23

Senate Journal of the Legislature of the State of Nebraska, Thirty-Fourth Session; compiled by E. A. Walrath, Secretary (Beatrice, Nebraska: Milburn and Scott Company, 1915), pp. 63-64, 183, 184, 190-191, 211, 850; Daily Proceedings of the Thirty-Fourth Session of the Nebraska House of Representatives, compiled by George W. Potts, Chief Clerk, Lincoln: Woodruff Banknote Company, 1915), pp. 162, 171, 532, 1190.

24

Congressional Record 63 Cong. 3rd sess., p 4016; Morning World-Herald, February 19, 1915.

25

Morning World-Herald, ed., February 20, 1915. President Wilson had told Secretary of State William Jennings Bryan that the Arms embargo measures were unneutral. Bryan later assured British Ambassador Sir Cecil Spring-Rice that the administration opposed such legislation. See Morrissey, *op. cit.*, pp. 17-18 and Walter Millis, Road To War, America: 1914-1917 (Cambridge: The Riverside Press, 1935) p. 99.

Lansing, who had succeeded Bryan, pointed out in answer to the Dual Monarchy that Germany and Austria had made sizable munitions sales to Britain during the Boer War while none had been made to the South African republics. Lansing's note also held that if the United States refused to sell these war commodities to any available customer, it could hardly expect to purchase these commodities itself from foreign sources, in the event that America needed such supplies in the future.<sup>26</sup>

The next day, the World-Herald showed its opposition to the course of the Administration when it stated that the reciting of precedents in support of our munitions exports "...may be good as a matter of controversial discussion, but it is not a very complete justification for us if America is to maintain its high moral position as the conscience of the world."<sup>27</sup>

The Hitchcock paper termed as being "strongly inapplicable" Lansing's argument that it would be to America's future disadvantage if she forbade arms and ammunition exports during the present war. American munitions producers, said the World-Herald,

are not only turning out hundreds of millions of dollars' worth of munitions of war, but tens of millions of dollars are being expended in enlarging those factories and if the war continues any length of time there will be developed in the United States an enormous manufacturing interest devoted to the production of arms and ammunition [which] ... will hereafter be used to promote war preparations on behalf of the United States. 28

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26

Morning World-Herald, August 12, 1915.

27

Ibid., ed., August 17, 1915.

28

Ibid., ed.

The Omaha Daily Bee supported Secretary Lansing's reply to Vienna. This paper asserted that it would be unneutral for the United States to break with precedent during the war and that accepted rules pertaining to arms and munitions exports could only be altered by international agreement.<sup>29</sup> Thus was an anomalous situation manifested whereby a Democratic newspaper was in opposition to a policy of the Democratic administration, while a Republican journal supported it.

#### Response to the Second Munitions Embargo Bill

On December 7, 1915, soon after the new Congress convened Senator Hitchcock introduced S. 380, a measure much like his earlier Munitions Embargo Bill presented in the previous session. Like its predecessor, S. 380 was never reported out of the Senate Committee on Foreign relations.<sup>30</sup>

The Lincoln Journal was quoted editorially by the World-Herald as saying that the bill was reintroduced by Hitchcock as a means of mustering German votes in the impending 1916 election. The World-Herald stood its altruistic ground and said that the proposed legislation was not designed to aid Germany or any other belligerent,<sup>31</sup> but was a measure of pure Americanism. Later the Hitchcock organ reiterated its earlier argument that the Munitions Embargo

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29

The Omaha Daily Bee, ed., August 17, 1915. The Bee had upheld in April a similar administration position taken in a note from Bryan to Germany. ( The Omaha Daily Bee, ed., April 23, 1915 ).  
The World-Herald was silent at this time.

30

Congressional Record, 64 Cong. 1 sess., p. 80.

31

Morning World-Herald, ed., December 2, 1915.

Bill was basically of a domestic nature since it sought to avert an increase of war passions between the pro-Allied and pro-German elements in American society. <sup>32</sup> The World-Herald also maintained that heavy war materials shipments were causing rail congestion and creating a shortage of boxcars needed for the movement of western agricultural products. <sup>33</sup>

The Bee defended again the position taken by the administration in the August 12 note to Vienna which said that an open arms market might in the future be of military value to the United States. Doubting the motives of the owner of the World-Herald in reintroducing the Munitions Embargo Bill, the Bee felt that

the senator's arms bill may be used by him for a little gallery play and to embarrass the administration still further, but it must be plain to everyone who knows anything about the situation that it will get no farther than the talkfest stage, and probably was not intended for anything else. <sup>34</sup>

The News, while saying all manner of evil about munitions manufacturers and their dealings with the United States Government, maintained a total silence on the second Hitchcock Bill.

Clearly, the Bee was right when it intimated that the latest Embargo Bill would be of little import. This can be seen in the fact that the World-Herald ran only three scattered editorials on the subject following the remarks in the Bee on December 11. <sup>35</sup> Contrasted

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<sup>32</sup>

Ibid., eds. December 22, 1915, January 29, 1916.

<sup>33</sup>

Ibid., January 29, 1916.

<sup>34</sup>

The Omaha Daily Bee, ed., December 11, 1916.

<sup>35</sup>

These were on December 22, 1915 and January 13 and 29, 1916.

to a year earlier, there were no World-Herald editorial polemics with the New York press, no mass meetings or Nebraska legislative resolutions introduced indorsing the Hitchcock Bill.

### Chapter Conclusion

Manifestly, the World-Herald editorial campaign in support of the first Hitchcock Bill was newspaper propaganda par excellence. Skillfully written, these editorials conveyed a sense of urgency; some thirty, two-column wide discourses appeared during the months of December, 1914, and January, 1915. Strong appeals were made to such human emotions as sympathy, indignation, pride and fear. Sympathy for the suffering and broken homes caused by the employment of American munitions, indignation that an enlightened people should tolerate such a transgression of its moral sense, pride in ultimately being divorced from such a tainted trade, and fear lest this country should, through munitions exports be drawn into the conflict, while enduring the spectre of witnessing its citizens being divided into two hostile camps—these feelings were all potentially raised in the reader.

The lofty moral position advanced by the World-Herald would seem to have been related to the nature of the midwestern economy. An ammunitions embargo would have worked no economic or industrial dislocations in the circulation area of the World-Herald, since Omaha had its roots in agriculture, agricultural processing, and transportation, whereas the munitions industry was centered in the eastern states. Hence the question could be observed in the light



economic detachment.

It can be surmised that the reason the World-Herald did not wage a strong campaign in support of the second Hitchcock Bill was the fact that the national administration had objected to the earlier measure, and Democratic Party unity had to be maintained in the election year of 1916.

The importance of political differences in the Omaha press was indicated by the question of the Hitchcock Bill. The sphinx-like silence of The Omaha Daily News would tend to indicate either personal differences with the World-Herald or an honest indifference to the issue of the munitions trade. Since the Bee attacked the Hitchcock Bill only after it had failed in the 1914-1915 short session of Congress, one is led to wonder if Dr. Rosewater had considered an attack upon the measure as politically infeasible in the face of strong local popular support for the pending munitions embargo legislation. Certainly the Hitchcock bills pointed out that the Omaha press could not be relied upon to exhibit a regional attitudinal similarity with respect to the question of American neutrality.

## CHAPTER IV

### ATTITUDES TOWARD GERMAN SUBMARINE WARFARE, 1915-1916

#### The War Zone Declaration

The origins of German submarine warfare lay in the fact that soon after the war began, Great Britain sought to cut off as much German commercial traffic with the rest of the world as possible. While international usage gave Britain the right to seize materials of an absolute contraband nature, ( those cargoes destined for direct use in warfare, such as arms, munitions, strategic metals, etc. ) precedent decreed that conditional contraband ( materials which could be used indirectly for warfare ) could not be seized except after proof had been made that such shipments were for enemy military use. By Orders in Council of August 20, and October 30, 1914, London declared that conditional contraband would be seized within a war zone encompassing the waters off northwestern Europe if such conditional contraband were consigned to enemy agents or under the blanket coverage "to order. " These declarations included shipments bound for neutral ports on the grounds that these cargoes were ultimately intended for German use.

While such conditional contraband was reaching Germany by way of Scandinavian ports, the German Government on February 4, 1915

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<sup>1</sup>  
Charles Seymour, American Diplomacy During The World War ( Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1934 ). pp. 34-35.

declared in retaliation that as of February 18, the waters around the British Isles would be considered a war zone and that all enemy vessels would be destroyed, even if this meant endangering the lives of their passengers and crews. Neutral vessels were warned that they ran the risk of being sunk since the British government permitted mis-<sup>2</sup>use of neutral flags as a means of escaping enemy submarines. Thus the submarine was to be used against merchant vessels whereas it had<sup>3</sup> formerly been restricted to employment against enemy war craft.

The immediate reaction of the Omaha press to the German declaration was that the measure was but part of a plan on both sides<sup>4</sup> to bring as much war suffering home to the enemy as possible. Realizing the importance of this declaration The Omaha Daily Bee condemned both Germany and Britain as being "utterly reckless" of neutral rights on the high seas, while it stated that Germany must be absolutely certain any vessel which was sunk and had been flying the<sup>5</sup> American flag was of a belligerent registry.

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Morning World-Herald, February 5, 1915.

3

Adolphe Laurens, Histoire de la guerre sous-marine allemande, 1914-1918 ( Paris: Société d'Éditions Géographiques, Maritimes et Coloniales, 1930 ), p. 9.

4

Morning World-Herald, eds., February 4, and 5, 1915; The Omaha Daily Bee, ed., February 6, 1915; The Omaha Daily News, ed., February 9, 1915.

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The Omaha Daily Bee, eds., February 6 and 9, 1915. The Bee's reference was to the German allegations in the February 4 declaration that British vessels were using neutral flags as a rouse. The Cunard liner Lusitania, in raising the American flag while crossing the Irish Sea, substantiated these charges.

On February 12 the press reported that the United States had sent a note to Germany holding that nation to a "strict accountability" for any losses in property or lives occasioned by German submarines and further warning that this country would "... take any steps that might be necessary to ... safeguard American lives and property." At the same time a note had been sent to London protesting the use of the American flag by British vessels to escape U-boats.<sup>6</sup> It was later announced that Germany had sent a note to London by way of Washington proposing that the submarine campaign would be averted if Britain allowed foodstuffs to enter the Reich.<sup>7</sup>

The World-Herald viewed the German proposal quite favorably. It asserted that if Britain should agree to the modus vivendi set forth by Berlin, the nature of sea warfare would be more easily endured by both belligerent and neutral nations.<sup>8</sup> While The Omaha Daily Bee upheld the ideas expressed in the American notes to Berlin and London, it was not suprised that they came to naught, but was hopeful that negotiations toward ending the commercial warfare might continue.<sup>9</sup>

Significantly, all of the local papers expressed sentiments opposing a rigid defense of our high seas prerogative. The News for example,

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<sup>6</sup> Morning World-Herald, February 12, 1915.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., February 16, 1915.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., ed., February 17, 1915.

<sup>9</sup> The Omaha Daily Bee, eds., February 18, March 6, 1915.

urged that special markings be put on American vessels in order to protect them from attack due to a continued British use of the American flag.<sup>10</sup>

The World-Herald, despairing that either Germany or Britain were likely to observe neutral rights, advocated an embargo on American trade to these nations as a last resort. Such a course

may be against precedent - though it represents what Thomas Jefferson did more than a hundred years ago. But there are... a good many cornfed and crudely amateur diplomatists who believe that such a course, drastic as it might seem, would be a great deal more nearly proper and statesmanlike than for Uncle Sam to paint his face black, emit a war whoop, and jump into the fight. 11

This point of view was repeated in subsequent editorials.<sup>12</sup> Senator Hitchcock was quoted as having told the New York World, in an interview that "all this country would have to do ( to preserve its maritime rights from Anglo-German encroachment ) would be to threaten to put an embargo on exports which the belligerents have to have, and they would soon come to terms."<sup>13</sup>

Such was the stand taken by The Omaha Daily Bee which asserted that the United States was self-sustaining and that in the final analysis, this country could submit to a trade embargo with Europe, if such action would insure America's avoidance of war. The Bee pointed to a recent Norwegian embargo of all exports to Germany as justification

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<sup>10</sup>

The Omaha Daily News, ed., February 19, 1915.

<sup>11</sup>

Morning World-Herald, ed., February 26, 1915.

<sup>12</sup>

Ibid., eds., March 3 and 17, 1915.

<sup>13</sup>

Ibid., ed. April 1, 1915.

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for a trade embargo to protect American neutrality. The position taken by the Bee seems anomalous in view of its ultimate stand on the related arms embargo question.

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In spite of warnings put forth by the Omaha papers concerning the potential infringements of American rights on the high seas, it was not until May 1, 1915, that Germany indicated that her war zone declaration of February 4 was of true importance to the United States. On that day, the American tanker Gulflight, bound from Port Arthur, Texas, to Rouen, France, was torpedoed by a German submarine off the Scilly Islands, with the vessel sustaining heavy damage and the loss of three crew members.

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In commenting upon the Gulflight incident, The Omaha Daily Bee remarked that it was difficult to believe that a German submarine had intentionally fired upon an American vessel and that Germany was by no means the only transgressor of neutral rights on the high seas.<sup>17</sup> In an editorial entitled "The Verge of Humiliation," the World-Herald observed once more that neither group of belligerents showed much respect for American rights, but that

Great Britain's conduct is more humane, and Germany's the more ruthless, in that British vessels are careful not to endanger human life. This is due to the circumstance that Great Britain, with her great naval preponderance, can safely capture ships and take them to port. Germany, able to fight only with submarines, obliged to strike and run, must either abandon her campaign of reprisal, or consent that human life be endangered. Perhaps if Germany commanded the sea, and Great Britain were driven to submarine warfare, each would do as the other is doing now. We presume they would. 18

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<sup>14</sup> The Omaha Daily Bee, eds., February 26, March 15, 1915.

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<sup>15</sup> Supra., p. 38-39, Morning World-Herald, May 3, 1915.

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<sup>17</sup> The Omaha Daily Bee, ed., May 5, 1915.

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<sup>18</sup> Morning World-Herald, ed., May 4, 1915.

The above comments by the World-Herald, which in retrospect appear portentous of America's entrance into the war, are highly important in illustrating that papers' attitudes toward the two great maritime belligerents. The emphasis upon circumstance as the determining factor in the naval warfare of the United Kingdom as opposed to that of Germany demonstrates that the World-Herald did not feel that Britain placed a higher valuation upon human life than did her enemy, but rather that her peculiar situation allowed her to maintain the amenities of warfare long decreed by civilization.

#### The Sinking of the Lusitania

When the British Cunard liner Lusitania, bound from New York to Liverpool, was sunk off Old Head Kinsale, Ireland, on the afternoon May 7, 1915 by the German submarine U-20, with a loss of 1198 persons, the spectre of entering the war loomed larger than ever before in the minds of the American people. In this crisis, the three Omaha newspapers were united in counseling a spirit of moderation amongst their readers.

The World-Herald well expressed the prevailing shock over the incident when it said that "with the torpedoing of the Lusitania . . . the audacious German submarine warfare has found its shining mark." The Hitchcock paper hastened to warn its readers that there might well be future sinkings with much loss of life which "might cause perilous tension to the peaceful relations between Germany and the United States." Of interest is the fact that this same editorial implicated Great Britain in the responsibility for the Lusitania sinking by

criticising the British Admiralty for not protecting the vessel as it passed through the war zone, especially in view of the warning of the German Embassy in the New York papers, printed on the day of the sailing of the Lusitania, that travel upon British ships was perilous.<sup>19</sup> This involvement of Britain in the incident was repeated later when the World-Herald said that if England had accepted earlier German proposals for ending submarine warfare in exchange for British permission to let non-contraband goods enter Germany, the Lusitania sinking could have been averted.<sup>20</sup>

Senator Hitchcock summarized the attitude of his paper in a statement to the Philadelphia Public Ledger, the New York Times and the New York World when he stated that

I think the duty of our government in the present crisis... should be limited to demanding reparation for the loss of American lives and property. Germany will probably accede to such demands, although adhering to and persisting in her submarine policy. The loss of American lives was not caused by a desire to injure America, but was accidental or incidental and if reparation is made does not become a cause to abandon a neutral attitude. <sup>21</sup>

Similar attitudes were taken by the Bee and the News. In criticising incursions made upon the rights of neutrals, the Bee asserted that "sea warfare is still indistinguishable from a remnant of piracy or licensed murder or robbery."<sup>22</sup> All three papers counseled calmness upon the citizenry and support of President Wilson in the impending negotiations with Germany. It was expressed that the best opportunities

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19

Ibid., ed., May 8, 1915.

21

Ibid., May 9, 1915; ed., May 9, 1915.

22

The Omaha Daily Bee, ed., May 10, 1915.

20

Ibid., ed., May 11, 1915.



for ending the conflict lay in the maintenance of American neutrality and that war should "... be averted at all costs short of an impossible

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price." This endorsement of President Wilson included his speech of May 10 in Philadelphia in which he said "There is such a thing as a man being too proud to fight... There is such a thing as a nation being so right that it does not need to convince others by force that

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it is right."

This unanimity of support for the President in his negotiations with Germany was also apparent in the editorial reactions to the first Lusitania note of May 13, 1915, in which the United States expected reparations as far as possible for lives lost on the Lusitania and assurances that such transgressions as the sinking of this vessel would not occur in the future. The note concluded with the statement that Germany "will not expect the Government of the United States to omit any word or act necessary" to maintain the rights of her citizens in

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their legal endeavors.

The World-Herald praised this note as giving strong expression to the American point of view and yet not offending the German Government. The World-Herald especially endorsed the section of the note which said that "... submarines cannot be used against merchantmen..."

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Morning World-Herald, ed., May 10, 1915; Also see The Omaha Daily Bee, ed., May 13, 1915.

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Morning World-Herald, ed., May 12, 1915; The Omaha Daily Bee, ed., May 12, 1915; The Omaha Daily News, ed., May 11, 1915; Woodrow Wilson, The New Democracy; Presidential Messages, Addresses, and Other Papers, 1913-1917, ed. Ray Stannard Baker and William E. Dodd. (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1926), 1, p. 321.

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Wilson, 1, pp. 323-328.

without an inevitable violation of many sacred principles of justice  
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 and humanity." As the Hitchcock journal put it,

Germany is asked to abandon its only hope of winning the war through sea power; to perform the superb act of self-abnegation that would come of placing the principles of humanity and justice as superior even to national necessity. And it is asked to do this despite lawless British aggression on German and neutral commerce which Great Britain has refused to discontinue even though Germany should discontinue its submarine warfare on merchantmen. . . We are sure that the fairness of President Wilson, no less than the fairness of the American people could be depended upon to insist [to Great Britain ? ] that that sacrifice should not be in vain. 27

Thus did the World-Herald harken back to British actions, even though the question at hand dealt with German transgressions of neutral rights. This tendency of the World-Herald to view the British Government as a factor in German-American negotiations was evident in two subsequent editorials which held that if Germany should unequivocally accept the requirements of the note of May 13, the United States would be morally obligated to obtain British adherence to international maritime law and also to cease arms and munitions exports. 28

The Omaha Daily Bee termed the first Lusitania note "... plain-spoken and to the point. . ." and also that it was "... broader than all possible claims for reparation for destroyed lives of Americans - it embraces all citizens of neutral countries and all non-combattants as well." 29 The Bee, noting reports that German Ambassador Bernstorff was proposing again that submarine attacks on enemy and neutral shipping would be terminated if Britain allowed traditionally

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26:

Ibid., 1, pp. 325-326; Morning World-Herald, ed., May 15, 1915.

27

Morning World-Herald, ed., May 15, 1915.

28

Ibid., eds., May 17, June 5, 1915.

29

The Omaha Daily Bee, ed., May 15, 1915.

non-contraband goods to enter Germany, opposed any bargaining attempts in American foreign negotiations.<sup>30</sup> This stood in contrast to the World-Herald position at this time and, as later events proved, was in agreement with President Wilson's attitudes.

The Omaha Daily News praised the "unmistakable firmness" of the May 13 note and like the World-Herald, asserted that Germany's adherence to it would elevate Germany's position in the eyes of the world.<sup>31</sup>

The German reply to the American note of May 10, published May 31, agreed to indemnify American losses in the Falaba, Cushing, and Gulflight cases, but stated that the Lusitania was, in effect, a British auxillary naval cruiser, had mounted, concealed guns, and carried ammunition and Canadian troops. Hence the German Government deferred making a decision as to indemnification of the Lusitania until further information on the case was presented from Washington.<sup>32</sup>

The Omaha Daily Bee felt that the statements in the note as to the status of the Lusitania impugned the good faith of the United States Government, but that diplomatic resources were far from exhausted, even though the case was quite serious. Two days later, the Bee, judging the public temper said that

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30

Ibid., ed., May 19, 1915.

31

The Omaha Daily News, ed., May 15, 1915.

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Morning World-Herald, May 31, 1915. The Falaba was a British steamer sunk by a German submarine on March 28, in which an American citizen was killed. The Cushing was an American vessel bombed by a German airplane on April 28. These incidents, together with those of the Gulflight and Lusitania, had been considered in the May 10 note.

the people of the United States as a whole are ready to reinforce an insistence upon the demands made in the original communication transmitted through Ambassador Gerard, [American envoy to Berlin] and that they will accept and back up the president's judgment should he conclude a severance of relations necessary to maintain our position. 33

The World-Herald, viewed the reply as disappointing, but not surprising. This paper viewed the situation as "precarious", and advised its readers to put their confidence in President Wilson during this crisis. 34

The News took a different stand from the other two papers when it agreed with the German reply which stated that American lives could not rightfully be used to protect contraband shipments. As the News put it, "there is logic and cold reason in this argument, whatever one may think of moral culpability in connection with the sinking of a ship like the Lusitania." The News professed confidence in the President's ability to uphold the rights of the United States, and yet warned its readers that anyone taking passage on an Allied vessel was risking his life. 35

Thus, while the World-Herald had strongly hinted at the time that the note to Berlin was sent, that there was an element of contingency of German-American relations upon British action, and the News had seen some justice to the contentions in the German reply, only the Bee did not seek to qualify the position assumed by the Washington Administration.

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The Omaha Daily Bee, eds., May 31, June 2, 1915.

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Morning World-Herald, ed., June 1, 1915.

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The Omaha Daily News, ed., May 31, 1915.

### Bryan's Resignation

When the early evening dispatches of June 8 from Washington heralded the resignation of William Jennings Bryan as Secretary of State, stemming from his refusal to sign the second Lusitania note, The Omaha Daily Bee caught the spirit of the moment when it termed the demise as being "... a stroke of lightning out of a clear sky,"<sup>36</sup> In interpreting the meaning of Bryan's resignation, the World-Herald stated succinctly the attitudes of the other local papers when it said that

its natural consequence would be to stiffen up the German government in its stand against the American demands, by advertising the fact that Mr. Bryan, long the most popular man in American public life, chose rather to resign than sanction them.<sup>37</sup>

It is significant that the World-Herald, inspite of its differences with Bryan, believed that the resignation of the Great Commoner might cause President Wilson and his cabinet to be unduly uncompromising in negotiations with Germany.<sup>38</sup>

As to Bryan's future, the World-Herald, taking cognizance of his desire to argue pacifism before the American people, feared a great

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The Omaha Daily Bee, ed., June 9, 1915. Yet a week earlier, in a short editorial, the Bee, realizing President Wilson's dominant role in American diplomacy at the time, said "as a factor in pressing international affairs Secretary Bryan is threatened with a total eclipse." The Omaha Daily Bee, ed., June 2, 1915.

37

Morning World-Herald, ed., June 10, 1915. See The Omaha Daily Bee, ed., June 9, 1915 and The Omaha Daily News, ed., June 9, 1915.

38

Morning World-Herald, ed., June 10, 1915. The above mentioned differences stemmed from Bryan's disapproval of certain Hitchcock candidates for patronage appointments in Nebraska, as well as his opposition to a munitions embargo.

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schism in the ranks of the Democratic Party. The Omaha Daily Bee also foresaw the chance of a battle royal when it prognosticated that there was a strong chance that Bryan might run against Hitchcock in the Nebraska senatorial primary in 1916. Both papers pointed out that Bryan, as Secretary of State, had not been amenable temperamentally to play a secondary role to the President.

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On June 11, the text of the second Lusitania note, signed by acting Secretary of State Robert Lansing was released to the press. This note "earnestly and very solemnly" renewed the demands for reparation in the Lusitania case after denying German allegations that the vessel was armed and served as a Canadian troop transport. The note also offered the good offices of the United States in the hope of obtaining a modus vivendi on the question of sea warfare. Realizing that the second Lusitania note was no more stringent than the first one, and was, if anything, more conciliatory, the Omaha papers were at a loss to understand why Bryan had resigned as Secretary of State. The World-Herald expressed the prevailing local belief concerning the tone of the second note when it stated that "if the newspapers were misled as to the spirit and context of the note surely nobody contributed so much to mislead them as did Mr. Bryan himself in resigning..."

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39

Ibid., ed.

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Morning World-Herald, ed., June 11, 1915; The Omaha Daily Bee, ed., June 10, 1915.

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Wilson, op. cit., 1, pp. 341-346.

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Morning World-Herald, ed., June 12, 1915; See also The Omaha Daily Bee, eds., June 12 and 17, 1915.

### Views Toward Lansing's Negotiations

The German reply to the second Lusitania note was released for publication on July 10. The reply agreed that Germany should observe the rights of American and other neutral vessels in the war zone, and accorded the United States the right to permit four belligerent liners to make the run under the American flag provided no contraband was carried. The communication from Berlin was silent however, on the American demand for safety of U.S. citizens on belligerent commercial vessels and the issue of the Lusitania indemnification.<sup>43</sup>

The reaction in the Omaha papers to this reply was varied. In an editorial entitled "In Conciliatory Spirit," the Hitchcock paper said that the German note indicated that "... the German government is sincerely desirous of prosecuting its submarine warfare in such a way as will afford the maximum of immunity to American ships and American passengers traveling the so-called war zone." The World-Herald felt that the real point of difference lay in the question of American citizens traveling on belligerent ships and it maintained that the matter of indemnification in the Lusitania case could be settled after questions of neutral rights had been closed. In summary, the World-Herald told its readers that "... there is no good reason to anticipate other than a peaceful termination," to German-American difficulties.<sup>44</sup>

The Omaha Daily Bee, in an editorial entitled "The German Note Unresponsive" said that the German reply evaded the issue at hand,

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Sunday World-Herald, July 11, 1915.

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Ibid., ed.

and international law did not require that a neutral should certify that vessels clearing its ports were not carrying contraband; a practice which the German note had requested from the United States. The Bee felt that the German reply might renew tension between the two nations but did ". . . not in itself warrant a cessation of correspondence, much less a severance of relations."<sup>45</sup>

The Omaha Daily News, like the other papers saw that the German note was evasive on the question of American rights on belligerent vessels. The News felt that the note gave little hope for concessions on the part of Germany, but that hope for continued peace could be found in the calmness of mind on the part of the American and German authorities.<sup>46</sup>

On July 21, a third Lusitania note was sent which rejected the German reply to the second note as being "very unsatisfactory." The July 21 note renewed American demands that United States citizens had a right to travel anywhere on commercial vessels under any flag and that this right would be defended from "whatever quarter violated." The note asserted that if any more American lives were lost through German action, the United States would deem such action as "deliberately unfriendly."<sup>47</sup>

The Bee and the News both noted the spirit of finality in the latest American communication. The World-Herald and the News saw the

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The Omaha Sunday Bee, ed., July 11, 1915.

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The Omaha Daily News, ed., July 11, 1915.

47

Wilson, op. cit., 1, pp. 351-355.



likelihood that impending negotiations with Great Britain on the question of American commercial rights on the high seas would modify<sup>48</sup> the intransigent position assumed by the German Government.

The scattered response to these latter negotiations on the Lusitania case, indicated rather clearly that the Omaha press, never deeply agitated over the question, was willing to leave consideration on the matter entirely to the diplomats.

### The Sinking of the Arabic

Just as the nation was relaxing from the threat of war caused by the Lusitania, the British White Star liner Arabic, westward bound from Liverpool to New York, was sunk by a German submarine off the Irish coast on August 19 with the loss of two American citizens.<sup>49</sup> In view of the third Lusitania note, which had proclaimed that further sinkings would be considered "diligently unfriendly," the Omaha press did not hesitate to inform the public of the gravity of the Arabic incident.

While the World-Herald warned that the nation may be drifting toward war with Germany, and the News admitted the seriousness of the latest sinking, the Bee uttered the strong statement that "if the sinking of the Arabic is an unfriendly act, then we must in self-respect<sup>50</sup> sever our diplomatic relations with Germany..."

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<sup>48</sup> The Omaha Daily Bee, ed., July 23, 1915; The Omaha Daily News, ed., July 25, 1915; Morning World-Herald, ed., August 3, 1915.

<sup>49</sup> Morning World-Herald, August 20, 1915.

<sup>50</sup> Morning World-Herald, ed., August 21, 1915; The Omaha Daily News, ed., August 21, 1915; The Omaha Daily Bee, ed., August 21, 1915.

The tension over the Arabic case was reduced on August 24 when Ambassador Bernstorff informed the State Department that the German Government regretted the Arabic incident, but since this ship had reportedly sought to ram the German submarine involved, the Kaiser's Government could not compensate any losses sustained.<sup>51</sup>

The fact that tension had been diminished was seen in editorials by the World-Herald and the Bee. These papers felt that if Germany had desired war, she would have remained silent on the Arabic sinking.<sup>52</sup>

On September 28, the World-Herald supplemented its ebullitions when it stated that a second memorandum from Berlin had agreed to grant compensation for the Arabic losses, and to prevent any further incidents of this nature. The Hitchcock paper praised Wilson's diplomacy, especially in the face of pro-Allied belligerency on the part of Theodore Roosevelt and occasional outbursts of extreme pacifism by William J. Bryan. The World-Herald asserted again that it was incumbent upon the United States to turn its attention to securing British acquiescence in the neutral right to trade with Germany in non-contraband goods.<sup>53</sup>

The Omaha Daily Bee, aware of the diplomatic gains registered by the United States in the settlement of the Arabic case, heralded

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Johann Heinrich von Bernstorff, My Three Years in America (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1920), pp. 181-182.

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Morning World-Herald, ed., August 26, 1915; The Omaha Daily Bee, ed., August 26, 1915. The World-Herald editorial incorrectly labeled the German communication of August 24 a "disavowal" of the Arabic sinking. See Bernstorff, loc. cit.

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Morning World-Herald, eds., August 28, September 1 and 2, 1915. Bernstorff, op. cit., p. 188.

them as "not a partisan triumph," and sought to illustrate the dis-loyalty of some Democrats to Wilson by citing the fact that Bryan had  
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resigned at a highly critical moment. The Bee expressed the common Omaha press sentiment as follows:

While Great Britain is yet halting over the simple matter of permitting the unobstructed passage of goods actually owned by the United States, and grudgingly giving assent to even that small measure of freedom of the seas, the Germans find themselves able to concede the utmost point contended for by the American government, and to do it in such a way as more than ever fixes the friendly relations between the two countries. In meeting the demands of the president, the kaiser has shown himself as good a diplomat as he is a tactician. 55

#### The Ancona Case

Just as it appeared that the Arabic case had been settled and a break with Germany averted, the newspapers heralded another submarine incident which threatened the continuation of diplomatic relations between the United States and the Austro-Hungarian Empire. On November 9, 1915, the Italian line vessel Ancona, bound from Naples to New York, was sunk in the Mediterranean by an Austrian submarine with a loss of 208 lives, of which nine were Americans. The seriousness of the incident was heightened by press reports and affidavits from survivors of the sinking which stated that the vessel had been  
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fired upon while its life boats were being lowered.

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The Omaha Daily Bee, ed., September 2, 1915. The Bee failed, however, to mention just which Republican had been helpful in making the Arabic settlement a non-partisan victory.

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The Omaha Daily Bee, ed., September 4, 1915.

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Morning World-Herald, November 10, 11, 12, and 15, 1915.

In reacting to the Ancona sinking, the World-Herald and The Omaha Daily Bee showed a sharpness of tone not found in earlier comments on submarine warfare. As the World-Herald put it

When a passenger ship like the Ancona is sunk the nature of warfare is radically changed. It is armed men on the one side- innocent and helpless non-combattants on the other. There is an element of fiendishness involved in such a one-sided combat.

The World-Herald added further condemnation to the attack by pointing out that the Ancona was headed toward New York, and, therefore, could not have been transporting any war materials for use against the Dual Monarchy.<sup>57</sup>

The strongly worded note sent to Vienna on the Ancona sinking resulted in the World-Herald warning "... there appears a reasonable probability that diplomatic relations between this government and that of the Austro-Hungarian empire may be broken." The Bee felt that<sup>58</sup> "the situation is more than serious. It is grave."

While the Rosewater journal said that the Ancona note was "... of that virile quality which will meet the unqualified endorsement of true Americans," it also took the opportunity to attack past diplomatic negotiations of the Wilson administration. The Bee remarked that

One of the chief weaknesses of the present administration at Washington has been its laxity, if not indifference, in the matter of providing protection for American citizens wherever they may be, regardless of the standing of the offender against the rights of Americans. It is encouraging to note that this policy is being

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57

Ibid., ed., November 15, 1915.

58

Ibid., ed., December 17, 1915; The Omaha Daily Bee, ed., December 14, 1915.

abandoned for the assertion of a more vigorous concern for the safety of Americans. 59

Following a second Ancona note, Austria agreed to indemnify the American losses sustained and also to provide for the safety of non-combattants in the execution of her submarine warfare. Both the World-Herald and the Bee rejoiced at the passage of the latest crisis, and, as the latter paper observed, the settlement "... preserves the pride of the haughtiest of the European governments." During the entire Ancona affair the News said nothing on the subject.

#### The Gore and McLemore Resolutions

An increasingly important problem which faced the United States Government in the maintenance of neutrality was the question of travel by American citizens upon armed belligerent vessels. On May 14, 1915, there were 149 armed British merchantmen plying the seas, but by December 25 of that year, the figure had risen to 766, with a portion of these vessels calling at United States ports. Secretary of State Lansing, seeing the problem facing American neutrality, sought to arrange a modus vivendi whereby the Allies would disarm their merchant-

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59

The Omaha Daily Bee, ed., December 15, 1915. If the above criticism of the Democratic administration for failure to protect American citizens abroad applied to the submarine question, the stand taken herein differs markedly from the endorsement by the Bee of Wilson's negotiations with Germany. The criticism, however, was nebulous enough that it might be applied to the question of American rights in Mexico. Perhaps the Bee was looking for issues to present in the coming 1916 election campaign.

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Morning World-Herald, December 31, 1915.

61

Ibid., ed., January 1, 1916; The Omaha Daily Bee, ed., January 1, 1916.

62

Alice M. Morrissey, The American Defense of Neutral Rights, 1914-

men with the Central Powers agreeing to observe the practice of visit and search while providing for the safety of non-combatants aboard these vessels.

On February 10, 1916, while Lansing's negotiations were in progress, Germany announced that henceforth armed belligerent vessels would be treated as naval craft, thus making such ships liable to destruction on sight.<sup>63</sup> While in a February 18 proposal to the Allies, Lansing had termed the arming of merchantmen "a doubtful legal right," the Secretary, following the German announcement of February 10 which he had to a degree inspired, made a partial volte-face on February 16 and said that merchantmen might be armed for defensive purposes only.<sup>64</sup>

The question of American travel on armed belligerent vessels soon spread to the halls of Congress. On February 22, Jeff McLemore of Texas introduced House Resolution 147 warning American citizens that they were risking their own safety and the peace of their country by traveling on armed belligerent vessels.<sup>65</sup> Three days later, Thomas P. Gore of Oklahoma, introduced a similar measure ( Senate Concurrent

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1917 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1939), p. 108. Derived from Archibald Hurd, The Merchant Navy, II, p. 237-238.

<sup>63</sup>

Ibid., pp. 107-110.

<sup>64</sup>

Ibid., pp. 107-113.

<sup>65</sup>

Congressional Record, 64 Cong. 1st sess. P. 2958 ( McLemore put a colon between his first and last names as indicated above.)

Resolution 14) in the Upper House.

The reaction to the McLemore and Gore resolutions by the Omaha papers illustrated the political orientation of these journals. In term-  
ing American travel on belligerent vessels "a dangerous right" the  
World-Herald praised the Gore Resolution as embodying "good common  
sense."<sup>67</sup>

The opposite attitude was shown by The Omaha Daily Bee, which endorsed the stand taken by President Wilson and a great majority of eastern Republicans. The position of the Bee was clearly seen in its comments on the exchange of correspondence between Senator William Stone, Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, and President Wilson. The Senator had warned Wilson of the rising congressional sentiment in favor of the Gore and McLemore Resolutions, and even the prohibition of American travel on belligerent vessels. This drew the reply that "to forbid our people to exercise their rights for fear we might be called upon to vindicate them would be a deep humiliation indeed."<sup>68</sup> As the Bee commented in support of Wilson,

The McLemore, or any similar resolution would... open the way to the continued aggression of all belligerents. To give way on the rights of neutrals on a single point means that in time all neutral rights must be foregone. The only way to preserve our rights is to stand firm for all of them. 69.

The Bee castigated Senator Stone and other Democrats who allegedly were impeding execution of American foreign policy by their endorsement of the Gore and McLemore resolutions. The Republican journal

66

Ibid., p. 3120.

67

Morning World-Herald ed., February 25, 1916

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69

Ibid.The Omaha Daily Bee, ed., February 25, 1916.

showed its partisanship in the comment that "It is worthy of note... that President Wilson, in this serious situation, finds his chief opposition in his own party where patriotism has no appeal to politicians who seek personal advantage." The Bee further charged that Senator Stone was seeking personal control over United States foreign relations.  
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The Bee once more made a party issue of the Gore and McLemore Resolutions in its remarks following President Wilson's request for a vote on these measures in order to settle the issue. As the Rosewater paper put it,

The demand of the president for a vote of confidence in his foreign policy is a crafty move, one that reflects some credit on the [political] acumen of the executive, whose single-track mind is now pointing to the St. Louis convention.... If he makes demands for a vote now, it is because he knows it will be his way.... It is too bad that grave negotiations with foreign powers could not be carried on without mixing in cheap politics, but this seems to be the democratic way of doing things. 71

The early stand of the World-Herald in favor of the Gore resolution was elucidated in a Washington press release by Senator Hitchcock who said,

My judgement is that Americans should be warned not to take passage on armed ships of belligerent countries. This warning should be given without regard to the question whether or not we propose to insist that passenger vessels may be armed and still have the rights of unarmed vessels. The warning should be given so as to save American lives and avoid dangerous controversy that might imperil the preservation of peace. The president feels... duty bound in his negotiations with foreign powers to assert and insist on our rights as neutrals, but in addressing American citizens

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70

Ibid., eds., February 25 and 26, 1916.

71

Ibid., ed., March 2, 1916.



he or congress [ sic. ] can very properly call upon them not to exercise those rights when life is endangered or peace in jeopardy. If congress acts it should do so in such a way as not to embarrass or discredit the president. 72

On March 3 the Gore Resolution was tabled by a 68 to 14 vote and on March 7 the McLemore Resolution met the same fate by a 276 to 142 tally. <sup>73</sup> On March 4, the World-Herald did not refer editorially to

the Senate vote, but merely asked if German Submarines, which were by nature quite frail, should allow an armed belligerent vessel to fire the first shot because the presence of American citizens on board these Allied craft afforded them the protection of the United States

<sup>74</sup> Government. Two days later, the World-Herald soothed its readers by asserting that the stand taken by President Wilson on the Gore-McLemore resolutions undoubtedly would not lead to war. Yet at the same time the Hitchcock journal condemned once more those Americans who took passage on armed belligerent vessels as being foolish and un-

<sup>75</sup> patriotic. The World-Herald concluded its comments on the Gore-McLemore upheaval with the following bit of meaningless equivocation:

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<sup>72</sup>

Morning World-Herald, February 27, 1916.

<sup>73</sup>

Congressional Record, 64 Cong. 1st sess. pp. 4365, 3720. Senator Norris voted against tabling the Gore Resolution, while all six Nebraska representatives voted not to table the McLemore Resolution. Senator Hitchcock who favored the Gore measure, voted for tabling it owing to a last minute amendment by Senator Gore which practically nullified his resolution. See also Morning World-Herald, March 4, 1916.

<sup>74</sup>

Morning World-Herald, ed., March 4, 1916. This concept was borrowed from the Chicago Tribune.

<sup>75</sup>

Ibid., eds., March 6 and 9, 1916.

The ebullition in congress [sic] did undoubtedly, for the time being, embarrass the President in conduct of difficult negotiations with foreign governments. But the disturbance served excellently well as a "stop! Look! Listen!" sign both at home and abroad. 76

The Omaha Daily News likewise took an indefinite position on the Gore and McLemore measures. While praising Congress for voting to table these measures, the News held that American citizens "... have no right whatever..." to jeopardize the peace of the nation by traveling on armed belligerent vessels. 77

The Omaha Daily Bee felt that the tabling of the resolutions was inconclusive and would not be understood by foreign leaders. The Bee, favoring an outright defeat of the Gore and McLemore resolutions, reiterated its doctrine of not relinquishing or modifying American rights on the high seas. 78

In summary, the Bee could readily uphold President Wilson's position of opposition to the Gore and McLemore measures because this position was in line with dominant Republican thought. The World-Herald was in the difficult position of sitting upon the fence in regard to this question which severely threatened division in the Democratic ranks. While favoring the Gore Resolution, Senator Hitchcock could ill afford to incur the consuming wrath of President Wilson in election year. The News, which supported the Democratic Party at the national level, probably was also aware of the chaos involved in the Gore--McLemore resolutions, and thus took an equivocal stand on the question.

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76

Ibid., eds., March 6, 1916

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The Omaha Daily News, eds., March 4 and 8, 1916.

78

The Omaha Daily Bee, eds., March 5 and 8, 1916.

### The Sussex Ultimatum

With the German submarine attack upon the French steamer Sussex en route from Folkestone to Dieppe on March 24 which resulted in the loss of eighty lives, American relations with Berlin came close to the breaking point. Although no Americans were among the dead, several were injured. Clearly the Sussex attack was a violation of the German agreement in the Arabic settlement in which the Kaiser's government agreed not to sink commercial vessels without providing for the safety of their passengers, <sup>79</sup> In the Omaha newspapers there was no editorial comment on this incident until after the dispatch to Germany on April 18 of a note discussing the Sussex case and recounting a number of lesser incidents of recent occurrence.

This note concluded that,

unless the Imperial Government should now immediately declare and effect an abandonment of its present methods of submarine warfare against passenger and freight-carrying vessels the Government of the United States can have no other choice but to sever diplomatic relations with the German Empire altogether. 80

The World-Herald asserted that the American people would loyally support the President in the event of a diplomatic break with Germany, but that there was much peace sentiment in Nebraska which was inclined toward a policy of moderation. The Hitchcock paper felt that there was a "fair prospect" for German adherence to the American ultimatum and added that peace could be preserved inspite of a war-like spirit which the World-Herald said pervaded the Atlantic sea-

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Morning World - Herald, March 26, 27, and 30, 1916. Morrissey, *op. cit.*, pp. 123-124.

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Wilson, *op. cit.*, pp. 147-152.

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board.

The Omaha Daily Bee, while terming President Wilson's presentation of the Sussex ultimatum to a joint session of Congress as being "exceptional and dramatic," endorsed the note to Berlin and said that "further patience would appear to be a weakness rather than a virtue." The Bee suspected, however, that there was more than mere submarine warfare behind the April 18 ultimatum. In support of this contention it pointed to an increasing activity of government agents in industrial centers along with secret State and justice Department conferences at the White House. The local Republican journal urged that Wilson let the public know the entire circumstances behind  
82  
the ultimatum.

The Bee made an interesting evaluation of the public temper, in which it asserted that even at the moment of grave crisis, a spirit of calmness pervaded the nation. The Rosewater paper attributed this to the fact that the Sussex case was but one of a series of crises, the sum total of which had made the public somewhat indifferent to the near-  
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ness of war.

In the reply to the Sussex ultimatum Germany agreed to conform her submarine warfare to the traditional principles of visit and search of commercial vessels with the safety of their passengers assured, if the vessel being accosted did not offer resistance or attempt to escape. After denouncing Great Britain for her illegal blockade, the

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81

Morning World-Herald, eds., April 20 and 21, 1916.

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The Omaha Daily Bee, eds., April 20 and 22, 1916.

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The Omaha Daily Bee, ed., April 24, 1916; Morrissey, op. cit., p. 124, cites German Ambassador Johann von Bernstorff and British envoy Sir Cecil Spring-Rice who bore out this contention.

note from Berlin closed with the ominous reservation that unless the United States could obtain the acquiescence of the United Kingdom in the observance of international law "the German Government would then be facing a new situation in which it must reserve itself complete liberty of decision."<sup>84</sup>

The World-Herald was encouraged by the German reply, but did not fail to point out the significance of the "complete liberty of decision" reservation. Even on this point the World-Herald showed optimism by the remark that the German reservation "...portends a war which both governments are anxious to avoid and which the people of neither country desire, we cannot bring ourselves to believe."<sup>85</sup>

The Bee again stood behind the President on the submarine issue when it likewise stated that "... the future of our relations with Germany depends exclusively on German action."<sup>86</sup>

The Omaha Daily News took a calm view on the German reply. It felt that "... Germany has undoubtedly conceded sufficiently to President Wilson's demands that the possibility of... an immediate break has disappeared." The News took the most lenient view of the Omaha papers toward the "complete liberty of decision" reservation when it held that "... it was... to be expected that Germany would demand something from England in return for its own concessions."<sup>87</sup>

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84

Morning World-Herald, May 6, 1916.

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Morning World-Herald, ed., May 6, 1916.

86

The Omaha Sunday Bee, ed., May 7, 1916.

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The Omaha Daily News, ed., May 6, 1916.

This contrasts to the firm stand taken by the World-Herald behind a later note to Germany which stated that German respect for American rights on the high seas could not be made contingent upon the actions of Great Britain.

### Chapter Conclusion

The most important feature in the reaction of the Omaha press to German and Austrian submarine warfare between February, 1915, and May, 1916, was the constant tone of moderation on the part of all three newspapers. Never was a spirit of jingoism or anti-Germanism put forth; always a hope was expressed that American rights might be preserved with resort to warfare only in the event of diplomatic failure. In spite of this calmness of approach, the Omaha papers did not unduly minimize the dangers which confronted the nation in the series of crises discussed above.

While all three publications endorsed the diplomatic negotiations of the Wilson administration, the World-Herald, especially during the Lusitania and Arabic crises, exhibited a slight inclination to consider British incursions upon American trading rights as a legitimate factor in our diplomatic exchanges with Berlin. This attitude was changed however at the conclusion of the Sussex case. The News, which commented the least of the three Omaha journals upon the submarine question, likewise showed a spirit of moderation based partly upon English non-conformity to international maritime practice.

The Bee, while critical of British excesses upon the high seas, divorced American differences with the United Kingdom from the United States diplomacy with Germany more completely than did the other two Omaha papers. In this respect the Bee was slightly closer to the official administration policy of not making our relations with one nation contingent upon the actions of another. As a general observation this difference of approach between the World-Herald and the News on one hand and the Bee on the other amounted to a nuance rather than a full scale conflict of ideas as to how our diplomacy should be handled. All papers urged the utmost of confidence in President Wilson's ability to handle each crisis.

The Gore and McLemore resolutions provided the only major difference of opinion between the three papers on the submarine question. If the solid support of these measures from the Nebraska congressional delegation was any criterion of public attitude, the qualified endorsement of the Gore and McLemore resolutions by the World-Herald and the News was closer to the popular local attitude than was the opposition of the Bee.

## CHAPTER V

### THE OMAHA PAPERS AND THE ENTENTE ALLIES,

1915-1916

#### The Blockade of Germany and American Shipping Rights

While American rights on the high seas were conflicting with the practices of German submarine warfare, they also encountered Allied, particularly British maritime restrictions which were aimed at ending all trade between the Central Powers and the outside world. While British incursions upon neutral trade definitely lacked the dramatic qualities of Austro-German subsea warfare, which was of a life-and-death nature, they were a constant source of annoyance for the United States during the period of neutrality. For this reason, English respect of American rights at sea was an important question in the editorial columns of the Omaha press.

As has been mentioned earlier, Britain, after establishing a contraband list, declared by Orders in Council of August 20 and October 30, 1914, that conditional contraband would be seized within the waters off northwestern Europe if consigned to enemy agents or the indefinite "to order" destination. The Omaha press reaction was slow, for it was not until November 19 that the World-Herald proclaimed that there were serious doubts as to Britain's right to engage in such action beyond her territorial waters. While The Omaha Daily

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<sup>1</sup>  
Morning World-Herald, ed., November 19, 1914.



Bee urged that the nations of the western hemisphere unite to protect their high sea rights from impending British incursions, the World-Herald held that according to tradition, foodstuffs could not be seized by Great Britain unless she could prove that their ultimate consumption was to be by the armed forces of the enemy. Both papers likewise admitted that belligerents had a right to engage in visit and search upon the high seas, and also could legally confiscate contra-<sup>2</sup>band.

The Orders in Council of March 1 and March 15, 1915, which sought to cut off all trade with the Central Powers, but which did not declare a formal blockade of German and neutral ports, were a new inspiration for criticism on the part of the Omaha press. The World-Herald, considering the German submarine warfare declaration of February 18 and the latest Orders in Council, decided that "international law is dead." The Bee felt that "it looks as if the neutrals not willing to become involved in the war, can only let traffic between the enemy ports and neutral ports fall into the condition of blockade running..."<sup>3</sup>

On March 30, 1915, the United States sent a protest to London which opposed the claim by Britain that illegal acts by Germany authorized illegalities upon the high seas by the Allies as a means of combat. The American note asserted that United States vessels should be allowed to proceed to neutral ports if these ships did not carry

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<sup>2</sup>

Ibid., eds., December 7 and 30, 1914; The Omaha Daily Bee, eds., December 30, 1914, January 12, 1915.

<sup>3</sup>

Morning World-Herald, ed., March 17, 1915; The Omaha Daily Bee, ed., March 17, 1915.

contraband or goods ultimately destined to the Central Powers.<sup>4</sup>

The World-Herald felt that the American position was quite justified in regard to Britain, since the United Kingdom had inaugurated restrictions on non-contraband before Germany had initiated a war on commerce. The Hitchcock paper showed its opposition to the Mistress of the Seas in the comment that "naval despotism is as dangerous to the peace and rights of the world, as is military despotism. . . . If there is to be 'disarmament' following the war. . . it is just as essential that it apply to armament for the control of the sea as to armament for the control of the land."<sup>5</sup>

The Bee defended the March 30 note as being "... essentially firm, and fairly states a position that will always be tenable, because it is founded on principles of exact justice."<sup>6</sup>

The World-Herald reserved its fullest measure of condemnation for British interference in non-contraband traffic between the United States and other neutral nations. In charging further that British detention of non-contraband products bound from Germany to this country had caused a twelve million dollar loss to the American Government, it can be observed just how drastic English sea warfare could be denounced by the Hitchcock organ:

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<sup>4</sup> Alice M. Morrissey, The American Defense of Neutral Rights, 1914-1917 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1939), p. 85.

<sup>5</sup> Morning World-Herald, ed., April 7, 1915.

<sup>6</sup> The Omaha Daily Bee, ed., April 7, 1915.

English interference with the commerce of neutral nations in non-contraband goods is the assumption of a right over the seas, that if submitted to would prove more disastrous to the world than anything that Germany has done, how ever much her action is to be condemned. 7

The Bee, however, gave the impression that in the middle of 1915, following a reply to the American note of March 30, the neutral rights controversy with London was well under control. As the Bee pointed out, the situation was "... not acute, nor is it likely to become so." The Rosewater paper, although less outspoken than the World-Herald, still was critical of British interference with American non-contraband trade with Holland and Scandinavia. 8

On August 3, 1915, the State Department released a note from British Foreign Secretary Sir Edward Grey which stated once more that England was obliged to adapt her regulation of neutral commerce to the exigencies of modern warfare. This communication also asserted that Britain could rightfully regulate trade with the European neutrals in view of the fact that greatly increased American exports to these countries indicated that Germany was the ultimate destination of the goods. The British note cited American Civil War seizure of certain cargoes bound for the West Indies on the judgement that these shipments were, in effect, of Confederate ownership. 9

In regard to the latest missive from London, The Omaha Daily

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Morning World-Herald, ed., June 16, 1915.

8

The Omaha Daily Bee, eds., June 24 and 29, 1915. The British reply released June 25 admitted that 27 American merchantmen were being detained in United Kingdom ports, but asserted that these vessels were being detained for legitimate inspection purposes. See Morning World-Herald, June 25, 1915.

9

Morning World-Herald, August 4, 1915.

Bee held that the British blockade of northern European neutral ports was illegal since it had never been officially proclaimed and was also ineffective. The World-Herald asserted that Britain had never proved that the greatly increased exports to Holland and Scandinavia from the United States actually had gone to the Central Powers, whereas the application of this doctrine of continuous voyage by Union authorities during the Civil War was based upon established fact that certain goods seized en route to West Indian ports were of proven Confederate destination.<sup>10</sup>

The Omaha Daily News took a much different approach to British interference with American trade to the northern neutrals. The News cited the following Treasury Department export figures in assumption that a good share of the increase was bound for Germany:<sup>11</sup>

#### Value of Exports

August 1, 1913 to September 4, 1914		August 1, 1914 to September 4, 1915
To Denmark	\$ 6,730,814	\$45,122,214
To Norway	\$ 6,940,802	\$22,173,888
To Sweden	\$ 6,894,240	\$36,996,720
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Totals	\$20,065,856	\$104,292,822

The News pointed out that American exports to Germany during the period August 1, 1913 to September 4, 1915 had been valued at

<sup>10</sup>  
The Omaha Daily Bee, ed., August 4, 1915; Morning World-Herald, ed., August 5, 1915.

<sup>11</sup>

The Omaha Daily News, ed., September 27, 1915.

\$84, 918, 080 and that the increase in exports to the above-mentioned Scandinavian nations from August 1, 1914 to September 4, 1915 totaled \$84, 226, 966. This was the basis for the assumption by the News that in spite of British restrictions, American goods were reaching Germany. Thus the News concluded that "... mighty few folks in this country other than politicians are excited over England's blockade." <sup>12</sup>

When it was announced on August 17, 1915, that Great Britain had formally declared cotton as contraband, and that the American exports of that fibre to the European neutrals would be regulated according to pre-war export amounts to those nations, the World-Herald and The Omaha Daily Bee again raised the hue and cry. While the Bee was critical of the latest British restriction, the Hitchcock paper was more vitriolic when it contended that "the free and open waters of the world are thus coolly annexed as a part of the British empire, and the United States, like other countries, is expected to submit to a foreign overlordship of its proper, lawful, and neutral commerce." <sup>13</sup>

The Bee later saw domestic political implications in the cotton contraband declaration. When Secretary of the Treasury, William G. McAdoo, decreed that thirty million dollars in gold was to be deposited by the Federal Government in three southern Federal Reserve banks in order to prevent regional credit derangement from the British

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Ibid., ed., This attitude was reiterated a year later in the second of two News editorials concerning British interference with high seas rights. See ed., September 30, 1916.

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The Omaha Daily Bee, ed., August 18, 1915; Morning World-Herald, August 17; ed., August 18, 1915.

declaration, the Rosewater paper proclaimed that "the southern planters will be tenderly cared for, as they have been from the first by the present administration, the strength of which comes from the cotton growing states."<sup>14</sup>

The Omaha Daily News felt that the United States should not condemn Britain's latest move, since the Federal authorities had blockaded southern ports in the Civil War, thus interfering with English commerce at that time.<sup>15</sup>

While on June 24, the Bee had proclaimed that our controversy with Great Britain was "... not acute, nor is it likely to become so,"<sup>16</sup> continuing reports of interference with American trade by the United Kingdom led to the Bee protesting that the high seas had become "an English lake." Like the World-Herald earlier, the Bee asserted that presumption of German destination of goods sent to neutral European ports was the only criterion utilized in the British trade restrictions. The conclusion was drawn that "this condition is intolerable." In condemning Sir Edward Grey's diplomacy with the United States, the Rosewater oracle reached the peak of earlier World-Herald criticisms of English action when it commented that "if any kindly feeling for the Allies remains here, it is in spite of, rather than because of the actions of Great Britain."<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>14</sup>

The Omaha Daily Bee, ed., August 25, 1915.

<sup>15</sup>

The Omaha Daily News, ed., August 18, 1915.

<sup>16</sup>

Supra, p. 75.

<sup>17</sup>

The Omaha Daily Bee, eds., October 7 and 10, 1915.

On October 26, 1915, a lengthy note was sent to London which, in the name of all neutral nations, questioned the validity of British assertions of continuous voyage of goods from Scandinavia and Holland to Germany. In this respect, the American note also questioned the ultimate destination of British goods sent to the above European neutrals. The note challenged the British contention that shippers must seek redress in prize courts ( in which the United Kingdom Government set the remuneration to be awarded a shipper if his goods were seized before having recourse to diplomatic action). The existence of an ineffective and thus illegal blockade was also  
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 protested.

The World-Herald and The Omaha Daily Bee both praised the firm position taken by the Administration in the October 26 note. After condemning the British Government as being "arrogant" and "contemptuous" with respect to neutral rights, the World-Herald in a two column, three-quarter page length editorial entitled "Causes of the War of 1812" pointed out that the United States had once been constrained to fight with England over the question of American rights on the high seas. No assertions were made that such a conflict would occur again, but the Hitchcock paper let its readers know that Anglo-American relations were seriously strained. Neither the World-Herald nor the Bee expressed any ideas as to how British illegalities should be met, but the Hitchcock paper intimated that if the United States Navy were strengthened according to plan, a greater respect

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for neutral rights on the part of Britain might be promoted.

## Reaction to the British Blacklist and Allied

### Interference With American Mails

When the British Government published the names of some eighty American firms ( a release commonly known as the "blacklist" ) with whom British subjects were not allowed to do business, owing to trade with Germany or partial German ownership of these establishments, some criticism from the World-Herald and the Bee was noted.<sup>20</sup>

English interference with American mails received, however, much more condemnation from these papers than did "blacklisting."

Since the start of the war, the United Kingdom had engaged in a system of inspecting all mail that passed through British territory, even if the correspondence involved was bound from one neutral nation to another. After British extention of censorship of the mails to vessels touching at British ports, the United States, on January 4, 1916, protested this latest action, maintaining that mails aboard these ships never rightfully came under British control. This led to a long-delayed round of correspondence between the United States and France, who was also involved in the issue and spoke for Great Britain.<sup>21</sup>

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Morning World-Herald eds., November 8, 9 and 21, 1915; The Omaha Daily Bee, eds., November 9 and December 4, 1915. Significantly, no mention was made of a trade embargo to force belligerent acquiescence in neutral rights as had been mentioned in the preceeding spring. Supra, pp 44-46.

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The Omaha Daily Bee, eds., July 23, September 19, 1916; Morning World-Herald, ed., September 14, 1916.

21

Morrissey, op. cit., pp. 137-140.



The Omaha Daily Bee, which took the lead in the local denunciation of interference with neutral mails admitted the Allied right to inspect parcel post packages as did the American notes, but held that letters should not be subject to censorship when bound from one neutral country to another. The Bee noted that some thirteen million dollars in American securities destined from Holland to the United States had been detained owing to British suspicion of German ownership. The Rosewater paper felt that Britain was taking an undue advantage of the Bryan Anglo-American Treaty which provided for a one-year delay over a given controversy before hostilities could begin.

On May 24, 1916 a note from Washington to the Allies conceded to them the right to seize merchandise from first class mails, but reiterated American contentions against searching the mails of vessels in port. While the Bee said that the May 24 note "... is set in very plain terms," the paper later asserted, following an unsatisfactory reply from the Allies to Washington, that the Administration should follow a more determined policy in prosecuting Anglo-French incursions on American rights. With the 1916 election campaign in full swing, the Bee finally criticised the failure of American diplomacy in dealing with the Allies when it remarked that "the spineless foreign policy of the administration is in keeping with its career in other ways."

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The Omaha Daily Bee, eds., April 14 and 25, May 17, 1916.

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Morrissey, op. cit., pp. 138-139.

24

The Omaha Daily Bee, ed., September 19, 1916.

In the closing days of the first session of the Sixty-Fourth Congress, an Emergency Revenue Bill was enacted which was amended to permit the President to deny the use of the United States mail service to any nation interfering with mails bound to or from this country. This measure also permitted the President to levy an export embargo upon shipments to any nation blacklisting American firms. <sup>25</sup> Of this measure, the World-Herald solemnly stated that "it is a weapon not to be taken up except as a next-to-the-last resort-the last step, short of war, that will serve to protect our rights and assert our honor as an independent nation." <sup>26</sup> The Bee did not comment upon this measure.

Thus during 1915 and 1916, the World-Herald and The Omaha Daily Bee, although different politically, showed essentially the same attitudes in opposing British transgressions of American rights upon the seas, while The Omaha Daily News almost entirely ignored the issue.

#### The Ship Purchase Bills

Upon the outbreak of the war, a sudden dislocation of maritime commerce took place when German shipping, amounting to some five million tons, was interned in neutral and home ports so as to avoid Allied capture. Added to this, neutral vessels were hesitant to ply their normal trade due to the possibility of seizure by both belligerents.

To meet the problem Congress enacted an Administration measure in September, 1914 which created a government-operated War Risk

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<sup>25</sup>

Morning World-Herald, September 6, 1916.

<sup>26</sup>

Ibid., ed., September 14, 1916.

Insurance Bureau, which was designed to encourage the small American commercial fleet to operate as usual. Later, a bill to admit interned German and other foreign-owned vessels to United States registry failed in Congress, owing to a widespread recognition that the unratified Declaration of London held such transfers during wartime to be invalid.<sup>27</sup> Even before this bill backed by the President had been defeated in the last days of the second session of the Sixty-Third Congress, widespread agitation in favor of a merchant fleet operated by the United States Government was noticeable.

In Omaha, The Omaha Daily News was the sole protagonist of such a fleet. The News stated that a government-operated fleet would be to the benefit of the American people in peace as well as during wartime. Showing its inherent suspicion to great wealth, the News proclaimed that the established shipping interests of the nation would oppose a government merchant marine in order that they might "escape the payment of white mens wages to their sailors."<sup>28</sup>

The Omaha Daily News impressed upon its readers the trade opportunities that it felt were to be gained from an expanded commercial fleet, partially under government operation. It pointed out that during the 1913-1914 fiscal year, American exports to South America had been valued at \$347 million while the total from Europe had been \$965 million. With Germany cut off from her export markets and Britain and France burdened with war production needs, the News

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Morrissey, op. cit., pp. 9-11.

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The Omaha Daily News, eds., August 22 and 26, December 27, 1914.

asserted that, the United States by means of a government fleet, should capture the bulk of the South American trade and expand its business in the Orient.<sup>29</sup> The comparatively small size of the American merchant marine was illustrated in a News editorial which said that as of November 24, 1914, ninety foreign-built, but American-owned vessels had been transferred to United States registry thus doubling the size of the American commercial fleet. This, said the News, brought our marine to a meagre 624,351 tons compared to 9,824,597 tons for that of the United Kingdom. Thus an increased demand for American goods occasioned by the war, was cited by the News as a prime reason<sup>30</sup> for building a government merchant marine.

On December 9, 1914, Senator William Stone of Missouri introduced S. 6865, a bill which provided for the creation of a government fleet corporation with an initial operational fund of ten million dollars to be granted by the federal treasury. While the Federal Government was to own fifty one per cent of the stock of this corporation, the balance was to be sold in one-hundred dollar shares to private buyers. The Stone Bill further provided that the government shipping corporation would be under the ex officio direction of the Secretary of the Treasury, the Secretary of Commerce, and the Postmaster-General.

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<sup>29</sup>

Ibid., eds., August 28, September 5 and October 8, 1914.

<sup>30</sup>

Ibid., eds., December 1 and 9, 1914. For example, Commerce Department figures revealed that American agricultural exports were valued at \$443 million for the eleven months ending June 1, 1914, but for the eleven month period up to June 1, 1915, were valued at \$724 million. Wheat exports had been 164 million bushels during the earlier period, but were 249,576,000 bushels during the later period. See Morning World-Herald, July 3, 1915.

This group would also supervise the spending of thirty million dollars in Panama Canal bonds for the purpose of buying or building vessels to be used by the government fleet.<sup>31</sup>

The reaction to the Stone Bill by the Omaha press was quite varied. The Omaha Daily Bee said that "the democrats have now an opportunity to atone for the blunder of the canal tolls, and under the spur of the president's influence, may clear the way for the reappearance of the American-built and American-owned vessel in the seaways of the world."<sup>32</sup>

The Omaha Daily News continued its support of a government merchant marine when it asserted that such was needed to lower rising ocean freight rates and would provide work for many men who were now unemployed. The News did not fail to castigate Senator Henry C. Lodge and Theodore Burton, who were among the leading opponents of the Stone Bill. At the same time the News firmly opposed a Senate bill providing for a subsidy to existing private companies.<sup>33</sup>

At first, the World-Herald supported the Stone Bill. It was pointed out editorially that the volume of American exports had increased fifty per cent in the past six months and that the cost of shipping a bushel of wheat from New York to Liverpool had risen from four to five cents in July, 1914, to sixteen to seventeen cents in December of that year. Thus a government shipping agency was said to be

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Congressional Record, 63 Cong. 3rd sess., pp. 46, 908.

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The Omaha Daily Bee, ed., January 6, 1915.

33

The Omaha Daily News, eds., January 6, 17, 24 and 31, 1915.

necessary to relieve an increased volume of traffic and to hold the  
 line on booming shipping rates.<sup>34</sup>

Soon, however, Senator Hitchcock shifted to the opposition since the Stone Bill did not provide for a time limit for the existence of the proposed government merchant marine. On February 10, the World-Herald asserted that an expenditure of thirty million dollars to develop a government fleet would provide only an insignificant amount of vessels needed. If any ships were purchased which were already in use, no benefit would be derived, while the purchase of interned ships might lead to diplomatic complications. The Hitchcock paper concluded that "the issue is so momentous and far-reaching that it would seem [that] its decision should be preceded by discussion and vote by the people themselves — by the acid test of a political campaign."<sup>35</sup> It was also stated that the bill was contrary to the wishes of President Wilson, who favored only a temporary measure which would not compete with private shipping, once ocean commerce was able to offer reasonable rates after the government had fostered overseas trade by demonstrating that certain unprofitable traffic routes could be made remunerative.<sup>36</sup>

The Omaha Daily News took Senator Hitchcock to task for opposing the Stone Bill. It charged that Hitchcock was enrolled in the ranks of

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Morning World-Herald, ed., January 11, 1915. See also Congressional Record, 64 Cong. 1st sess., pp. 13435 et seq.

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Morning World -Herald, eds., February 7, 10 and 11, 1915.

36

Ibid., ed., February 13, 1915.

reactionaries and favored a subsidy to existing interests. As the News put it, "Mr. Hitchcock stands shoulder to shoulder with Tammany and with the old Bourbons from the sugar and whiskey trust states, the same old gang that used always to train with Aldrich." <sup>37</sup>

When a combination of a majority of Senate Republicans and a few Democrats prevented the Stone Bill from coming to a vote, The Omaha Daily Bee charged the President with undue partisanship and refusal to permit modification of the measure as being responsible for its failure. The World-Herald maintained that a government merchant fleet would not provide the ships needed to carry our increasing commerce. Instead, the failure of many British merchantmen to leave port for fear of German submarine attack was said to be the cause of excessive ocean freight rates:

If English ships refuse to take the chance [of submarine attack] why should we spend \$50,000,000 for the opportunity to take the chance ourselves, and in doing so probably buy a war into the bargain? <sup>38</sup>

The Hitchcock paper also stated that private enterprise was answering the need for ocean-going bottoms since nine ship yards on the Atlantic coast were currently constructing forty-eight vessels with fifty more under contract. "Self-help is the American way..." was the terse remark with which the World-Herald concluded its

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<sup>37</sup>

The Omaha Daily News, ed., February 4 and 5, 1915.

<sup>38</sup>

The Omaha Daily Bee, eds., February 11 and 16, 1915;  
Morning World-Herald, ed., March 10, 1915.

attack on the corpse of the Stone Bill.

The News, in view of the failure of the Stone Bill, asserted that the measure had been circumvented because of "large, juicy graft" obtained by the opponents of the proposed legislation. In support of this serious contention, the News merely noted that since the outbreak of war, trans-Atlantic grain shipping rates had risen two hundred per cent from Norfolk, and three hundred per cent from New York, while the rate on cotton from Galveston had increased two hundred and seventy  
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five per cent during this period.

After the failure of the Stone Bill to come to a vote in the short session, there was only isolated mention made of the government merchant fleet issue in the Omaha press. The News asserted that the Lusitania sinking showed the need for such a fleet in that both Germany and Britain would be constrained to respect the rights of American vessels on the high seas, especially if these ships were operated by the United States Government. The World-Herald again pointed to a growing private American fleet which it said had grown from 1,076,152 to 1,813,775 tons during the fiscal year 1914 - 1915. Thus the Hitchcock paper reemphasized its belief that the efforts of  
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private enterprise were meeting American shipping needs.

On May 8, 1916, Representative Joshua W. Alexander of Missouri introduced an administration - backed measure ( H. R. 15455 ) which

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Morning World-Herald, ed., March 9, 1915.

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The Omaha Daily News, eds., February 11 and 20, 1915.

41

The Omaha Daily News, ed., May 20, 1915; Morning World-Herald, eds., September 3, November 18, 1915 and May 4, 1916.



was much like the Stone Bill, except that it provided that a Government Shipping Board should lease vessels to private operators wherever possible, a provision not included in the earlier legislation. The Alexander Bill passed the House by a 209 to 161 vote and in the Senate by a 38 to 21 tally and was signed by President Wilson in the closing days of the Congressional session.<sup>42</sup>

The Omaha papers practically ignored the Alexander Bill. The Bee held that proposed legislation concerning a merchant fleet was a Democratic ruse to deceive the people in the coming election. It later told its farmer readers that their tax money would be used to build a government merchant marine which would haul South American agricultural products to the United States thus offering competition with home-produced foodstuffs.<sup>43</sup> The World-Herald never commented on the question, while the News printed only one feature editorial which reiterated its earlier praises of a government fleet.<sup>44</sup>

Hence, by the summer of 1916, much more pressing questions, such as the preparedness issue and the election campaign, had reduced the merchant marine question to insignificance in the Omaha papers, in strong contrast to the prominence accorded it in the early months of the war.

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Congressional Record, 64 Cong. 1st sess., pp. 7618, 7752, 8356-57, 8374-75, 12824-25, 13419-64. Three Nebraska Representatives ( Lobeck, Shallenberger, and Stephens ) voted for the Alexander Bill and three ( Kincaid, Reavis, and Sloan ) voted against it. In the Senate, Hitchcock and Norris did not vote on the measure.

43

The Omaha Daily Bee, eds., February 1 and June 2, 1916.

44

The Omaha Daily News, ed., March 1, 1916.

## War Credits and Loans

The question of belligerent war bond sales, loans to the warring nations, and purchase credits in the United States was a significant factor in the maintenance of neutrality during the years 1914 and 1915. In August, 1914, Secretary of State Bryan had put the open disapproval of the Federal Government upon monetary loans to nations at war as being "the worst of all contrabands," while Senator Gilbert M. Hitchcock introduced a bill to prohibit the securities of foreign governments from being sold, purchased, or delivered in the United States. While both measures sought to further implement the strict preservation of American neutrality, the Hitchcock Bill was also designed "to keep at home the capital which may be otherwise drained to foreign countries during a war."<sup>45</sup>

Oddly enough the bill introduced by Senator Hitchcock was not commented upon by the World-Herald while Congress was still in session. The Omaha Daily Bee, however, asserted that foreign nations had a right to sell war bonds or seek war loans in this nation, although the paper admitted that for the benefit of the national economy it was most desirable that American capital should seek an outlet at home.<sup>46</sup>

When the World-Herald did comment upon the Hitchcock Bill, the proposed legislation was a dead letter since it had not been re-introduced into the 1914-1915 short session of Congress. Arguing

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Morrissey, *op. cit.*, pp. 21-22; Congressional Record, 63 rd Cong., 2nd sess., p. 13962. The Hitchcock Bill (S. 6341), was never reported from the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

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The Omaha Daily Bee, ed., August 19, 1914.

against war loans on economic grounds, the World-Herald said that "there is a great need for capital in this country, for railroads, for developing mines, for the extension of agriculture, and if the capital necessary for that work is sent out of the country instead of being invested in it, progress must stop."<sup>47</sup> When the New York Sun stated that the defunct Hitchcock Bill could only serve "... to deprive the United States of... the legitimate benefits that flow from the war..." the World-Herald replied that "for every penny we gain in profits on munitions, or in interest on a loan, we are losing dollars in deranged business, deranged commerce, universal apprehension and uncertainty,<sup>48</sup> and in turning our rich and profitable customers into bankrupts." The World-Herald proclaimed that the Hitchcock Bill was merely an attempt to write into law the position maintained by Bryan, and was thus part of the Democratic credo. While never doubting the wisdom of government prohibition or disapproval of loans to belligerents, the Hitchcock paper lamented that "... it is no use to appeal to a Wall street [sic.] bankers patriotism. He will put his money where he will get the highest rate of interest."<sup>49</sup>

The administration opposition to loans to belligerents by American citizens or corporations broke down later in the summer of 1915. On August 13, the House of Morgan discontinued its support of the British pound, thus causing the exchange value of United Kingdom currency to fall rapidly. At the insistence of Secretary of the Treasury William G.

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Morning World-Herald, ed., December 2, 1914.

48

Ibid., ed., December 18, 1914.

49

Ibid., eds., December 23, 1914 and April 14, 1915.

McAdoo and Secretary of State Robert Lansing, President Wilson was brought to agree that the maintenance of the American export business and thus, to a large extent, the national prosperity, depended upon governmental acquiescence in the raising of large Allied loans in this country. Soon, therefore, an Anglo-French deputation arrived in New York with the result that a half billion dollar credit was arranged by a banking syndicate headed by the Morgans. This credit for Allied purchases in the United States bore five per cent interest and was sold to the Morgan group at 96 per cent of par. It was then offered to the public at 98 per cent.

The World-Herald, in viewing the large Allied loan being arranged, said that since the British Government could not induce its own citizens to sell their American securities and invest the money thus derived in war bonds, it was necessary for England to turn to America to obtain enough credit to finance the war. The World-Herald felt that if the Anglo-French credit were secured it would force extensive rediscounts of domestic paper, thus impairing American industrial business and agricultural expansion. It was hinted that such a loan would also threaten domestic tranquility. As the Hitchcock organ put it,

A loan of such magnitude would involve, directly and indirectly, the industrial, commercial, and financial interests of this country in [ a ] very keen concern as to the outcome of the war. It would mean buying an interest in the war. 51

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Morrissey, op. cit., pp. 95-98; Morning World-Herald September 4, 14, and 16, 1915.

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Morning World-Herald, ed., September 15, 1915. See also issues of September 16, 1916 and December 21, 1916. While the

The World-Herald hastened to assure the American farmer that rumors to the effect that the Allies would switch their heavy agricultural purchases to Canada, Argentina, and Egypt unless a loan was granted were pure nonsense, since only the United States had the credit resources available to finance these purchases. <sup>52</sup>

The News took a similar position to that of the World-Herald on the foreign bond and loan question. It viewed the proposed credit as a poor business risk, in view of the increasing war debt in all belligerent nations. <sup>53</sup> The News also feared that foreign bond sales would increase war tension in the United States. As it commented, "the holder of a \$100 Franco-British war bond will be as ardent a sympathizer with the allies as is J. P. Morgan himself. . . . For where a man's money is, there is also his heart." The News warned its readers that since many savings banks and insurance companies had invested in the recent Anglo-French credit, the public was being forced to indirectly buy a share in the war. <sup>54</sup>

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World-Herald counseled its readers against "buying a share in the war." It published an advertisement on November 17, 1915 by the Zimmermann and Forshay Company of New York which offered five per cent German bonds for public sale. On August 22 and 23, 1916, it published advertisements by J. P. Morgan, et al, offering a quarter billion dollar issue of two year, five per cent United Kingdom bonds. On October 30, 1916 a Morgan advertisement two-thirds of a page in size appeared in the World Herald offering three hundred dollars in 5½ per cent British bonds. Since the World-Herald refused to publish medical advertising, which it deemed detrimental to the public welfare, it is difficult to understand why these bond advertisements were accepted, in view of the editorial position taken by the paper.

<sup>52</sup>

Ibid., ed., September 15, 1915.

<sup>53</sup>

The Omaha Daily News, ed., September 16, 1915.

<sup>54</sup>

Ibid., ed., October 4, 1915.

The Bee put forth a defense of the credit to Britain and France thus taking a different position from that assumed by the World-Herald and the News. The Bee cited James J. Hill as having said that the proposed loan to the Allies was a necessity if the United States expected to sell its four-hundred million bushel export wheat crop. As the Rosewater journal put it: "facts and not sentiment will guide the negotiations for the loan to the Allies and the farmer who owns the wheat need not worry."<sup>55</sup>

#### The Entrance of Italy and Rumania into the Conflict

When Italy declared war on Austria-Hungary on May 23, 1915, the Omaha papers once more revealed that they doubted the holiness of the Allied cause. The Omaha Daily News pointed out that the chief desire of Italy in the war was to unite the province of Trentino in the alpine north and the province of Istria on the Adriatic with the Italian kingdom, owing to a nationalistic desire to set all Italians under one domain. The News prophetically stated that "by regaining the lost provinces, Italy not only realizes its most ardent aspirations but cripples Austria so that she will never in all probability figure as an important factor in central Europe [an] politics." Much later the News asserted that the entrance of Italy into the war bore "the taint of treachery" toward her former alliance partners and that she had been of no particular aid to the Allies in the Serbian or Dardanelles

campaigns.

The Omaha Daily Bee likewise hinted that Italian entrance into the war against Austria showed her ingratitude to her ex-allies ( Austria and Germany ) since Italy, as a member of the Dreibund, had drawn the major, if not the sole benefits from this three-decade old.  
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alliance.

The World-Herald, in view of reports of mass demonstrations in Rome in favor of Italy's entering the war, said with disallusionment that "in Italy, instead of a wicked king forcing his innocent and peaceful people into line to serve as cannon fodder, we beheld the innocent people demanding that the wicked king either feed them to the  
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cannon or get off the throne." The World-Herald also frowned upon Italy's having allegedly encouraged cotton shipments from the United States to Austria and Germany by way of Italian ports for the purpose of confiscating the material in large quantities when the almost-certain war with the Dual Monarchy was declared. As the World-Herald put it, "to hold a semi-neutral position until she got a considerable part of the cotton of the world and then confiscate it, was along a questionable  
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line of action."

After Rumania cast her lot with the Allies, on August 27, 1916,

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The Omaha Daily News, ed., May 25, 1915 and May 29, 1916.

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The Omaha Daily Bee, ed., May 8, 1915.

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Morning World-Herald, ed., May 19, 1915. See also ed. of April 16, 1916.

59

Ibid., ed., May 31, 1915.

the World-Herald ( the News and the Bee ignored this extension of the war ) asserted that this was only another case of desire for

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territorial acquisition. When the World-Herald extended its comments beyond the entrance of Rumania into the war, it succinctly stated what it thought of the aims of the belligerents in general:

Great Britain with her heel on prostrate Ireland is no longer the champion of small nations. Germany is frankly greedy for the valuable mineral and farm and oil lands her armies have acquired. France is thirsting for Alsace-Lorraine, and eastern Europe makes no further pretense except devotion to the doctrine that he shall seize who has the power and he shall hold who can. . . . It was Serbian plotting with Russian encouragement against Austria with German backing, that kindled the first flame of war. All were playing for the other fellow's property. 61

#### Relief to War Victims

From the start of the war the Omaha press showed sympathy for the peoples of Belgium, northern France, Poland, and Syria who had undergone extraordinary hardships as a result of the conflict. In the autumn of 1914 the Bee led a local drive to collect toys and clothing and money to be sent to the people of Belgium for Christmas.

62

All three papers endorsed the work of Herbert Hoover's Belgium Relief Commission and related organizations, such as the American Red Cross which were working in the war-torn areas on the western front. Relief efforts in Poland were also endorsed with the World-Herald sharply criticising the British Government for its prevention of relief shipments from the United States to Poland on

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The Omaha Daily Bee, ed., August 29, 1916; Morning World-Herald, ed., August 29, 1916.

61

Morning World-Herald, ed., August 29, 1916.

62

The Omaha Daily Bee, ed., October 28, 1914, et passim.



the grounds that these might be used to further the efforts of the  
 63  
 German military occupation. Thus were all the Omaha papers in  
 sympathy with the various attempts to reduce the sufferings of war  
 and urged their readers to contribute to the charitable organizations  
 created for such a purpose.

### The Easter Rebellion

In the last days of April and the first several days of May, 1916,  
 some twelve thousand Larkinites and Sein Fein radical protagonists  
 of Irish independence in Dublin rose in armed rebellion against Great  
 64  
 Britain. The suppression of this revolt led to editorial comment in  
 the Omaha World-Herald which was a significant factor in explaining  
 the coolness of that paper toward the British Government during the  
 period of American neutrality. In mid-May, after 15 Dublin rebels had  
 been executed, the World-Herald was moved to comment that

by ruthlessness, at a time when it [the British Government]  
 is fighting the greatest war of all time in behalf, it asserts, of the  
 right of small nations to enjoy liberty and independence, it has  
 centered attention on the inconsistency of its professions with its  
 intolerance for the love of freedom that burns in Irish the same as  
 in other breasts. 65

After Sir Roger Casement, leader of the Easter Rebellion, had  
 been hanged, the Hitchcock journal said that

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Morning World-Herald, ed., February 8, 1915, February 9,  
 1916; The Omaha Daily Bee, eds., September 26, November 7, 1915,  
 and December 9, 1915; The Omaha Daily News, eds., June 17 and July  
 23, 1916.

64

Morning World-Herald, April 27, 28, 29, and May 2, 1916;  
Sunday World-Herald, April 30, 1916.

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Morning World-Herald, ed., May 15, 1916.

the sympathy of lovers of liberty the world over has gone out to Casement and other Irishmen who were executed following that ill-fated and ill-timed insurrection.... The feeling of the Irish rebels was the feeling of our own "rebels" of 1776.... It is the same feeling that is still to be found in parts of Schleswig-Holstein and Alsace-Lorraine against the German Government. 66

Thus the heavy-handed British suppression of the Irish revolt in May, 1916, by no means endeared the cause of England to the Omaha press.

### The Coming of the Deutschland

One of the most interesting and dramatic incidents that transpired during this period of American neutrality was the arrival at the port of Baltimore on July 9, 1916, of the North German Lloyd cargo submarine, Deutschland, with a 750 ton cargo of dyestuffs. All three Omaha papers praised the sixteen day, 3800 mile voyage from Bremen ( only a few hundred miles of which were actually made under water ) as exemplifying the technological wonders of modern Germany.

The World-Herald had hopes that a partial commerce with Germany could be restored, while The Omaha Daily News ran a feature editorial by Simon Lake, the inventor of the submarine, who said that "successful inauguration of a line or lines of undersea boats will...make the allies more amenable to peace terms." The Omaha Daily Bee criticised the Allies for asserting that the United States

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Ibid., ed., August 4, 1916. The Omaha Daily Bee took an indefinite position on the Easter Rebellion, but had hoped that clemency would be accorded Casement. See eds., of May 19 and July 1, 1916.

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Morning World-Herald, July 10, 11, and 12, 1916.

68

Ibid., ed., July 11, 1916; The Omaha Daily News, ed., July 20, 1916.

Government should classify the cargo U-boat as a warship, even if it did not carry guns or gun mountings. The Rosewater journal, like the World-Herald and the News, openly expressed a desire that Captain Koenig's vessel would make the return voyage to Germany safely, thus avoiding the British warships which were waiting to attack the Deutschland, as it entered the high seas off the Chesapeake Bay. The Bee summarized the local press attitudes in the remark that "the sinking of a thousand ships by torpedoes would not have elevated the U-boat as has the one voyage of the Deutschland." Significantly many of the editorials cited had a rather gleeful tone as a result of this submarine having eluded the mighty British Navy. <sup>69</sup>

#### Chapter Conclusion

The fact that both the Democratic World-Herald and the Republican Bee were quite firm and on occasion vehement in their denunciations of the British Government for its extralegal treatment of American commerce with Scandinavia and Germany, indicates that these newspapers were by no means convinced of the alleged holiness of the Allied cause. This point can be noted to a lesser extent in scattered comments by these journals in regard to the matter of the Rumanian entrance into the war, the sending of relief to Poland, the suppression of the Easter Rebellion, and the Allied view toward the cargo submarine Deutschland. While The Omaha Daily News discounted the controversy with Britain over the rights of neutrals on

the high seas, it cannot be asserted that this paper which constantly proclaimed itself to be the voice of the masses, ignored the question.

The World-Herald found itself in opposition to the administration when it stood against the ship purchase program. With the Bee following the lead of the Republican Party in opposing these measures, the independent News was the only local voice of the Administration on this question.

The World-Herald, in not changing its editorial stand on the question of loans to belligerents, again found itself in opposition to the final policy adopted by the Wilson government. In light of the fact that the Hitchcock paper said that investment in belligerent securities would constitute "buying a share in the war," The World-Herald was, through its advertising, put in the quite hypocritical position of selling shares in the war. Indeed, the opposition of the News seemed to possess an element of intellectual honesty not present in the World-Herald.

CHAPTER VI  
ATTITUDES TOWARDS  
THE  
PREPAREDNESS MOVEMENT

Preliminary Views, 1915

In the latter half of the year 1915, a new word, "preparedness," gradually entered the American vocabulary. Not until the commencement of German submarine warfare in February, 1915, had the nation been confronted with the prospect that a day might eventually arrive when it would be constrained to abandon its neutrality and enter the conflict in order to uphold its traditional maritime rights. As months passed by, incident upon incident, chargeable to both the Entente and the Central Powers, transpired upon the high seas, the sum total of which formed the substance of the motivation of the "preparedness," or national defense movement.

The fact that the preparedness movement was quite gradual in its development could be noted in the spirit of relative tranquility in which the Omaha press dealt with the Lusitania incident. The World-Herald, seeking to allay any fears that its readers might have concerning the possible invasion of the United States by an unnamed foreign power, pointed out that three thousand miles of water guarded our shores from European attack and five thousand miles protected us from Asia. Thus the World-Herald concluded that "no European nation is going to invade this country, not at least for the next fifty years." <sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Morning World-Herald, ed., May 29, 1915; Sunday World-Herald, ed., May 28, 1915.

Soon, however, with increasing discussion in high government circles of a need for a program of national defense, the World-Herald ceased to consider the immediate likelihood of this country being attacked and gradually evolved a position on the preparedness question. As early as July 26, 1915, the World-Herald endorsed Secretary of War Lindley M. Garrison's preparedness program which had been outlined in the New York World. This plan, which would authorize a regular army increase from the existing 87,000 man maximum to a 140,000 man peak and increase the National Guard to 270,000 men from a force of 120,000 men, was viewed by the Hitchcock journal as "reasonable" and by no means militaristic. Later, the World-Herald denounced a number of eastern newspapers that advocated a large defense program costing one-half billion dollars as contrasted to a much smaller outlay involved in Garrison's plan for moderate preparedness.<sup>2</sup> The World-Herald perhaps saw the prospect of pork-barrel benefits when it advocated that a volunteer citizens' training camp, such as was attaining prominence at Plattsburg, New York, be established at either Fort Omaha or Fort Crook.<sup>3</sup>

The Bee likewise took a stand in favor of moderate preparedness. It asserted that American defense needs were between the conception expressed on occasion by William J. Bryan that a million men could be raised for an army in one day and the attitude of Major-General Leonard Wood that the volunteer army system was a failure. The

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<sup>2</sup> Morning World-Herald, eds., July 26 and September 6, 1915.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., ed., August 24, 1915.

Rosewater paper admitted that an enlarged army and navy were needed, but felt that at present the United States had the nucleus of an adequate system.<sup>4</sup>

When the North Atlantic Fleet staged a naval demonstration for the Convention of Governors meeting at Boston, the Bee suspected that Secretary of the Navy Josephus Daniels was the Administration tool behind a move to identify the Democratic Party as being solely responsible for a vitally-needed defense program.<sup>5</sup> Hence, it became obvious at an early date that preparedness would not be divested of its political implications.

The Omaha Daily News was suspicious of the preparedness movement from its inception. The local penny paper condemned great military expenditures as well as the sea defense demands of the Navy League. The News supported an idea expounded by Senator George W. Norris that the Federal Government should take over the production of arms and ammunition needed by the nation for defense. As the News put it, "the United States can nip American Kruppism in the bud by refusing to allow national defense to become a means of private profit."<sup>6</sup> Later in the fall, the News asserted in a feature editorial by Representative Clyde Tavenner of Illinois that such organizations as the

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<sup>4</sup> The Omaha Sunday Bee, ed., June 6, 1915; The Omaha Daily Bee, eds., July 12 and August 16, 1915.

<sup>5</sup> The Omaha Daily Bee ed., August 30, 1915.

<sup>6</sup> The Omaha Daily News, eds., June 17 and July 30, 1915.

Bethlehem Steel Corporation and the House of Morgan had direct interests in the continuance of the war and in a large defense program. It was then reiterated that the government should safeguard the nation's peace by manufacturing its own war goods.<sup>7</sup>

The World-Herald took a similar view point toward the matter of provision of war materials necessary in a preparedness program. Pointing to a dispatch from Dover stating that in one day three munitions manufacturing firms with a total capitalization of over a quarter of a billion dollars had been incorporated in Delaware, the World-Herald asserted that such an industry could only be of long term harm to the nation. In support of comments by Senator Hitchcock favoring a nationalization of the munitions industry, the World-Herald stated that if this step were taken, the nation could safely embark upon a preparedness program without fearing that vested interests would be created which profited through the perpetuation of defense measures. As the World-Herald succinctly stated, "war is always a national, never a private enterprise."<sup>8</sup>

The Omaha Daily Bee took a somewhat more moderate position on the munitions question as witnessed by the following remarks:

... there can be no serious dissent... that the pecuniary motive for inflating the preparedness program, or for embroiling the country in war, must be reduced to the very minimum by every reasonable precaution. It will be well for the government to do for itself, and for whatever it must buy from private concerns it should certainly pay no greater price than the cost if manufactured for [sic. by] itself. But neither should the government be put in a position where it cannot supplement its own production by outside purchases when required.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup>  
Ibid., ed., October 23, 1915.

<sup>8</sup>  
Morning World-Herald, eds., September 7 and November 17, 1915.

<sup>9</sup>  
The Omaha Daily Bee, ed., November 18, 1915.



In the fall of 1915, the Administration developed a program for a "continental army" which would supplement the regular army and the National Guard. The continental force aimed at raising four hundred thousand volunteers in three years at the rate of 133,000 men per year. The "continentals" would serve two months out of each year for a three-year period and then would be placed on a reserve status for another three years.

The World-Herald immediately endorsed the continental army plan as an example of moderate and rational preparedness. The Hitchcock paper stated that,

We are asked to teach our citizens that this is their republic, theirs to protect as well as to enjoy. By teaching them the hardships and privations of camp and field, by bringing it home to them that these, and the attendant sufferings and dangers would devolve on them individually in case of war, we will be going far to insure against the fanning of the flames of war, in times of stress and excitement by our own people.

The Bee utilized President Wilson's speech in New York on November 4 which expounded the plan for a continental force as the occasion for a political attack on the Democratic Party. As the Rosewater oracle put it,

The threatening complications with foreign nations are no more acute and the probability of this nation being involved in the great war is negligible. . . . The president's [ sic. ] sudden zeal for placing the United States in a state of preparedness is a confession that all these years the democratic party [ sic. ] has been wrong and that the republicans have been right in standing for an adequate

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Morning World-Herald, ed., October 19, 1915; Woodrow Wilson, The New Democracy; Presidential Messages, Addresses and Other Papers, 1913-1917, ed. Ray Stannard Baker and William E. Dodd ( New York: Harper and Brothers, 1926 ), I, pp. 387-388.

11

Morning World-Herald, eds., October 19 and 28, 1915.

12

Ibid., ed., November 6, 1915.

navy and army at least sufficient for a nucleus of the needs of war times. <sup>13</sup>

The Bee wondered just how the nation was going to pay for a moderate program of preparedness after it had charged that the Democrats had converted a revenue surplus of eighty-five million dollars at the end of the Taft Administration into an existing deficit of seventy-five million dollars. <sup>14</sup>

The Omaha Daily News disapproved of the continental army plan since it felt that such a program would be detrimental to American industry because of the men it would remove from productive endeavor each year. It was further stated that employers might discriminate against workers who had enlisted in such a program. The News scoffed at the possibility that the United States could conceivably be invaded and asserted that it would take five hundred transports and a thousand warships to convey a potent invading force to our shores. <sup>15</sup> The News supported its arguments against a comprehensive preparedness program when it noted that with the loss of seventy-five naval craft by Germany during the first ten months of war, the United States unquestionably possessed the second largest navy in the world. <sup>16</sup>

On December 7, 1915, President Wilson delivered his third annual message to Congress in which he summarized the Administration requests for preparedness. In addition to the program for increasing the regular army and creating a continental force as noted above,

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<sup>13</sup>

The Omaha Daily Bee, ed., November 6, 1915.

<sup>14</sup>

The Omaha Daily Bee, ed., October 28, 1915.

<sup>15</sup>

The Omaha Daily News, eds., October 20 and November 6, 1915.

<sup>16</sup>

Ibid., ed., October 28, 1915.

the President asked for a considerable increase in naval strength. This included the recruitment of 7,500 sailors, 2,500 apprentice seamen and the construction within five years of ten dreadnaughts, six battle-cruisers, ten scout-cruisers, fifty destroyers and one hundred submarines. Four squadrons of airplanes were also requested.

The World-Herald, which had recently denounced Theodore Roosevelt as being the leader of the jingoes after he had criticised Wilson's program of neutrality, endorsed the preparedness plan placed before Congress. The Bee also supported the Administration defense program and asserted that the Congressional advocates of preparedness would be divided from the pacifists on non-partisan lines.

The News felt that the President was voicing the will of the people, but not the right people, when he proposed a preparedness program to Congress. The local vox populi said,

We believe... that he [Wilson] has erred—that he has taken the vociferous and hysterical cry of the eastern coast section, aided by the expansionists and by those who will financially benefit, as an expression of sentiment from the average citizenship of the United States. 19

The News felt that since this country was at peace with all the world, the public would view a preparedness program as an "expensive luxury and as an unnecessary expenditure of money" which would weigh most heavily upon those of modest means.

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Wilson, op. cit., I, pp. 412, 414.

18

Morning World-Herald, eds., December 4, 5 and 28, 1915;  
The Omaha Daily Bee, ed., December 8, 1915.

19

The Omaha Daily News, ed., December 8, 1915.

20

Ibid., ed.

Thus as the year 1915 ended, the Omaha newspapers had evolved some basic attitudes toward the question of national defense. In 1916, these attitudes solidified, except on the part of the News as it will be seen, into the patterns which had already developed.

### The Resignation of Garrison

When the newly-assembled Congress demonstrated an intention not to accept Secretary of War Garrison's plan for a continental army, and did not look with favor upon his advocacy of universal military service, a near impasse was created between the Administration and Congress. This potential stalemate which imperiled the future of the preparedness program, was broken on February 10, 1916, when  
21  
Garrison resigned.

The World-Herald told its readers that President Wilson opposed Garrison's plans for universal service and that it was best that the latter had resigned rather than jeopardize the defense program. It was also pointed out that Wilson's opposition to universal service indicated that he had no militaristic leanings; thus his position on the preparedness movement was quite close to the midwestern desire for moderation  
22  
in a defense plan.

The Omaha Daily Bee, which had earlier reproached Garrison for overemphasizing the nation's lack of military strength, took the opportunity offered by his resignation to criticize President Wilson. After charging that Wilson had made himself inaccessible to his cabinet

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Morning World-Herald, February 11, 1916.

22

Ibid., eds., February 12 and 19, 1916.

officers, the Bee stated that,

It must be his [ Wilson's ] self-styled one-track mind which cannot run along smoothly with any other mind that has an individuality of its own [that caused Garrison's resignation]. The break emphasizes the utter lack of team work, essential to administrative efficiency and successful steering of the ship of state. 23

The Omaha Daily News did not commit itself on the resignation of the Secretary of War, but merely said that Garrison had created an interest in military affairs on the part of the American people. 24

### Views Toward the Army and Navy Preparedness

#### Programs Formulated by Congress

The military aspects of the preparedness movement were to be based upon a bill introduced in the House of Representatives by James Hay, a Virginia Democrat, and upon a measure put before the Senate by Oregon Democrat George Chamberlain.

The Hay Bill, adopted in the House by a 402 to 2 vote on March 23, 1916, provided for a regular army increase from 100,000 to 140,000 men with 7,045 officers being added to raise the total to 2,090. The National Guard was to be placed under more federal control and would be recruited to a level of 425,000 men over a five-year period. Provision for a college Reserve Officer's Training Corps ( ROTC ) of 50,000 men was also included in the House bill as was a summer training camp program for volunteers. 25

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23  
The Omaha Daily Bee, eds., December 31, 1915 and February 12, 1916.

24  
The Omaha Daily News, ed., February 13, 1916.

25  
Morning World-Herald, March 24, 1916.

The Chamberlain Bill, which passed the Senate by a 65 to 14 vote on April 18, increased the army to 250,000 men with a commensurate increase in the officer staff. The large regular army was to be organized on a basis of three years active service and four years on a reserve status. A federal volunteer force of 261,000 men, somewhat similar to the earlier Garrison plan, was adopted. Also included in the Senate measure was provision for a government nitrate plant, a ROTC program, a National Guard Section of the General Staff, and war-time federalization of all Guard forces.<sup>26</sup>

In support of the preparedness program, the World-Herald reasserted its idea that a program between the pacifism of Bryan and the vast defense plans of Theodore Roosevelt was needed. Directing its criticism at Bryanite members of Congress who had shown opposition to the President's defense program, the World-Herald asserted that,

Those who are fighting the Wilson program of preparedness... because they think they are opposing militarism in so doing, are in reality the worst friends of peace and the most powerful assistants that militarism has. They have but to succeed in their efforts, to defeat the Wilson program, to tear Wilson down, to help land Roosevelt and the steel trust and the munitions makers in the seats of power, to see their country enlisted for the long march toward militarism, from which, once it is started, there will be no turning back. 27

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26

Ibid., April 19, 1916.

27

Morning World-Herald, ed., January 15, 1916. See eds. of January 26 and February 21, 1916. The World-Herald viewed the early opposition by some sixty to seventy pro-Bryan Congressmen to the President's preparedness program as a threat to his party leadership.

The Hitchcock paper thus endorsed the speaking tour made by the President to various midwestern cities in late January and early February in which he carried the preparedness appeal to the people in order to bolster Congressional support for the army bills which were progressing rather slowly.<sup>28</sup>

As to specific provisions of the army bills, the World-Herald endorsed the federalization plans for more complete control from Washington over the National Guard. The provision in the Chamberlain Bill for a volunteer army somewhat like Garrison's original plan which had been partially responsible for the withdrawal of the War Secretary from the cabinet was also endorsed by the World-Herald. As the Hitchcock paper stated, the volunteer army "... is the alternative to a large standing army of professional soldiers to which Senator Hitchcock is opposed and to which, we think, most Nebraskans are opposed."<sup>29</sup>

The World-Herald opposition to "a large standing army" presaged Senator Hitchcock's vote against the Chamberlain Bill with its provision for a regular army of a quarter of a million men. Hence the World-Herald endorsed the modest army increases involved in the Hay Bill which it hoped could be combined with the modified continental army scheme envisaged in the Senate measure. As the World-Herald stated, "Such preparedness as thus provided—by a small standing army, by the state militia, by the federal volunteers—would be effective preparedness without militarism."<sup>30</sup>

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28

Ibid., eds., January 20 and February 3, 1916.

29

Ibid., ed., April 8, 1916, Ibid., ed.

30

Senator Hitchcock also opposed a provision in the Senate bill which permitted re-enlistment in the regular army at increased pay. Concerning this re-enlistment feature, the World-Herald said that "... the Senate [Military Affairs] committee apparently has taken a step or two toward what Mr. Bryan and others denominate militarism." <sup>31</sup>

The World-Herald defended the votes of Senators Hitchcock and Norris against the Chamberlain Bill on April 18 from an attack in the New York Herald which asserted that these two men and twelve other dissenters were "... irreconcilable opponents of preparedness." In speaking for its owner, the World-Herald reiterated his stand against the danger of "militarism" inherent in the large regular army provided <sup>32</sup> by the Chamberlain Bill.

The Bee, in pointing to the fact that the Administration preparedness programs in Congress provided for a total armed force of less than a half million men, while the plan outlined by the Army War College asked for a million and a quarter men in the regular army, the National Guard, the continental service, and the various reserves, asserted on February 23, that "... the advice of experienced army men has been abandoned altogether for the plans of the politicians." The Rosewater paper admitted, however, that the Congressional preparedness program which was being worked out provided a definite improvement <sup>33</sup> over the existing defense status of the nation.

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31

Ibid., ed., March 20, 1916.

32

Ibid., ed., April 24, 1916 as quoted from the New York Herald.

33

The Omaha Daily Bee, ed., February 23, 1916.



Later the Bee, after urging a strengthening of the Army Aviation Corps, reasserted its idea that there was too much Congressional interference with defense affairs. The Bee concluded that,

the army bills now going through congress [sic.] could be made to serve a great purpose without jeopardizing any of the rights of the people, simply by putting the control of the army into the hands of the soldiers and keeping the politicians out of the service. 34

The only preferential commitment that the Bee made concerning either of the army preparedness measures was an endorsement of the volunteer army provision found in the Chamberlain Bill, but not present in the Hay Bill. Pointing to recent Federal-state jurisdictional disputes pertaining to some National Guard forces serving on the Mexican border after the recent Villa crisis, the Rosewater paper said that "a truly serviceable military organization will not be had until the states have given over their armies to the nation." Thus the Bee preferred the pending Senate Army Bill to that which had recently passed the House. 35

The local Republican journal did not fail to take advantage of the opportunity to criticise Senator Hitchcock for voting against the Chamberlain Bill. As Dr. Rosewater put it. "President Wilson is always certain of the senator's support till it comes to the roll call." 36

The Omaha Daily News, which late in 1915 had exhibited a definite opposition to the preparedness movement, made a surprising volte-

34

Ibid., ed., April 19, 1916.

35

Ibid., ed., April 7, 1916.

36

Ibid., ed., April 25, 1916. There are indications that Hitchcock was actually upholding the President's preparedness plan by voting against the Chamberlain Bill. In his message to Congress of December 7, 1915 Wilson had requested an increase in the regular army to 141,843, not 250,000 men, as the Chamberlain Bill provided. See Wilson, op. cit., I, p. 412.

face in a lengthy editorial on February 7, 1916. The News in citing remarks from President Wilson's recent midwestern speaking tour in which the Chief Executive had told the nation that every hour of every day brought forth dispatches which contained potential danger for the security of the United States, made the following conclusions:

When the president [ sic. ] of the United States . . . declares that the very life of our republic is at stake, citizens and newspapers must yield to his fuller information regarding the peril—even though they still have hope that a factor of error may have crept into his conclusions owing to his unfortunate proximity to New York and the eastern seaboard . . . The Omaha Daily News feels impelled to subscribe to a rational policy of preparedness against aggression.

Let us then have universal military service—and not conscription, or so-called voluntary enlistment, or drawing by lot, or sending of substitutes . . .

No farmer's boy should be permitted to start his career or have any right or title to his life or liberty of action until he shall have first by a period of involuntary servitude fitted himself to take his place as a trained man at arms when the call to arms comes.

No Vincent Astor should be permitted to buy or sell or to enjoy the protection of the court . . . until he . . . has taken his turn as a private along side the farmer's boy.

Let there be no private profit from preparedness on the money side and let there be no shirking in preparedness on the human side. 37

The News made no specific evaluations of the army bills pending before Congress.

After a compromise army bill had been passed by both houses, the measure was vetoed by President Wilson since it provided that retired army officers should be exempted from any court-martial proceedings. This objectionable provision was removed and the revised Hay Bill was signed in the closing days of the Congressional session in August, 1916.

The Army Bill provided for a regular army of 206,000 men and a 425,000 man National Guard which was brought under closer Federal control. Volunteer summer camps were authorized as was the establishment of a government nitrogen plant. In time of war the President was given power to seize munitions plants necessary for the national defense. The cost of the army program for the coming year was set at \$267,597,000 which was provided in a separate Army Appropriation Bill.<sup>38</sup>

The World-Herald proclaimed that the compromise Army Bill was the "best in our history." Nebraska Congressman Ashton C. Shallenberger of the House Military Affairs Committee, Secretary of War Newton D. Baker, and Major William D. Connor of the General Staff Corps were cited as authorities for this far-reaching statement.<sup>39</sup> The Hitchcock journal asserted that "after a succession of republicans [sic.] administrations that did nothing but waste the peoples money, this democratic administration is giving the country all the preparedness it needs, and is arranging that the additional expense shall be born by wealth and not by poverty."<sup>40</sup>

While the News made no reference to the compromise Army Bill, the Bee stated that the measure was a "makeshift designed to meet the election exigencies of the Democratic Party,"<sup>41</sup> The Rosewater paper

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<sup>38</sup>  
Morning World-Herald, May 14, July 28, August 8 and 14; ed., August 19, 1916.

<sup>39</sup>  
Morning World-Herald, ed., June 19, 1916.

<sup>40</sup>  
Ibid., ed., May 17, 1916.

<sup>41</sup>  
The Omaha Daily Bee, eds., May 2, 8, and August 19, 1916.

did, however, endorse the creation of a Council of National Defense by the Army Appropriation Act. This Council was to be composed of the leading authorities in business, industry, and transportation who would work to integrate their given fields into the general defense pattern of the nation.<sup>42</sup>

On June 2, the House passed a Navy Bill providing for the construction within a year of seventy-two vessels. Among these were fifty coastal defense submarines, ten destroyers, four scout cruisers, and five battle cruisers. The Senate passed a bill on July 21, which was more thoroughgoing than the House bill and was also closer to the Administration requests. The Senate Navy Bill authorized the construction within three years of ten dreadnaughts, six battle cruisers, ten scout cruisers, fifty destroyers, nine fleet submarines, and fifty-eight smaller coastal U-boats. The House then accepted the Senate measure in toto with a result that a sum of \$315,826,843 was to be spent for naval increases in the coming year.<sup>43</sup>

Both the World-Herald and the Bee expressed opinions that the United States stood in need of naval preparedness. The World-Herald asserted that an enemy fleet could threaten to bombard such cities as Boston, New York, or San Francisco and could exact a million-dollar tribute while lying a considerable distance off shore.

Taking the raid by Francisco Villa, the Mexican revolutionary leader, upon Columbus, New Mexico, on March 9 as an indication of

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42

Ibid., ed., August 19, 1916.

43

Morning World-Herald, June 1, July 22, August 8 and 14, 1916.

the need for greater sea as well as land defenses, the Hitchcock paper asserted that the United States was "... fat and wheezy with plenty," and placed the following spectre before the reader:

Suppose, instead of Villa... it had been the Mikado, with the Japanese army and navy at his back, landing on the California coast, and establishing a base on Puget Sound!

Suppose it were Canada, with the British navy and the great British empire at its back!

Suppose it were Germany, devoting its undivided attention, not to the rest of the world, but to us alone! 44

The Omaha Daily Bee, arguing from another viewpoint, felt that American world commerce, and not merely home coastal defense, required that this country should increase its naval force. As the Rosewater journal pointedly asserted, "to share with John Bull the dominion of the sea is necessary for our commerce, unless we are content to trade on terms prescribed in London." 45

The World-Herald and the Bee manifested a partisan attitude toward the naval increase question. The Democratic organ proclaimed that,

if the republican party, especially under Taft and Roosevelt, had given some attention to the navy, instead of devoting all of its energies to building up the trusts and "big business", a very large portion of the appropriations made by this congress [ sic. ] would not have been necessary. 46

The Bee criticised Secretary of the Navy Daniels for asserting before the House Naval Committee that the Taft Administration had been negligent in strengthening American sea defenses. The Republican

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44

Ibid., eds., January 14 and March 18, 1916.

45

The Omaha Daily Bee, ed., February 25, 1916.

46

Morning World-Herald, ed., June 9, 1916.

paper said that Congressional Democrats had blocked naval increases under Taft. The Bee stated that the relatively small and short term increases provided by the House Navy Bill indicated that "the Bryanites have had their way again, and the navy will be left as is the army, with little better than nothing from the present congress."<sup>47</sup> When the Navy Bill was finally enacted in August, the Bee approved of the legislation ( since the Senate bill prevailed), but said that "president's [ sic. ] party is solely responsible for the decline of the navy from second to fourth place, and for the predicament that now is to be remedied by building ships with material at its highest cost."<sup>48</sup> Thus did both the World-Herald and the Bee engage in a quite partisan treatment of the naval side of preparedness while the News made no significant comment concerning this phase of the defense question.

During the early phases of the preparedness movement the Omaha papers exhibited a desire that "the profits should be taken out of preparedness." While this was first meant to apply to the obtaining by the government of the arms and munitions necessary for defense, the concept of profitless preparedness was later extended to the related question of how the navy would be provided with the armor plate needed in the construction of war vessels. The Bee at first criticised the World-Herald for a lengthy attack on the munitions makers who, as the Democratic journal viewed it, would make undue profits from the

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The Omaha Daily Bee, eds., April 10 and May 26, 1916.

48

Ibid., ed., August 17, 1916.

defense program unless they were heavily taxed. The Rosewater paper said that the World-Herald and William J. Bryan's Commoner, which took a like approach and urged that the government produce its own munitions and armor plate, were impeding the Administration defense program by raising public suspicions that sinister men of wealth were behind the whole preparedness movement.<sup>49</sup>

Somewhat later it was revealed that certain armor plate manufacturers had threatened to raise the price of armor steel for the Navy if pending Senate and House legislation providing for a government armor plate factory were enacted. The Bee asserted that the arms, munitions, and armor plate producers were already making high profits and such covert threats which had been made to Congress would only stimulate the demands for government production of these goods.<sup>50</sup>

At the same time, the News published figures stating that since 1903 armor plate for the Navy had been purchased from Bethlehem Steel Corporation, Carnegie( United States ) Steel, and the Midvale Steel Company at a price ranging from \$420 to \$445 per ton and that the government could manufacture its own plate at \$251 per ton. At a later date the News, in arguing for a government armor plate plant, cited Secretary of the Navy Daniels as having said that in the past twenty years plate manufacturers had gleaned seventy million dollars from the government by means of excessive charges for the product.

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Morning World-Herald, ed., February 2, 1916; The Omaha Daily Bee, ed., February 3, 1916.

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The Omaha Daily Bee, ed., February 10, 1916.

The local independent paper vented its fury upon the United States Steel Corporation which it cited as having made a war-time profit of \$45,512,872 for the first quarter of 1916 as compared to a \$915,058 profit for the same period a year earlier. The News informed its readers that this organization was of potential danger to the welfare of the nation since its war profits threatened to make the evils of John D. Rockefeller's Standard Oil trust look small in comparison. 51

Both the News and the World-Herald rejoiced at the passage of House and Senate legislation which ultimately authorized the construction of a government armor plate plant, while the Bee remained silent on the subject. 52

All three Omaha newspapers voiced strong objections to editorial comments in eastern journals which asserted that the West and Midwest were unconcerned over the question of preparedness and that the trans-Mississippi region was miscreant in its patriotism. As early as January 21, The Omaha Daily News quoted Western Union President Newcomb Carlton, who headed a preparedness pressure group in New York City, as stating bluntly that "the west is indifferent to preparedness." The News caustically replied that,

He [Carlton] is quite right when he said that the west is indifferent to Johnny-get-your-gun preparedness; that it is absorbed in the business of peace, and that it has small faith in defense societies fostered by battle ship constructors and makers of munitions of war. . . . New York can find no parallel

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51

The Omaha Daily News, eds., February 6, April 10, and May 8, 1916.

52

Ibid., eds., March 25, 29, and June 5, 1915; Morning World-Herald, ed., March 25, 1916.



to her draft riots of the civil war [sic.] in any part of the unpatriotic west. 53

The World-Herald answered eastern insinuations by asserting that the East, through its munitions sales and its war loans, had a war time prosperity which was conducive to an inordinate interest in the conflict and therefore promoted an excessive desire for extreme defense measures. Revealing a sense of class consciousness and sectionism the Hitchcock paper stated that,

The [eastern commercial] interests do not want to do any fighting themselves and they know that the half-starved men who work for low wages and live in the foul tenement houses of that part of the country can never be made into soldiers worthy of the name, and so to the west, where men are men, and not undersized anemic creatures, they look for the soldiers that will defend the country, 54

The Omaha Daily Bee showed its resentment of certain remarks from eastern quarters when it put forth the following acidic observations:

Preparedness patriots down east insinuate that the redblooded west considers its blood to precious to spill. In which respect they are no more economical than the east, where spilling hot air is the preferred occupation. 55

On June 14, 1916, a Flag Day parade was held in Omaha with some 20,000 marchers, which included members of the Grand Army of the

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The Omaha Daily News, ed., January 21, 1916.

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Morning World-Herald, ed., March 24, 1916. See also eds., of March 10 and May 24, 1916. Much later the Bee pointed to the March 24 editorial and said that the World-Herald held a Bryanistic concept of preparedness and thus opposed the movement. See The Omaha Daily Bee, ed., June 13, 1916.

55

The Omaha Daily Bee, ed., May 8, 1916.

of the Republic, Spanish War veterans, and the Nebraska National Guard as well as eighteen bands. The World-Herald proclaimed that this parade was a "... spontaneous manifestation of the patriotic spirit of Omaha," while the Bee praised the occasion in similar terms.

The most significant attitude concerning the Flag Day parade was reflected by The Omaha Daily News. Pointing to the fact that Henry Ford, a staunch initiator and advocate of various peace measures had nearly carried the Republican presidential primary in April, and that Theodore Roosevelt had spoken in favor of an extreme preparedness program, the News concluded that,

Preparedness, according to its foremost champion [Roosevelt] means universal military training which is against our traditions; heavier taxes for the mass of citizens, [and] ... a stronger likelihood of war. This city is no place for a preparedness parade. 57

The News reiterated its opposition to the forthcoming Flag Day demonstration in the following comments:

There is no occasion for making any parade appeal to patriotism at this time. The people of Omaha are as patriotic now as they have ever been, and they will continue to be patriotic.

But they are not for the militarism which is masquerading under the name of preparedness. 58

These comments shed no light but only confusion upon the question of how the News actually viewed the whole preparedness movement. The firm stand taken by the News three and one-half months earlier which clearly endorsed universal military service was in sharp

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Sunday World-Herald, ed., June 11, 1916; Morning World-Herald, eds., June 13 and 16, 1916; The Omaha Daily Bee, ed., June 15, 1916.

57

The Omaha Daily News, ed., May 21, 1916.

58

Ibid., ed., May 29, 1916.

contrast to the above remarks condemning the practice as alien to American traditions.

### Chapter Conclusion

From the latter months of 1915 it could be seen that both the Democratic World-Herald and the Republican Bee favored a moderate form of land and sea preparedness. The World-Herald, following the lead of Senator Hitchcock, endorsed measures to build up the state militia and to create a short-term "continental" force of large proportions. The Bee also endorsed these plans, but unlike its Democratic rival, expressed no fear of militarism in large increases in the regular army. When the Bee criticised the "politicians" of Congress for their handling of military legislation and urged that control of army and naval needs be left strictly to the leaders of these services, it undoubtedly had no forebodings of the inherent disaster involved in such a policy. In two decades the world was destined to submit to the tragic results of such a system whereby, for the sake of efficiency, the armed forces of Germany, Japan, and Italy were divorced from a true legislative control.

Since the preparedness program finally became law when the election campaign of 1916 was in progress, many of the remarks made by the World-Herald and the Bee upon national defense had a purely political purpose. Both publications charged the opposing party as being responsible for the alleged defenseless status of the nation. Hence the heat of an election campaign sharply reduced the capacity for a fair evaluation of the preparedness program by these two journals.

The position of The Omaha Daily News on the preparedness question could best be described as schizophrenic. From a position of opposition to preparedness in December, 1915, to one of full endorsement in February, 1916, and back again to apparent opposition by May, 1916 was the quite inexplicable route taken by this journal.

While the World-Herald and News were most vocal in criticising the munitions and armor manufacturers for arrogating the preparedness movement to their profit, the Bee was even constrained to admit that the Government should do as much as it could for itself in acquiring the tools of defense.

A distinctly regional solidarity could be noted in the unanimity of the three Omaha newspapers in answering eastern critics of the West concerning preparedness. These replies took the form of counter-charges by the local press while only in the case of the News was there a reflection of the preparedness attitudes of the publication.

In summary, it can be said that the Omaha press approached the preparedness question primarily upon its merits, but with strong political overtones. With the exceptions of answering eastern critics of western patriotism, and upon the "profits in preparedness" question, the Omaha papers did not approach the defense issue on a regional basis.

## CHAPTER VII

### "HE KEPT US OUT OF WAR"

#### THE PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN OF 1916

##### Henry Ford, Apostle of Peace

A local prelude to the neutrality question as it was manifested in the 1916 presidential campaign was to be found in the famous voyage of the Oscar II, the so-called "peace ship" chartered by Henry Ford, which sailed from Hoboken on December 4, 1915. The voyage of this Scandinavian-American liner to Norway, Sweden, Denmark, and Holland was financed entirely by Henry Ford, who had come under the influence of such prominent pacifists as Jane Addams and Rosika Schwimmer, and was designed to initiate action that would "get the boys out of the trenches by Christmas." On board were many crusaders for peace who hoped to establish headquarters at The Hague<sup>1</sup> and hold a continuous conference designed to end hostilities.

In Omaha, all three daily newspapers praised Ford for this action to promote peace. The World-Herald criticised those eastern publications which considered the voyage of the Oscar II as ridiculous and discussed the Ford incident with levity. The Hitchcock and Rosewater journals admired Ford's devotion to the ideal of peace even though they did not feel that his venture had much chance of success. The Omaha Daily Bee recommended that the Nobel Peace

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Morning World-Herald, November 26 and December 5, 1915; Walter Millis, Road To War, America: 1914-1917 ( Boston, Houghton Mifflin Company, 1935 ), pp. 242-245.

Prize be awarded the automobile manufacturer, while The Omaha Daily News stated that the voyage had served to awaken the American public to the horrors of warfare.<sup>2</sup>

### The Nebraska Primary Election

In the April 18, 1916, Republican presidential primary in Nebraska, Henry Ford with 26,884 votes ran second to Senator Albert B. Cummins of Iowa who polled 29,850 votes. Prior to the election large advertisements entitled "Humanity and Sanity" had appeared in the local papers. These put forth an anti-preparedness argument which condemned alleged jingoism on the part of the Navy League and the munitions manufacturers and bore the signature of Henry Ford.<sup>3</sup> The World-Herald attributed Ford's show of strength in Nebraska as well as his victory in the Republican presidential primary in Michigan to a wide spread sentiment in favor of peace.<sup>4</sup> Neither the News nor the Bee, however, commented upon the large vote accorded the famed auto manufacturer.

While the Bee urged its readers to write in the name of Justice

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2

Morning World-Herald, eds., November 27, December 25 and 27, 1915; Sunday World-Herald, ed., November 28, 1915; The Omaha Daily Bee, eds., December 3 and 21, 1915; The Omaha Daily News, eds., December 10 and 11, 1915.

3

Addison E. Sheldon, Nebraska; The Land and the People (Chicago: The Lewis Publishing Company, 1931). I, p. 908; The Omaha Sunday Bee, April 16, 1916.

4

Morning World-Herald, ed., April 20, 1916. Ford's high vote in Nebraska was even more surprising in that none of the Omaha papers had accorded him editorial support.

Charles Evans Hughes of the United States Supreme Court on the  
 5  
 Republican presidential primary ballot, the only other issue involved  
 in the Nebraska primary which was of significance in the neutrality  
 question was an acrimonious political feud between Senator Hitchcock  
 and former Secretary of State Bryan. The actual basis for this dis-  
 cord lay in division within the state party concerning prohibition.  
 Bryan, as head of the dry faction of the Nebraska Democrats, did not  
 hesitate to make speeches criticising Senator Hitchcock for his endorse-  
 ment of the wet gubernatorial candidate, Keith Neville. When Bryan  
 extended his criticisms to the national level and asserted in the  
Commoner that President Wilson was "joy-riding with the jingoes"  
 on the preparedness question, Harvey E. Newbranch, who rarely  
 signed World-Herald editorials, sharply replied that Bryan's remarks  
 were a "gross, flagrant and wicked misrepresentation of the President's  
 6  
 position and ideas."

The Hitchcock-Bryan feud was further manifested in a large  
 advertisement paid for by H. E. Gooch, President of the Star Publish-  
 ing Company of Lincoln, which appeared in the World-Herald on April  
 6. This advertisement, under the heading "W. J. Bryan Should Not Go  
 To St. Louis," opposed the Great Commoner's candidacy as a dele-  
 gate-at-large to the Democratic convention. While denouncing  
 Bryan's resignation from the Wilson cabinet as "... little short of  
 treason," it was also stated that

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5

The Omaha Daily Bee, ed., March 27, 1916. Hughes polled  
 15,837 write-in votes and thus ran third in the Republican balloting.  
 In the Democratic presidential primary Woodrow Wilson received  
 69,506 votes to 9,417 tallied by Robert G. Ross:

6

Morning World-Herald, eds., March 30 and April 7, 1916.

after accepting the high office of secretary of state [ sic. ]  
 ... Mr. Bryan embarrassed the president and lowered the dignity  
 of his position by accepting speaking engagements in which he  
 appeared on the same program with yodlers, vaudeville perform-  
 ers, etc... HE DID IT FOR MONEY. 7

The Omaha Daily News, which had opposed Senator Hitchcock  
 in the Democratic Senatorial primary on purely domestic matters,  
 expressed regret over Bryan's defeat for the position of convention  
 delegate. Even the World-Herald was moved to admit that highly favor-  
 able responses to his speeches in Omaha and Lincoln revealed the  
 presence of a strong local peace sentiment, which was especially  
 obvious regarding the prohibition of American travel on armed  
 belligerent ships.<sup>8</sup>

#### Pre-Convention Press Attitudes

Prior to the assembling of the major party conventions in the  
 first half of June the Omaha papers had expressed definite attitudes  
 concerning the coming presidential election. Realizing that Theodore  
 Roosevelt, who had split the Republican Party with his Bull Moose  
 candidacy in 1912, would be a definite presidential aspirant when the  
 GOP and Progressive conventions met in Chicago, the World-Herald  
 and the News made the hero of San Juan Hill, who had been critical  
 of Wilsonian neutrality, their special object of attack.

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7

Ibid., April 6, 1916.

8

The Omaha Daily News, eds., March 22 and April 24, 1916;  
Morning World-Herald, ed., April 20, 1916. With four delegates-at-  
 large to be chosen out of seven candidates, Bryan finished fifth and  
 polled 37,793 votes. Senator Hitchcock easily won the Democratic  
 Senatorial primary over Ignatius J. Dunn by a vote of 20,652 to  
 26,090. In the Republican Senatorial contest, The Omaha Daily Bee  
 endorsed Omaha Attorney John L. Kennedy, who defeated Chester  
 H. Aldrich. Sheldon, op. cit., I, p. 909.



In March, the Hitchcock journal quoted Roosevelt as having said that

the American people will not be content merely to change the present administration for one equally timid, equally vacillating, [and] equally lacking in vision, in moral integrity and in high resolve.

The World-Herald replied that,

if one of another sort [than the allegedly jingoistic Roosevelt] is named-- some weakling and coward with a hard face and a soft body who prefers peace to war--then by the Eternal, T. R. will see to it that he is defeated in the election.

With memories of 1912, the World-Herald asserted that the presence of the "Colonel of Oyster Bay" put the Republican Party in a "be damned if you do, and be damned if you don't" position.<sup>9</sup>

In answering Roosevelt's remarks that the Administration should have asserted its opposition to German violation of Belgium neutrality, the World-Herald quoted editorially from Outlook in which Roosevelt had observed that "...it would be folly to jump into the gulf ourselves to no good purpose, and very probably nothing we could have done would have helped Belgium."<sup>10</sup> It was also stated that Roosevelt had abandoned the Progressive platform of 1912 which pledged the party to utilize all possible peaceful means to avert war and further endorsed international naval limitations.<sup>11</sup>

The News condemned the Colonel's strong stand on preparedness when it asserted that fulfillment of Roosevelt's defense ideas would

<sup>9</sup>

Morning World-Herald, ed., March 11, 1916.

<sup>10</sup>

Ibid., ed., March 21, 1916; quoted from Outlook, September 23, 1914.

<sup>11</sup>

Ibid., ed., May 12, 1916.

serve primarily to make greater fortunes for those who would sell  
 12  
 defense articles to the government.

The World-Herald regarded Hughes with the same suspicion that it cast upon Roosevelt. As the chances of Hughes' candidacy grew, the local Democratic paper stated that

... a casual survey of the eastern republican [ sic. ] newspapers discloses that almost unanimously they are boosting for the Hughes nomination; and the more enthusiastic they are for a big army, the more eager for a war-like attitude, the stronger they are for Hughes. 13

In the days before the Republican convention both the World-Herald and the News criticised Hughes for not making known his views on the  
 14  
 vital questions of the day, particularly that of American neutrality.

On the Republican side, The Omaha Daily Bee took President Wilson to task when it proclaimed that "his inchoate and undetermined views as to national defense hardly deserve consideration, for, were they pronounced by a person of less [ er ] consequence... they would be dismissed as unworthy." The Rosewater paper also pointed to a Democratic-proposed duty on dyestuffs as indicating that Republican high tariff policies were correct and would save the nation from a flood of cheaply-made foreign goods after the war. This contrasted to the position of the World-Herald which stated that when the war was over, Europe would have sustained such heavy devastations  
 15  
 as to make her unable to compete with the United States.

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12

The Omaha Daily News, ed., May 19, 1916.

13

Morning World-Herald, ed., May 18, 1916.

14

Ibid., ed., June 21, 1916; The Omaha Daily News, ed., May 24, 1916.

15

The Omaha Daily Bee, eds., April 4 and June 3, 1916; Morning World-Herald, ed., May 27, 1916.

Such, then, were the local press attitudes toward the war-related phases of the 1916 presidential campaign prior to the nominating conventions early in June. In the ensuing months the above views were destined to be repeated and expanded upon and solidified along basic partisan lines.

**Response to Actions by the Progressive,  
Republican, and Democratic Conventions**

When the Republican and Progressive conventions gathered at separate places in Chicago on June 7, the major question was whether the two parties could mend the great breach created four years earlier. In Omaha, the World-Herald pointed to an alleged incongruity of the union between the two parties when it asserted that convention attempts to avoid a third party candidacy were a sign that the Bull Moosers were willing to forsake their lofty principles of 1912 and rejoin the hosts of reaction. In explanation of this impending move the Hitchcock paper stated that,

There would have to be an excuse [by the Progressives] for such a startling betrayal of principle... and the excuse is at hand. Like everything else it will be blamed on the war. War issues will be held up as transcending domestic issues. It will be declared that Preparedness with a big P is more important than social justice, that universal service is more the crying need of the hour than the recall and the initiative and referendum; that mammoth armies and navies will bless the country more than industrial pensions; and that so, for the sake of the Flag, radicals must forget their grievances and their principles and return as repentant prodigals to the standpat home they left in 1912. 16

When on June 10 Charles Evans Hughes accepted the Republican nomination and at the same time Roosevelt declined to become the Progressive standard bearer, thus insuring the demise of the Bull Moose Party, The Omaha Daily News asserted that "the republican [ sic. ] leaders stole Roosevelt's attractive claptrap about Americanism and preparedness and ditched all the fundamental ideas and reforms upon which the progressive party was built."<sup>17</sup>

Even before the Republican convention assembled, the World-Herald was of the opinion that the GOP would be in a difficult position as far as working out a platform which could justly criticise Democratic handling of foreign affairs. As the Hitchcock journal asserted "they will have to frame a reason. . . why the one great nation that is today enjoying peace with honor. . . should oust the administration to which the credit for this is due."<sup>18</sup> When the Republican platform was evolved the World-Herald noted that it avoided comment on Roosevelt's plan for universal military training as being "a poker too hot to hold." The Local Democratic journal castigated both Republican convention keynote speaker Senator Warren G. Harding and the GOP platform for opposing government munitions and armor plate plants and the proposed Democratic ship purchase bill.<sup>19</sup>

Both the World-Herald and the News again took Republican candidate Hughes to task for not stating clearly his attitudes toward

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The Omaha Daily News, ed., June 9, 1916.

18

Morning World-Herald, ed., June 5, 1916; See also ed. of June 8, 1916.

19

Ibid., eds., June 10 and 13, 1916.

the problems involved in the maintenance of American neutrality. When shortly prior to his acceptance of the Republican nomination Justice Hughes made a speech in which he solemnly proclaimed that the American flag stood for America first, the Hitchcock journal reacted in the following manner in an editorial entitled "Tweet! Tweet! He roared":

Are half the American people losing their wits entirely that it should be esteemed an act of statesmanship and patriotism and high moral courage to declare for the flag? If he should go further and defiantly proclaim his belief in the multiplication table would there be republican ratification rallies held in every town hall and bonfires burned on every hilltop? 20

The Omaha Daily News said that the position of Hughes on pressing domestic and foreign issues could not be ascertained until he made some clear cut statements. It was asserted that his record as Governor of New York indicated that the GOP candidate was of a reactionary turn of mind. Exhibiting an unusual amount of good-will, the World-Herald later stated that "Judge Hughes is a man of irreproachable character, of outstanding ability, with a creditable public record behind him. . . . And just as Taft was of a conservative cast of mind, with little outcroppings of progressive views, so, too, is Hughes." 21

The Omaha Daily Bee in its few comments concerning the Republican convention as it was related to the position of the United States toward the European conflict, endorsed Senator Harding's remarks criticising the false wartime prosperity which the Democrats were allegedly relying upon for victory. The local Republican

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20

Ibid., ed., June 9, 1916. See also ed. of June 5, 1916.

21

The Omaha Daily News, ed., June 11, 1916: Morning World-Herald, ed., June 12, 1916.

journal praised the GOP platform which criticised Democratic maintenance of American rights abroad. When Hughes denounced the Democrats on similar grounds, the Bee said that "his criticism of the course of the administration in its foreign policy, is not that of a partisan, but of a citizen who keenly feels the humiliation that has come to Americans by reason of the weakness of the president and his cabinet."<sup>22</sup>

When the Democratic Party assembled in convention in St. Louis on June 14, it was a foregone conclusion that President Wilson would be renominated. Hence little editorial comment was found in the Omaha press as compared to the recent events at Chicago. The World-Herald had nothing but praise for the strong endorsement of Wilsonian neutrality found in the keynote speech by Former Governor Martin Glynn of New York. The Bee took the opposite viewpoint when it remarked that "the cold iconoclastic fact is [that] the president could not have done otherwise [than preserve neutrality]. He cannot alone make war on any one, and no pretext that has yet appeared would have served him, had he wanted war ever so much." The Rosewater organ drew the questionable conclusion that following the Lusitania incident, the President took cognizance of public opinion and that from no quarters could he find a clamor for war.<sup>23</sup>

The only editorial comments concerning the Democratic convention made by the News were found in a feature editorial by William

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22

The Omaha Daily Bee, eds., June 8 and 12, 1916.

23

Morning World-Herald, ed., June 15, 1916; The Omaha Daily Bee, ed., June 16, 1916.

Jennings Bryan, who had gone to St. Louis as an observer for the Hearst and other newspapers. The Fairview Colonel praised the moderate stand on preparedness put forth in the Democratic platform and its endorsement of government manufacture of war materials needed in the American defense effort.

24

The Campaign Defense of Wilson by the  
World-Herald and The Omaha Daily News

In the four and one-half months which elapsed between the nominating conventions in June and the election on November 7 the World-Herald devoted a considerable amount of editorial comment to a defense of the Wilson Administration and its maintenance of American neutrality. The local Democratic journal was profuse in its praise of the Administration, especially with respect to the handling of relations with Germany. As the World-Herald summarized,

... Wilson avoided war, He "wrote notes" instead. And by the means of those despised notes, though with no army to back him and without an adequate navy, he succeeded in inducing the proudest and most powerful military nation on earth to abandon the effective use of a weapon on which it greatly relied for victory. In the name of humanity and neutral rights he was able to persuade Germany, fighting desperately for self-preservation, to tie its own hands and surrender the great advantage which the submarine afforded. He did it without bluff or bluster, without any appeal to force, by a wise admixture of reason, patience, firmness and confidence in the better nature of the German people. Not in all history has diplomacy gained a greater victory. 25

24

The Omaha Daily News, ed., June 17, 1916.

25

Morning World-Herald, ed., August 2, 1916. Material underlined indicates bold face type. See also ed., of August 27, 1916.

The World-Herald, in justification of Wilsonian neutrality, sought to accord the President's policies the sanctity of endorsement by the founding fathers of the Republic. The maintenance of American neutrality during the Napoleonic wars was cited as a precedent for Wilson's actions with Thomas Jefferson being quoted in support of aloofness from Europe's upheavals.<sup>26</sup>

The local Democratic journal informed its readers that it would be a mark of true Americanism to endorse the Democratic administration at the polls in November. It was stated that citizens who were first of all pro-American rather than partisans of Great Britain or Germany would vote to retain Wilson in office for another term. Thus, the Hitchcock paper cautioned its readers that it was of vital importance that an experienced President and cabinet should be kept in power to meet the grave problems confronting American neutrality. As the World-Herald told its readers in an advertisement on the eve of the election

You Are Working; Not Fighting!

Alive and Happy; Not Cannon Fodder!

Wilson and Peace With Honor?

27

Hughes With Roosevelt and War?

When Theodore Roosevelt began an active campaign in support of Hughes, the World-Herald seized upon some of the Colonel's

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26

Ibid., eds., September 4 and October 9, 1916.

27

Ibid., eds., July 7, August 2, 9 and October 26, 1916; advertisement, November 6, 1916.



jingoistic statements with the result that it equated a Republican election victory with American entrance into the war. Chief among the Roosevelt speeches which drew the ire of the World-Herald was one delivered in Lewiston, Maine on August 31. In this discourse the former president proclaimed that

The kind of "safety first: for which President Wilson's advocates stand means "duty last, honor last, courage last". . . .

Since 1912 we have had four years of a policy which had been an opiate to the spirit of idealism. It has meant a relaxation of our moral fiber. Horror of war, combined to a sordid appeal to self-interest and to fear, has paralysed the national conscience. . . . America, which sprang to the succor of Cuba in 1898, has stood an idle spectator of the invasion of Belgium, of the sinking of the Lusitania, of the continued slaughter of our own citizens, and of the reign of anarchy, rapine and murder in Mexico. 28

After Roosevelt had compared President Wilson with Pontius Pilate for not taking action in the face of German invasion of Belgium, the World-Herald concluded that "The United States under [this] theory of government, should take upon itself, uninvited and alone, the function of democratic policeman to the universe." 29

After Roosevelt had made a statement to the Petit Parisien declaring that Hughes would have sent only one note to Germany concerning the sinking of the Lusitania, the World-Herald observed that

The program [of Roosevelt] . . . is easy to understand. . . . It means that no differences in which the United States may become involved with foreign powers shall be settled by diplomatic methods. For diplomacy means discussion; it means the search for. . . a settlement satisfactory to both parties.

No dispute ever has been or ever will be settled by diplomatic methods if the first word of the disputants is also their last word. 30

28

Ibid., ed., September 2, 1916.

29

Ibid., ed., September 4, 1916.

30

Ibid., ed., August 10, 1916. Material underlined indicates bold face type.

The News also showed its disgust for the Colonel when he criticised Wilson's neutrality policies and asserted that if Hughes were a man who possessed courage, he would have repudiated the jingoistic campaign utterances of Roosevelt.<sup>31</sup>

The chief criticism which the World-Herald and The Omaha Daily News levied against Charles Evans Hughes was that he did not unequivocally commit himself on any of the questions concerning American neutrality thus making his campaign devoid of any appeal to the electorate. As the Democratic paper put it,

Peace, Prosperity and Progress constitute a trinity of Domestic Facts against which Mr. Hughes, with all his ingenuity, finds it difficult to contend. He has no issue that appeals to the popular imagination and judgment, because really he has nothing new to offer that appears better than what we have. . . .<sup>32</sup>

The World-Herald criticised Hughes for avoiding a discussion of government manufacture of the armor plate and munitions necessary for American preparedness and the taxation of large incomes to pay for national defense. The Democratic organ proclaimed that such program, then being completed in Congress, were contrary to the desires of the standpat or reactionary elements within the Republican Party whom the GOP candidate did not dare alienate. The World-Herald was likewise critical of the evasive position taken by Hughes on the question as to whether armed force should be used to protect the ill-begotten investments of Wall Street in foreign lands.<sup>33</sup>

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31

The Omaha Daily News, eds., June 27 and October 27, 1916.

32

Morning World-Herald, eds., August 3 and 21, 1916.

33

Ibid., eds., August 11 and October 25, 1916. In a large advertisement appearing in the August 2, 1916 issue of the Morning World-

The News attacked some comments made in Outlook which criticised Wilson's supporters for asking Hughes to specify exactly how he would have dealt with the various crises facing the incumbent president. In summarizing the attitudes expressed by itself and the World-Herald toward the GOP standard bearer, the News stated in reply that "...all that we have a right to expect from a man who aspires to the highest office in this republic is criticism." <sup>34</sup>

Both the World-Herald and the News noted a definite dichotomy in the campaign appeals of the Republicans. Cognizant of the less stentorian and belligerent campaign appeals made by Hughes as compared to Roosevelt concerning America and the war, the Hitchcock organ stated that

the Roosevelt candidate, it is true, is not speaking in such clarion tones on this tremendous issue as is the Colonel himself. Mr. Hughes is working the other side of the street, where he hopes, by speaking softly and hiding his big stick, to gather in a multitude of votes that the Colonel might otherwise drive away from him. <sup>35</sup>

The News proclaimed that Hughes was seeking the German-American vote by voicing his opposition to the sale of arms and munitions to the belligerents, but that the Republican candidate did not state that he would seek to stop these exports. The local independent paper

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Herald, under the heading "Writers Ask Hughes To Drop Generalities And To Definitely Outline His Policies," such Wilson supporters as Irwin Cobb, Ray Stannard Baker, and George Creel asked the GPO candidate such questions as the following: (1) Would he have used the United States Navy to defend Belgian neutrality?, (2) Would he have severed relations with Germany as a result of the Lusitania incident?, (3) Would he advise an embargo on munitions exports?, and (4) Would he advise universal military training?

<sup>34</sup>

The Omaha Daily News, ed., September 28, 1916. See also eds., of October 16 and November 4, 1916.

<sup>35</sup>

Morning World-Herald, October 4, 1916.

asserted that in appealing to the pro-Allied voter, Hughes criticised the inaction concerning the invasion of Belgium and his handling of the Lusitania case, but observed that he carefully made no commitments concerning what his action would have been in these instances. <sup>36</sup>

While only a small amount of the World-Herald editorial space was devoted to war-related matters concerning Senator Hitchcock's campaign for re-election, his personal oracle sought to associate him with the foreign and domestic record of the Wilson Administration. The World-Herald portrayed Republican-Progressive candidate John L. Kennedy as a reactionary tool of Wall Street who was willing that American blood should be spilled in foreign lands on behalf of plutocratic eastern financial interests. Kennedy was also taken to task for commenting in a speech in Grand Island that the Democratic Congress would have better served the interests of the nation by repealing the stamp tax enacted at the outbreak of the European war as a means of making up for revenue losses occasioned by falling tariff receipts. Kennedy had advised that a 12½ per cent tax be levied on arms and munitions products and that the inheritance and income taxes be raised as a means of meeting the greater financial burden incurred by the preparedness program. With accuracy the World-Herald pointed to the fact that this was exactly what had been done in the closing days of Congress and concluded that "... where he <sup>37</sup> [Kennedy] is specifically critical he should be specifically informed."

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36

The Omaha Daily News, ed., August 12, 1916; See also Morning World-Herald, ed., November 4, 1916.

37

Morning World-Herald, eds., September 4 and October 26, 1916.

The best example of how the World-Herald tied the Wilson and Hitchcock campaign together was found in the pre-election front page headline Remember: "A Vote Against Hitchcock Is A Vote Against Wilson---Don't Be Fooled Into Support of The Stand-Pat Crowd."<sup>38</sup>

While the independent Omaha Daily News urged its readers to cast their ballots for John Kennedy, it made no specific attack on Senator Hitchcock concerning war-related questions. The Omaha Daily Bee, however, sought to disrupt the improving relations between Hitchcock and Bryan when it cited remarks made by the Great Commoner during the primary campaign criticising the World-Herald owner for his opposition to the first Ship Purchase Bill. The Rosewater oracle concluded that a letter of endorsement of the candidacy of Hitchcock for re-election from President Wilson "... was gotten by trickery and misrepresentation."<sup>39</sup>

In urging the continuation of the Democratic Party in power the World-Herald pointed to the prosperous economic status of the nation. It was shown that since 1912 railroad earnings had risen 26 per cent, bank deposits and clearings had gone up 35 and 49 percent respectively, corporation earnings had risen 50 per cent, and the value of exports had grown by 77 per cent. The World-Herald rejoiced that while none of the Nebraska economy was based on arms and munitions exports, only two-thirds of one per cent or 535 million dollars of a total American industrial output valued at eighty billion dollars

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38

Ibid., November 4, 1916.

39

The Omaha Daily Bee, ed., November 2, 1916.

during the twenty three months of the war was based on the nebulous  
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trade.

In face of these proclamations of prosperity, the Bee put forth its chief war-related campaign argument against the Democrats. The Republican journal asserted that the prosperous state of the nation was actually based upon heavy American exports to the Allied nations and that before and during the early stages of the war, the American economy had been depressed. In specifically attacking the minimization by the World-Herald of arms and munitions exports, the Rosewater paper asserted that in 1915, the value of these commodities sold abroad by the United States was \$588,838,924, while this valuation had risen to \$1,645,363,022 in 1916. These shipments accounted for 21.68 and 38.51 per cent respectively of United States exports during these two years. The Bee further stated that only 3.95 per cent of the increase in value of American exports since the war began had  
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resulted from shipments to other neutral countries.

The Republican paper stated that in January, 1915, there were

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Morning World-Herald, eds., June 24, September 29, and October 12, 1916.

41

The Omaha Daily Bee, ed., October 2, 1916. The validity of these figures is quite dubious since no source was cited. Bureau of Foreign and Domestic Commerce figures indicate a total export value of arms and munitions in 1915 of \$201,136,374 and in 1916 of \$757,700,475. Since these were itemized as cartridges, dynamite, gunpowder, other explosives, and firearms, it would seem possible that the higher figures given by the Bee included strategic metals of value in munitions production. See Alice M. Morrissey, The American Defense of Neutral Rights, 1914-1917 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1939), p. 151.

325,000 men in the city of New York who were unemployed. This record level was blamed upon the moderate Democratic Underwood Tariff, the evil effects of which had only been temporarily overcome by the false wartime prosperity. The Bee reiterated earlier charges that unless the Underwood Tariff were repealed, vast quantities of cheaply-produced European goods would be dumped on the United States market, much to the distress of American labor.<sup>42</sup>

As a rebuttal to Republican charges of the existence of a false wartime economy under Wilson, the World-Herald cited Charles M. Schwab of the Bethlehem Steel Corporation as stating that the coming of peace would not disturb the American economy since it would take years for European industry to remedy the effects of war time devastation. The Democratic paper defended the tariff policies of the Administration by referring to Title VIII of the Revenue Act of 1916, which put a double duty on the importation of foreign-made articles at a price lower than that obtained by home producers.<sup>43</sup>

#### The Omaha Daily Bee Backs Hughes

The Bee devoted very little editorial space to the defense of Hughes on questions relating to war. When Theodore Roosevelt agreed to support the campaign of the former Supreme Court justice, the Rosewater paper asserted that this was the action "...of an earnest patriot, who seeks his country's good." This was the only comment

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42

The Omaha Daily Bee, eds., September 5, 6, 26, October 12, 20 and 31, 1916.

43

Morning World-Herald, eds., August 31, October 25 and November 4, 1916.

by the Bee concerning the campaign made by the Colonel on behalf of Hughes.<sup>44</sup>

Very seldom did the Bee launch a frontal attack upon the foreign negotiations of the Wilson administration. On the several occasions when it did, it based its criticisms upon the need for a defense of American rights on land and sea which it claimed that Wilson had ignored. As the Bee put it,

Hughes would not, as Wilson has done, promise to uphold and protect the rights of American citizens everywhere and then wantonly sacrifice them with, at best, warning that they are in foreign lands [probably referring to Mexico] or on the seas at their own risk.<sup>45</sup>

The local Republican journal told its readers of charges made by Senator Lodge that there had been a secret postscript to the second Lusitania note telling Germany to ignore the strong wording of the message. It was noted by the Bee that while Wilson denied that he made any such addition to the Lusitania correspondence, there had never been a denial made that the alleged postscript had been added. It was concluded that the full facts had not been released concerning the resignation of Bryan as Secretary of State. Thus did the Bee try to cast a veil of suspicion over the diplomacy of the Wilson administration.<sup>46</sup>

Likewise on the question of national defense, the Bee defended

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The Omaha Daily Bee, ed., June 27, 1916.

45

Ibid., ed., September 6, 1916. See also ed., of September 5, 1916. The Bee thus ignored Wilson's successful opposition to the Gore and McLemore Resolutions which sought to warn Americans to stay off of armed belligerent vessels.

46

Ibid., ed., November 1, 1916.



Hughes by attacking Wilson. The Rosewater paper, which by October, 1916, endorsed a program of universal military service, made the following sweeping criticisms:

Hughes would not, as Wilson has done, fritter away two years of valuable time, with Europe aflame with war, pooh poohing preparedness as wholly unnecessary and then suddenly embrace a preparedness program contradicting all his former professions. 47

The local GOP oracle bitterly resented editorial comments in the World-Herald which openly proclaimed that "a vote for Hughes is a vote for war." In a prominently-displayed front page article under the headline "Inciting a Dastard Deed," the Bee denounced the campaign propaganda of its Democratic rival by asserting that

It was this kind of talk. . . that stirred the assassin's hand and speeded the bullet that put an untimely end to the lamented McKinley. We have in our files a newspaper article which calls McKinley "a murderer," written by a man who is now a member of the editorial staff of Senator Hitchcock's democratic organ that is spreading this "vote-for-Hughes-vote-for-war" poison. To that article and to articles like that may be traced the inception of the crime that took McKinley away from us. 48

The Bee also stated that far from keeping the nation out of war, Wilson had conducted warfare in Mexico, albeit on a small scale. The Rosewater journal drew the conclusion that

not only will a republican [ sic. ] victory seating Hughes in the White House be no provocative of war, but it will be by the very notice to other nations that a firm, far-seeing, and fearless man is at the helm, the best preventative and the safest guaranty against war. 49

When President Wilson visited Omaha at the commencement of the jubilee celebrations of Nebraska statehood on October 5, 1916,

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47

Ibid., ed., October 1 and 23, 1916.

48

Ibid., ed., September 6, 1916.

49

50

Ibid., October 20, 1916.      Ibid., ed., October 2, 1916.

both the World-Herald and The Omaha Daily News praised his speech in which he noted the obscure origins of the European war and concluded that if the United States were to enter the conflict, it must have a clear-cut reason for doing so. While the Bee welcomed President Wilson to the city, it felt that his remarks in his speech at the City Auditorium were of no special merit or distinction to the Chief Executive, even though they were of a non-partisan nature.

51

#### Election Results: Why Wilson Won

While President Wilson won a very close victory over Charles Evans Hughes by an electoral vote of 277 to 254 and a popular tally of 9,129,000 to 8,538,221 in the national contest, his margin in the state of Nebraska was proportionally wider. The final results indicated that Wilson drew 158,827 votes while 117,771 ballots were cast for Hughes. In Douglas County, Wilson obtained 24,796 votes against 14,557 for the GOP candidate. Senator Hitchcock was also re-elected by a vote of 143,082 while his Republican opponent, John L. Kennedy

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obtained 131,359 ballots.

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Morning World-Herald, ed., October 7, 1916; The Omaha Daily News, eds., October 5 and 6, 1916; The Omaha Daily Bee, ed., October 9, 1916. In addition to Wilson's speech at the City Auditorium, he delivered another address at the Omaha Commercial Club. See Woodrow Wilson, The New Democracy; Presidential Messages, Addresses, and Other Papers, 1913-1917. ed. Ray Stannard Baker and William E. Dodd (New York; Harper and Brothers 1926), II, pp. 344-355.

52

The Nebraska Blue Book and Historical Register, 1918, ed., Addison E. Sheldon, Nebraska; The Land and the People, I, p. 912.

Surprisingly little editorial comment was made by the Omaha press concerning President Wilson's victory. While the World-Herald and the News made no interpretative remarks, the Bee asserted that

except for the electoral votes of the solid south, chained to the democratic party [sic.] by the race issue and negro disfranchisement, [sic.] the democratic showing would be pitiful indeed and the triumph of Hughes and the republicans would be overwhelming. 53

Thus the Bee associated the re-election of Wilson with a purely domestic condition and made no comments concerning the election results as related to questions of American neutrality.

#### Chapter Conclusion

The most striking condition found in the treatment by the Omaha papers of the American neutrality question as a factor in the election campaign of 1916 was the relative weight accorded the topic by each publication. A considerable amount of editorial space was devoted by the World-Herald to a consideration of the record of the Wilson Administration in maintaining the neutrality of the United States while this question evoked far less comment on the part of the News or the Bee.

Senator Hitchcock's journal played the "he kept us out of war" theme to the utmost. When it varied this slogan and frankly told its readers that "a vote for Hughes is a vote for war" it did so, not in consideration of the record of the GOP candidate or of his campaign remarks, but ostensibly as a result of the intemperate utterances of Colonel Roosevelt. Indeed, if the comments of the World-Herald, and to a lesser extent, of The Omaha Daily News were of

any importance whatsoever in the outcome of the presidential contest in Nebraska, the conclusion cannot be escaped that Roosevelt was more of a detriment than an aid to the cause of Hughes. Nevertheless, this intentional confounding of the attitudes of Roosevelt with those of Hughes was both intellectually and morally unjustifiable, even in the heat of a political campaign.

The News, which always purported to be the true voice of the mass-man, also used the "he kept us out of war" cliché in defense of Wilson, but elected to utilize the extensive domestic reforms instituted by the Administration as its principle argument for sustaining the President in power for another four years. Hence, less editorial space was devoted to campaign issues hinging upon the European conflict than was the case with the World-Herald.

The Bee had no real reason for advocating the replacement of Wilson by Hughes as Chief Executive. Hence the approach to the campaign by the Rosewater publication was based upon carping criticisms of the Administration and no true advancement of the qualities of Hughes, per se. Thus the Bee in effect assumed the negative supposition that Hughes, for no stated reason, possessed the qualities of leadership which Wilson allegedly lacked.

The fact that the Republican paper devoted much less space to neutrality issues than did the World-Herald was due to its having focused its attack upon the domestic record of the Democrats. Much of the criticism by the Bee was directed against the Adamson Act. This Administration measure, which granted an eight hour day to

railroad workers engaged in interstate transport, had been rammed through Congress in the middle of the election campaign and had thus averted a nation-wide strike. Undoubtedly the eight-hour law drew the wrath of Dr. Rosewater which might otherwise have been devoted to castigating the Administration on matters pertaining to neutrality and other war-related questions.

Significantly the Bee offered no major defense of the campaign remarks by Theodore Roosevelt which were so roundly denounced by the World-Herald. In view of this, it would seem possible that the local voice of Republicanism may not have agreed with all of Roosevelt's criticisms, especially those which attacked American aloofness at the time of the German violation of Belgium neutrality.

When the Bee raised the question of wartime prosperity, it perhaps pointed to a valid issue. The post-war years were marked by a brief but sharp general depression, with continuing poor economic conditions in American agriculture. This condition had its foundation in a booming industrial and farm output which was largely contingent upon the European war therefore giving it a temporary quality. The Bee did not, however, urge that the United States forsake the acquisition of war prosperity merely for the purpose of keeping the economy of the nation on a more natural peacetime basis.

In summary, it can be stated that partisan lines were the only criteria assumed by the three Omaha newspapers in considering war and neutrality issues in the 1916 campaign.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE PEACE DOVE ESCAPES

#### The German and American Peace Notes

Ever since the Anglo-French armies had checked the advance of the German forces at the Marne in the autumn of 1914, President Wilson had considered making proposals to the belligerent powers which would eventually lead to a peace conference. Early in 1916 he had sent his confidential adviser, Colonel Edward M. House, to Europe to confer secretly with the leaders of the principal nations at war, but these conferences came to naught. Clinging tenaciously to his desire that the United States should be highly instrumental in laying the groundwork for bringing the European conflict to an end, the President, in the weeks following his re-election in November, 1916, formulated a note to be sent to the belligerents informing them that the United States was vitally interested in having the war terminated, and requesting that both the Central Powers and the Entente submit their peace terms in Washington.

As President Wilson's proposal was nearing completion, a note was presented to Joseph Grew, American Chargé d'Affaires in Berlin, which in the name of Germany, Austria-Hungary, Bulgaria, and Turkey, offered to enter into a peace conference with the Allies. This note of December 12 pointed to the successful military endeavors of the Central Powers and asked the United States to convey the German peace conference proposal to the governments of France, Great Britain,

Japan, Rumania, Russia and Serbia. It was added that if this offer were not accepted by the Allies, the Central Powers would be absolved<sup>1</sup> of responsibility for continuing the war.

When the German note was released to the press, all three Omaha newspapers rejoiced over this latest development. The World-Herald interpreted the German move as indicating that the Central Powers were willing to terminate the war on the basis of a draw. While it was frankly stated that "all the weight of passion, of prejudice, of hatred, of national resentment. . . will count against acceptance," the World-Herald also saw major factors in favor of an agreement by the Allies to enter a peace conference:

What will weigh. . . in favor of acceptance, is [ sic. ] the hard, unpalatable facts. Though Germany has the military advantage today, the war is nevertheless a draw. There is no one who can give any reasonable guarantee that the same condition would not prevail should the war be continued a year longer-or five years-or ten. . . . The world is weary of war. 2

In noting the distrust and opposition with which the British and French press generally received the German note the World-Herald made the following observation which, in retrospect, seems prophetic:

It may be said there is no safety for the entente powers unless Germany is crushed, dismembered and disarmed. But certainly in that case there would be no safety for the central powers [ sic. ] either. And a settlement of war on that basis would be to create a festering cancer in the European body that would make anything but a temporary peace or temporary safety impossible to conceive of. . . .

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<sup>1</sup> Robert Lansing, War Memoirs of Robert Lansing, Secretary of State ( Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1935 ) pp. 174-182.

<sup>2</sup> Morning World-Herald, ed., December 13, 1916.

It is difficult to see how any government or combination of governments can take for long upon itself the awful responsibility of refusing to consider, or of refusing to offer, reasonable terms of peace. 3

The Omaha Daily Bee took a most optimistic view of the German proposal when it said that

It is quite within reason to believe that England and France are willing to discuss peace on a basis that concedes to them less than the share of the undefeated. . . . It is not improbable. . . . that negotiations may be advanced early enough to permit an armistice within a fortnight, and give the men in the trenches a real Christmas. Once an armistice is declared, the end may be considered at hand. 4

The Omaha Daily News termed the latest development "a ray of hope," but carefully pointed out that Allied willingness to participate in a peace conference would be contingent upon the tangible war aims of the Allies. The News noted that whether Russia would accept peace without gaining control of the Dardanelles, France would sacrifice Alsace-Lorraine, or Britain would compromise her position as Mistress of the Seas, were all major factors in determining the outcome of the peace movement. It was also pointed out that the question of Italian frontier adjustment demands as well as the future status of Belgium and the Balkans were of primary importance in any over-<sup>5</sup>tures designed to end hostilities.

On December 18, 1916 President Wilson's note asking the belligerents to state the terms under which they would accept peace was

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3  
Ibid., ed., December 14, 1916.

4  
The Omaha Daily Bee, ed., December 14, 1916.

5  
The Omaha Daily News, eds., December 15 and 16, 1916.



dispatched. The American diplomatic officials were instructed to inform the governments to which they were accredited that the request by the United States was in no way related to the recent proposal made by Germany.<sup>6</sup>

In reaction to the President's move, the World-Herald proclaimed that

That power, or that combination of powers, that should have the hardihood not to heed his solemn summons would stand indicted before the bar of judgment of both man and God. He speaks because he has a right to speak. . . . Not only do we feel the present burdens of the war. . . . but we are ourselves in constantly increasing danger of being drawn into it. . . . in defense of rights that we cannot surrender and that maddened and desperate combatants will not respect. And should the United States become involved. . . civilization would have pawned its last precious chattel with the god of war. . . .<sup>7</sup>

The News took a similar position of endorsement and asserted that the neutral nations of the world had a right to know specifically why each nation was engaged in combat and what would be required to terminate the conflict.<sup>8</sup>

The Bee exhibited a different attitude toward Wilson's December 18 note than did the other two papers. While the Rosewater publication admitted that the action of the President was well-intended, it concluded that such a move was not feasible at the moment. As the Bee put it, "so delicate is the present situation that words uttered with the best of intentions by an outsider may sound presumptuous or

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Lansing, op. cit., p. 185.

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Morning World-Herald, ed., December 22, 1916. See also ed. of December 26, 1916.

8

The Omaha Daily News, ed., December 22, 1916.

obtrusive and be liable to misconstruction."

When it became apparent that there would be no acceptance of the proposed German peace conference by the authorities in London, Paris, and Petrograd, the Bee was constrained to admit that the belligerents apparently were far less desirous of peace than were the neutral nations. On December 30, 1916, following a German reply to Wilson's note of December 18, in which Berlin named no specific peace terms, but merely reiterated the conference proposal of December 12, the Allies rejected Germany's offer. The World-Herald took a rather optimistic view of the situation when it observed that

Insistence on the part of the entente allies that the central powers [sic.] name their terms before a conference is held is merely good strategy. . . . It is easy to see that it might be embarrassing to either side to be obliged to name terms, publically, if the other side did not name its terms at the same time. If too severe, they might be rejected out of hand, and neutral sympathy be lost, and with it possibly a considerable measure of home support. If generous terms were pro-offered in the very first instance, then the other side, by countering with stiff terms would be able to enter the conference with the great advantage of having the most "trading stock" at its disposal. 11

On January 10, 1917, the Allies stated their peace terms in compliance with President Wilson's request. The restoration to full

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The Omaha Daily Bee, ed., December 22, 1916. Years later Robert Lansing wrote that he had tried to dissuade the President from sending his long-contemplated note since the Allies would likely, in spite of American statements to the contrary, think that the request by the United States was of German motivation and was in effect, an appendage to the Berlin proposal of December 12. As the Secretary of State put it, Wilson "... lacked the ability of rapid re-adjustment to changed conditions so necessary in the successful conduct of foreign affairs." Lansing, op. cit., pp. 183-184.

10

The Omaha Daily Bee, ed., December 23, 1916.

11

Morning World-Herald, ed., January 2, 1917.

independence of Belgium, Serbia, and Montenegro was demanded, as was the full evacuation of France, Russia, and Rumania by the Central Powers. It was further required that the Ottoman Empire must abandon all of her European territory and that areas taken from any of the Entente nations against the will of their inhabitants should be returned. This last point was meant to include the Italian Tyrol and Alsace-Lorraine.<sup>12</sup>

Little surprise was evinced by the Omaha papers when the harsh Allied demands were released. The Bee concluded that since the belligerents were apparently moving no closer to settling their issues, that "...early peace depends on the moral influence of the neutrals..."

The World-Herald again took a fairly optimistic position and asserted that inspite of the Allied rejection of the German conference proposal and the mutually unsatisfactory replies to the American note, progress was being made and that a growing peace sentiment in Europe was evident. The Hitchcock paper concluded that the peace terms put forth by the Allies were "...about the best the entente [sic.]... could publically announce and retain the loyal and continued support of each of its members."<sup>13</sup>

In the meantime, however, Senator Hitchcock had introduced a resolution indorsing President Wilson's note to the belligerents. This resolution was debated on January 2 and 5, 1917, and was opposed by

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Ibid., January 12, 1917.

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The Omaha Daily Bee, ed., January 12, 1917; Morning World-Herald, eds., January 13 and 15, 1917.

Senators William E. Borah, Jacob Gallinger, and Henry C. Lodge on the grounds that full endorsement of the President's note was dangerous since one section of it could be interpreted to mean that the United States would obligate itself to defend the rights of small nations in future disputes. Accordingly, the Senate adopted the Hitchcock Resolution by a 48 to 17 vote after the measure had been modified by an amendment by Senator Wesley Jones of Washington. Thus the resolution endorsed only the segment of the Wilson note asking the belligerents to set forth their peace terms, and not the introductory remarks which would also have been approved by the unmodified Hitchcock declaration.<sup>14</sup>

In an editorial entitled "Peace, Politics and Palover," the Bee endorsed the Jones Amendment in preference to the original resolution offered by the owner of its competitor. As the Rosewater paper put it, "the [Hitchcock] resolution is sufficiently mild to be the expression of a sewing circle. . . ." The World-Herald praised the St. Louis Post-Dispatch for its backing of the Hitchcock measure and asserted that the belligerents would view the President's note, which also proclaimed the interest of the United States in obtaining peace, as being more authoritative in view of the endorsement by the Senate. The News made no comment concerning the Hitchcock resolution.<sup>15</sup>

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Morning World-Herald, January 5 and 6, 1917; Wilson, op. cit., II p. 404; Congressional Record, 64 Cong. 2nd sess., pp. 635-636, 668, 736-739, 791-797, 830-836, 863, 883-897.

15

The Omaha Sunday Bee, ed., January 7, 1917; Morning World-Herald, ed., January 9, 1917.

### "Peace Without Victory"

On January 22, 1917, President Wilson went before the Senate and delivered one of the most famous of the addresses of his period in office, and one which achieved great stature in the annals of American statesmanship. In this speech, the President stated that the United States would be vitally concerned in the nature of terms which would end the European conflict. As Wilson proclaimed,

The treaties and agreements which bring it to an end must embody terms which will create a peace that is worth guaranteeing and preserving, a peace that will win the approval of mankind, not merely a peace that will serve the several interests and immediate aims of the nations engaged. 16

In arguing for a "peace without victory" the President prophetically asserted that

Victory would mean peace forced upon the loser, a victor's terms imposed upon the vanquished. It would be accepted in humiliation, under duress, at an intolerable sacrifice, and would leave a sting, a resentment, a bitter memory upon which terms of peace would rest, not permanently, but only as upon quicksand. 17

After attaining a just peace, Wilson advocated that a "League for Peace" should then be created among the several countries of the world with an armed force at its disposal greater than that of any nation or combination of nations. Thus a "community of power" would be created which could prevent any international wrongdoing. In the

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Woodrow Wilson, The New Democracy; Presidential Messages, Addresses and Other Papers, 1913-1917, ed., Ray Stannard Baker and William E. Dodd (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1926), II, pp. 408-409.

17

Ibid., p. 410.

post-war settlement, the President stated that the rights of small nations must command the same respect accorded those of the great powers and that naval armaments must be controlled in such a manner as to guarantee the freedom of the seas.<sup>18</sup>

In Omaha, all three newspapers endorsed this address. The World-Herald asserted that

By outlining, in concrete form, the essential articles of this constitution [of a "League for Peace"] President Wilson has gone very far to make practicable what seemed chimerical, and make safe and American to the core a proposed policy for the United States, that before he spoke, had seemed unsafe, if not un-American. 19

In praise of Wilson's dictum that "the paths of the sea must alike in law and in fact be free," the Hitchcock journal reiterated its condemnation for the maritime policies of both Great Britain and Germany. Looking forward to the proposed new world order, the World-Herald rejoiced in that there would be "no more starvation blockades, directed against the innocent, frail and helpless! [and] No more subsea monsters to send unoffending women and children to watery graves!"<sup>20</sup>

The World-Herald proclaimed that, under Wilson's program for a league to maintain peace, the principles of freedom of religious and cultural status, such as existed in the United States, would be extended to the rest of mankind, thus making American participation in the organization desirable.<sup>21</sup>

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Ibid., p. 412. For complete text of address see pp. 407-414.

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Morning World-Herald, ed., January 24, 1917.

20

Ibid., ed. Ibid., ed., January 27, 1917.

The Hitchcock paper rather dramatically concluded that

Mr. Wilson has raised on high, naked and resplendent before the bemired peoples of the earth, the Truth, that alone can set them free. . . . Not Caesar nor Charlemagne accomplished by combined force of arms and statescraft, one-half what Wilson, if he succeeds, will have accomplished by invoking reason. . . . 22

In view of the strong advocacy of the principles put forth in the "peace without victory" address, the World-Herald exhibited little patience with those who criticised the President's speech. William Jennings Bryan for example, was quoted as saying that the American people would not agree to put the armed forces of the United States at the disposal of a "community of power" since to do so would be to give an international council the authority to decide when this nation would go to war. Bryan was also cited as having said that the President's plan for a large extra-national force to be used in the maintenance of world order was contrary to the principle that brotherhood and international co-operation should prevail in the future union of nations. The World-Herald asserted that the Great Commoner had been reckless with the facts since the President had specifically stated that a guiding concept in the formation of a "League for Peace" would be justice for all nations, great and small. Thus the United States would not be endangered by a misuse of its power since the philosophy of the proposed international organization would look

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"... toward the Americanization of the world."

The Omaha Daily News proclaimed that the President had out-

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Ibid., ed., January 24, 1917.

23

Ibid., ed., January 25, 1917.

lined the basis for a "federation of the world" which had been poetically advocated by Alfred Tennyson. The News while approving Wilson's plan, nevertheless told its readers that the projected pooling of military strength in the post-war league would entail a drastic re-evaluation of the traditional American policy of isolationism.<sup>24</sup>

The Omaha Daily Bee, in voicing its approval of the President's address, stated that his unequivocal remarks in support of a peace settlement wherein there would be no conquered powers and which would guarantee the freedom of the seas, armament limitations, as well as political self-determination for all peoples, would interject a neutral United States into any negotiations aimed at ending the war. As the Bee noted, this "... would make us participate indirectly in the peace negotiations by serving notice that any other settlement would not be satisfactory and advising the peacemakers of the consequences of ignoring our desires."<sup>25</sup>

The above observations by the Bee indicated that the local Republican journal had realized a deeply significant probability which had apparently overlooked by the other papers. As Robert Lansing later wrote, the President had taken cognizance of the failure of the German peace conference proposal and his own note in leading to any concrete steps toward a cessation of hostilities. Hence he had ostensibly placed his concepts of a world peace before the Senate, owing to the constitutional status of that body on questions of foreign affairs, but

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The Omaha Daily News, eds., January 23 and 28, 1917.

25

The Omaha Daily Bee, ed., January 23, 1917.



in reality was appealing to the people of the belligerent nations for  
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 their support in obtaining a just and permanent settlement. Thus,  
 it seems that the Bee possessed an awareness of the unusual orien-  
 tation of President Wilson's address.

With obvious political overtones, the Rosewater paper noted  
 that a Republican, ex-President William H. Taft, had originally  
 proposed a "League to Enforce Peace" similar to that outlined by  
 Wilson. The Bee therefore asserted that the World-Herald was incon-  
 sistent in referring to President Wilson's plan as being "safe and  
 American to the core," while it had earlier made no kind remarks  
 27  
 concerning the peace program of Taft.

The Bee expressed with greater clarity the concept of the News  
 that the Wilsonian peace program meant an abandonment of tradi-  
 tional American aloofness from the affairs of Europe, As it stated,

What seems to us plain is that, regardless of previous pre-  
 cedent and tradition, the new situation, precipitated by the world  
 war, not overlooking also the expanded sphere of American influ-  
 ence in consequence of our war with Spain, puts us where we have  
 no alternative but to take our part in the readjustment of the world-  
 power balances if we are to protect our own interests. 28

Later, in a short editorial, the Bee added that

President Wilson's advocacy of an international police force to  
 maintain peace is another way of hinting that considerable water  
 [has] passed under the bridge since Washington warned his  
 countrymen against "entangling alliances." 29

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Lansing, op. cit., pp. 193-194.

27

The Omaha Daily Bee, ed., January 25, 1917.

28

Ibid., ed., January 23, 1917.

29

Ibid., ed., January 27, 1917.

### Chapter Conclusion

The reaction of the Omaha press toward the peace notes of December, 1916 illustrates the essentially calm and moderate position assumed by these newspapers toward the whole question of the war and American neutrality. While it can be seen that these publications exhibited a strong measure of hope and logic in that world peace would soon come, they did not attempt to elevate the expectations of their readers to an undue level.

Of greater significance was the full-fledged endorsement by the local press of President Wilson's famed "peace without victory" speech. The request of the President that the United States should pool its armed strength with that of other nations of the world in a "League for Peace" in order to maintain a post-bellum world tranquillity was calmly accepted by the Omaha press as one of the facts of life. Indeed, the blunt remark by the Bee that "... considerable water [has] passed under the bridge since Washington warned his countrymen against entangling alliances" does nothing to support the long-assumed contention that isolation from the affairs of Europe was the sine qua non of Midwestern attitudes toward American Foreign affairs. Thus did the Omaha papers endorse the position of the President that while no nation should lose the war, all nations must, for the future security of civilization, win the peace. In this endorsement, an attitudinal flexibility was shown wherein it was admitted that changing world conditions had considerably modified the relationship of the United States to the rest of the world.

## CHAPTER IX

### WAR COMES TO AMERICA

#### The German Declaration of Unrestricted Submarine Warfare

Late in the afternoon of January 31, 1917, the German Ambassador, Count von Bernstorff, called at the Department of State and handed Secretary Lansing a note from Berlin stating that as of February 1, Germany would reinstitute unrestricted submarine warfare in a zone encompassing France and the British Isles. According to this note, the German Government, constrained by the hunger blockade of the Allies, had no other alternative than to terminate the Sussex pledge of May 4, 1916. Thus, while the Kaiser's government would permit one pre-designated passenger vessel to make weekly voyages between the United States and the port of Falmouth, England, all other vessels, both neutral and belligerent, were to be sunk without warning within the war zone.<sup>1</sup>

In Omaha, the World-Herald, after recounting the recent peace overtures and the optimism which they had created, remarked that "seldom in history... has a whole people been subjected to so bewildering a shock. Little wonder if our nerves, today, are frazzled, and our minds dazed." While the World-Herald warned its

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<sup>1</sup> Robert Lansing, War Memoirs of Robert Lansing, Secretary of State ( Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1935 ), pp. 210-211; Morning World-Herald, February 1, 1917.

readers of the extreme gravity of the new situation, it did not feel that the latest German move was tantamount to the entrance of the United States into the war. After condemning British as well as German encroachment upon American rights on the high seas, the Hitchcock journal dropped a hint as to how the United States might avert involvement in the great conflict:

It is the same lawless situation... that existed in the Napoleonic wars, and that led Jefferson to seek to avoid war by imposing a complete embargo on all American shipping.

Jefferson did not succeed in saving this country from war. As long as the door of peace is not entirely closed we may yet nourish the hope that Wilson will succeed where Jefferson failed. 2

Thus it can be observed that the World-Herald, if the above comments can be interpreted to mean that the paper favored a trade embargo with Europe in order to preserve the peace of this country, was actually reiterating a position it had taken at the start of submarine warfare over twenty-three months previous.<sup>3</sup>

The next day, the World-Herald, in a lengthy editorial entitled "New York and Omaha," sought to contrast public reaction in the Middle West toward the German crisis with that prevailing on the eastern seaboard as reflected by the New York Times:

There is no excitement in Omaha. There is little war sentiment. There is more than a little quiet indignation... and most of it is directed against Germany. But there is indignation against the entente allies too, and a disposition to blame them, as well as

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Morning World-Herald, ed., February 2, 1917.

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Supra. pp. 44-46.

Germany, for lawless methods, [of naval warfare] and for a flouting of neutral rights. . . . There is quite a widespread sentiment, by no means confined to German sympathizers, in favor of keeping our citizens and ships out of the war zone rather than wage war to establish their right to be there. It isn't because Omaha people are cowardly. . . . [but because]. . . . Western people have a habit for detached thinking. . . . 4

While the moment when diplomatic relations with Germany were to be severed was only hours away, the World-Herald viewed a possible American entrance into the European conflict as quite infeasible when it concluded that:

Merely to declare war would hardly be satisfactory. It would be too much like saying "I hate you" and making faces and shaking fists. . . . at a safe distance of ten miles or so. It would be necessary to fight if we were to get anywhere. . . . How could we get at our antagonist. . . . ? Where is our army? We haven't enough of it for the Mexican border even now—and Villa. . . . is getting stronger. Would we entrain the state militia and try to land it, somehow in France? Would we send our insufficient and poorly supplied navy to join the great British navy in doing nothing but enforce an illegal blockade that is already airtight? 5

The German declaration evoked little immediate comment of any significance in The Omaha Daily News. This paper merely urged its readers to support President Wilson, whether he should choose to send a protest to Berlin, forbid American ships and citizens from entering the war zone, or sever diplomatic relations with Germany. 6

The Omaha Daily Bee likewise made little immediate comment upon the resumption of unrestricted submarine warfare. What this

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Ibid., ed., February 3, 1917.

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Ibid., ed., It would seem that the World-Herald did not realize that the above remarks were quite inconsistent with the praise which it had accorded the Administration preparedness program some months earlier.

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The Omaha Daily News, ed., February 1, 1917.

paper did say, however, amounted to a minimization of the danger of the latest crisis as witnessed by the remark that "not much greater destruction of property may follow the new [German sea warfare] policy than heretofore, unless it should result from the employment in the campaign of an increased number of submarines." <sup>7</sup>

### Diplomatic Relations Severed

On February 3, 1917, the United States severed diplomatic relations with Germany as a result of the policy of unrestricted submarine warfare adopted by the Kaiser's government.

In Omaha, all three newspapers endorsed the decision of President Wilson without qualification. The World-Herald viewed both the resumption of unrestricted submarine warfare and the ensuing American break with Germany as the result of inexorable circumstances brought on by the war. As the Hitchcock paper observed,

There is, in the whole situation, a cruel fatality. Germany no more desires war with the United States than the United States with Germany... [Germany]... chooses lawless ruthlessness in preference to unconditional surrender to an enemy proposing harsh terms. And the United States is thereupon presented by [sic.] the necessity of defending the lives of its citizens on the world's highways even at the cost of war. <sup>8</sup>

The World-Herald, realizing that the situation was most unfortunate for the many Americans of recent German background, praised the position taken by The Omaha Daily Tribune. This German language publication had strongly endorsed the break with Germany and

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<sup>7</sup>

The Omaha Daily Bee, ed., February 2, 1917.

<sup>8</sup>

Morning World-Herald, ed., February 6, 1917.

had implored its readers to recognize that their first allegiance was to the United States. Likewise, the World-Herald expressed its admiration for State Representative Fred Hoffmeister of Imperial ~~Germany~~ who introduced a resolution in the Nebraska House of Representatives which would endorse the severance of relations with the Reich by President Wilson. After pointing out that Representative Hoffmeister was born in Germany and had relatives in the Kaiser's Army, the Hitchcock journal concluded that "we are one race and one people in America today. The menace that has risen... has established our national unity and fraternity and consecrated us all alike to the one Flag."<sup>9</sup>

After a week had elapsed since the break with Berlin, the World-Herald was disposed to view the crisis with Germany with increasing optimism. This measure of optimism by the local Democratic organ was enhanced by the realization that American diplomatic relations with the Austro-Hungarian Empire were still intact, and that an important channel of communications between the authorities in Washington and Berlin remained open. Thus did the World-Herald hope that rapproachment or a modus vivendi between the United States and Germany might be achieved since "... Vienna, politically speaking, is only another name for Berlin."<sup>10</sup>

The Omaha Daily News, in support of the action taken by the Administration with respect to Germany, remarked that "only the

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid., ed., February 5, 1917.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., ed., February 10, 1917.

knowledge that the American people will back President Wilson solidly... will cause European governments to heed America's warnings and measure America's demands in their proper worth." The News, however, sought to impress upon its readers the fact that the diplomatic break by no means meant that war with Germany was inevitable. Showing its old animosity for certain pressure groups and interests, the local independent journal urged that the citizenry should close its ears "...to the shrieks of the jingoes, munitions manufacturers, owners of war baby stocks and war-profit ship mongers, who are loudly calling upon President Wilson to plunge the United States into the shambles."<sup>11</sup>

When cable dispatches indicated that the American ambassador to Berlin, James Gerard, was being delayed in his departure from Germany on the grounds that the German envoy to Washington had not been granted a safe conduct home, the News viewed the matter with suspicion. It was concluded that there was some plausibility to contentions from certain quarters that Germany was seeking to develop an incident whereby the United States would be drawn into the war, and the Kaiser's government could honorably sue for peace. Hence, with the United States as a recent, dispassionate, but idealistic belligerent, the German Empire would be able to acquire more lenient peace terms in contrast to the severe demands outlined by the Allies.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup>  
The Omaha Daily News, ed., February 4, 1917.

<sup>12</sup>  
Ibid., ed., February 8, 1917.



The Omaha Daily Bee, like its competitors, asserted that in view of the Sussex settlement, wherein Germany agreed to take precautions for the safety of non-combattants on the high seas from the submarine danger, the new policy had left President Wilson with no other choice but to sever relations. In pointing out that our continuing diplomatic relations with Austria-Hungary might lead to a modification of the unrestricted submarine program of Berlin, the Bee showed little confidence in any positive developments accruing from this situation. As the Rosewater organ stated,

It is unthinkable that Germany should have undertaken to resume the policy of "schrechlichkeit" on the high seas for [the] mutual benefit of its comrades in arms as well as itself, except as a war measure agreed upon by all with joint assurance for carrying it through and taking the consequences. 13

The Bee, soon after the break with Germany, piously urged its readers to unite behind President Wilson, regardless of their national origins or their political affiliations. Two days later however, the local Republican oracle noted that in view of the crisis with Germany the army and navy had entered upon further defense measures. This evoked the distinctly partisan conclusion that this action was "... just another demonstration of the superiority of the hindsight over the foresight of the democratic [sic.] party." In spite of certain exceptions, such as that just cited, the Bee, like the other two

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13

The Omaha Daily Bee, eds., February 4 and 6, 1917.

14

Ibid., eds., February 5 and 7, 1917.

Omaha papers, exhibited an almost monolithic support of the Wilson Administration in the period following the break with Germany.<sup>15</sup>

"A Little Group of Willful Men"

On February 26, 1917, following the sinking of the American schooner Lyman M. Law and other incursions upon the maritime rights of the United States, President Wilson went before Congress to request means whereby such outrages could be prevented. To protect American commerce, the President asked Congress for its approval in arming the vessels of this country in order that they might ward off attacks by German submarines. While Wilson informed the legislators that he no doubt, by general implications possessed the right to take such a step, he wished to add weight to his action by obtaining the approval of Congress before embarking upon a program of armed neutrality.<sup>16</sup>

To effect the President's armed neutrality program, bills were introduced into the Senate and the House of Representatives which provided for a one hundred million dollar bond issue, the proceeds of which would be allocated to the War Risk Insurance Bureau in order that this agency might provide coverage for armed commercial vessels. All American craft entering the war zone were to be provided by the United States Navy with an adequate gun and a gunner.<sup>17</sup>

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15

Ibid., eds., February 10 and 11, 1917.

16

Woodrow Wilson, The New Democracy; Presidential Messages, Addresses and Other Papers, 1913-1917, ed. Ray Stannard Baker and William E. Dodd (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1926), II, pp. 428-432.

17

Morning World-Herald, February 27, 1917.

Ostensibly, the World-Herald had no doubts that the armed neutrality legislation would be enacted and termed any other course of action as being "unthinkable." Yet what was "unthinkable" soon came to pass, for during the afternoon of March 1, after the slightly divergent House and Senate bills had been passed and reported back from conference committee, a relatively small number of Senators decided to thwart the final enactment of the unified measure. This group, which was ultimately composed of twelve men, was under the leadership of Senators Robert LaFollette of Wisconsin and George Norris of Nebraska. Since these individuals felt that the armed ship legislation would relinquish Congressional possession of the power to declare war and would put the Chief Executive in a position whereby he could lead the nation into the European conflict, they instituted a filibuster in view of the fact that Congress would adjourn at noon on March 4. In spite of the efforts of Senator Hitchcock, who was temporarily the ranking member of the Foreign Relations Committee and therefore the floor leader of those favoring the bill, the LaFollette-Norris filibuster was a dramatic success and the short session of Congress ended without the President's armed neutrality legislation being enacted.

In the wake of this action the President publically proclaimed that "a little group of willful men, representing no opinion but their

own, have rendered the great Government of the United States helpless and contemptible," while the newspaper of Senator Hitchcock was equally vehement in denouncing the filibuster. After pointing out that thirty Republican and forty-six Democratic Senators had signed a manifesto stating that they would have voted for the armed neutrality bill if given a chance, the World-Herald observed that the filibuster was justifiable on technical but not on moral grounds. As it remarked editorially, the leaders of the filibuster

... had no right to prevent the government from functioning in the greatest foreign crisis in which this republic has been involved ... To the full extent that reckless abuse of their power made possible, these senators have placed our President naked before the enemies of our country, [and] before the assailants of our peace. They have advertised the United States to those trespassing upon its rights and honor as a poor, weak thing without the courage or the will to defend itself-- without, even, the power to defend itself if it wishes! 19

Later, the World-Herald denied the charge of those who had conducted the filibuster that Congress had been asked to surrender its war-making power to the President. It was asserted by the local Democratic journal that a vast majority of both houses of Congress had desired to adopt an armed neutrality program such as had been used to keep the United States out of war during the Administration  
20  
of John Adams.

The World-Herald found it necessary to reply editorially to verbal attacks upon its owner who had led the Senate forces seeking

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19

Wilson, op. cit., II, pp. 433-435; Morning World-Herald, March 5; ed., March 7, 1917.

20

Ibid., eds., March 7, 8, 9 and 11, 1917.

passage of the armed ship bill. For example, the Hastings Tribune charged that Hitchcock had deserted his former position of having opposed arms and munitions shipments to the belligerents and was now backing legislation which would arm vessels carrying these items. The World-Herald admitted that while Hitchcock had originally endorsed an amendment to the armed ship bill offered by Senator William Stone of Missouri which would have forbidden the arming of vessels carrying war munitions, he had later withdrawn his support of the Stone modification. Since Hitchcock felt that under the precedents for armed neutrality, the President would be obligated to forbid the arming of vessels transporting munitions, thus making the Stone amendment unnecessary. It was also urged that this amendment would imply a measure of distrust concerning the faith of the President in upholding the obligations of neutrality. The World-Herald concluded its exchange with the Hastings Tribune by pointing to a recent speech in which Senator Hitchcock had reiterated his earlier opposition to arms and munitions exports, thus indicating that the position of its owner on this question had not changed.

The World-Herald made little comment upon a modification by the Senate of the rules of that body so as to allow, upon the motion of sixteen Senators by an affirmative vote of two-thirds of the members, that debate could be limited to one hour per speaker. Likewise no significant discussion was accorded the decision of Wilson on March 9,

to arm American merchantmen on his own authority. The filibuster question was briefly reviewed in the columns of the Hitchcock journal following the public announcement of a letter from Senator Norris to Governor Keith Neville in which he offered to abide by the results of a state recall election and resign from the Senate if the vote went against him. While the World-Herald felt that a recall vote was not necessary since the term of the junior Nebraska Senator expired within a year and a half, it asserted that if the United States were constrained to enter the war,

... the blame will not all... rest upon the Kaiser and the European belligerents. A part of it will have to be endured by men like Senator Norris, who, with whatever motive, co-operated and conspired to make our government and people appear weak and divided at a time when unity and strength were essential safeguards of our peace. 23

Following a speech in Lincoln in which Norris told his audience that Wilson, by the Armed Ship Bill, had sought to rule Congress as if he were Czar, the World-Herald reversed the comparison and asserted that,

when Senator Norris and his associates by the power of mere physical endurance prevented Congress from acting [on] ... the bill which nine-tenths of the members favored, then those senators were guilty of a despotic abuse of power the same as when a Czar dissolves the Duma to prevent its acting in opposition to his imperial will. 24

The Bee, following President Wilson's request for legislation

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22

Ibid., March 9 and 10, 1917; Norris, op. cit., p. 182.

23

Morning World-Herald, ed., March 20, 1917. See also ed., March 22, 1916; Norris, op. cit., p. 185.

24

Morning World-Herald, ed., March 28, 1917; Norris, op. cit., pp. 183-187.

to effect an armed neutrality, like the World-Herald assumed that the necessary bills would easily pass as a result of strong bi-partisan support. Soon, however, the Rosewater publication stated that the proposed armed ship legislation had a dangerous quality in that the powers granted to the Chief Executive were sweeping and ill-defined, even though Wilson had no intention of usurping the war-making prerogative of Congress.

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Following the successful execution of the Senate filibuster, the Bee calmly stated that the failure of the Armed Ship Bill to come to a final vote was relatively unimportant since President Wilson undoubtedly possessed the power to carry out an armed neutrality program. According to the Bee, Wilson was partially responsible for the failure of neutrality legislation since he could well have requested Congressional action immediately after the severance of diplomatic relations with Germany, rather than on February 26, which was so near the end of the session.

26

After the President had taken to task those who had engaged in the Senate filibuster, the local Republican journal replied that

Senators who are in opposition to the president [ sic. ] resent, and properly so...his public expressions denouncing them as "unpatriotic." In his chagrin at being refused a "blank check" the president evidently overlooked the fact that he was criticising a co-ordinate branch of the government, into whose keeping the making of war is placed by the constitution. 27

25

The Omaha Daily Bee, ed., February 26 and 28, 1917.

26

Ibid., eds., March 5, 6 and 10, 1917.

27

Ibid., ed., March 10, 1917.

In view of Senator Hitchcock's strong support of the armed neutrality legislation, the Bee did not miss the opportunity to bait its competitor for the unequivocal position which it had assumed:

After so long championing the German "ruthlessness," our amiable hyphenated contemporary now goes the gamut of double-shotted hysterics to prove its single-minded patriotism and blind devotion to the president. The W-H man is bewildered, if not delirious-that's very evident! 28

The Bee took a rather indefinite position on the rule limiting debate adopted by the extra session of the Senate. While the Rosewater paper felt that some means should be adopted whereby a Senate minority could, under certain conditions, be induced to yield to the will of the majority, it concluded that a way likewise had to be determined whereby the traditional rights of minority members could be upheld. Thus it could not be clearly ascertained as to the actual attitude of the Bee concerning the LaFollette-Norris filibuster. <sup>29</sup>

In regard to the proposal by Senator Norris that a recall vote be taken concerning his further tenure of office, the Bee like the World-Herald felt that such action was unnecessary in view of the fact that he was in the latter part of his term. The indefinite stand assumed by the Rosewater paper concerning the Senate filibuster was further revealed in its response to the Lincoln speech of the Republican Senator from Nebraska. As the Bee put it, "considering the persistent efforts made by President Wilson to keep the country

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28

Ibid., ed., March 5, 1917.

29

Ibid., eds., March 6 and 8, 1917.



honorably out of war, Senator Norris' assertion of White House<sup>30</sup> czarism reflects little credit on the senator's common sense."

After urging prompt passage of the armed neutrality legislation, The Omaha Daily News took a moderate position on the ensuing filibuster. It stated that in view of the worsening position of the United States with respect to continuing peace with Germany, the failure of enactment of the Armed Ship Bill could be construed by the Kaiser's government as indicating that the United States was divided as to the question of the maintenance of American rights upon the high seas. On the other hand, the News asserted that the Senators who had engaged in the filibuster had some justification for their action in that one of the major causes of the European conflict was to be found in the control of the war-making power by monarchs in certain countries,<sup>31</sup> rather than in the legislative branch of these governments.

While it did not discuss either the adoption of the limited debate rule by the Senate, or the arming of merchantmen on the authority of the President, the News strongly praised Senator Norris for his willingness to submit to a recall vote. Although the local independent paper felt that the voters of Nebraska viewed such action as unnecessary, the News stated that "so far as the records disclose no United States senator... has ever been this particular as to what his constituency might think of his acts." It was further stated that the honest opposi-

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Ibid., eds., March 20 and 28, 1917.

31

The Omaha Daily News, eds., February 27, March 4 and 5, 1917.

ition of Norris to the armed neutrality program contrasted to the intolerant stand in support of the legislation taken by Senator Hitchcock. Like the Hastings Tribune the News asserted that Hitchcock's championship of the Armed Ship Bill, which it claimed would cover vessels laden with arms and munitions, was a betrayal of the ostensibly lofty position of self-righteous contempt with which the owner of its competitor considered these exports a year earlier.

#### Reaction to the Zimmermann Note

In all the major newspapers, the headlines of March 1, carried reports of a German plot against the security of the United States which created general indignation throughout the country. The day before, the State Department had released a telegram, which had been sent from German Foreign Secretary Alfred Zimmermann to Ambassador Bernstorff in Washington who, on January 19, 1917, transmitted the dispatch to the German Legation in Mexico City. This so-called Zimmermann note proposed that in the event that America entered the war against Germany, Mexico would ally herself with the Kaiser's government and attack the United States. While receiving financial aid from Berlin, Mexico was also promised the return of her "lost territory" in Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona for participating in the war. Finally, the Zimmermann note proposed that Mexico seek aid of Japan in making war on the United States, while at the same time

she should endeavor to arrange a peace between the Japanese and  
 33  
 German Empires.

Of the three Omaha newspapers the World-Herald reacted in the most vitriolic manner to the Zimmermann note. After condemning Count von Bernstorff, who relayed the dispatch from Berlin to Mexico City, for "...abusing the hospitality of the United States to further... a sinister conspiracy against its happiness and security," the Hitchcock paper went on to say that

... the German government... stands exposed to the world, caught in the act, branded with hypocrisy and double-dealing... It was deliberately plotting to bring down upon this country pillaging and plundering and greedy invaders from the south and west. It was promising to parcel out the United States territory-sovereign states of this union included!... And while it was doing these things it was still professing friendship.

This newspaper... has thought, and still thinks, that Great Britain and Russia are about as much responsible for the war as are Germany and Austria-Hungary. It has not yielded to the notion that purely altruistic motives inspire the one side and a fiendish purpose the other. . . But there can be no neutrality in the heart of any patriotic American when the issue shifts from Germany against Great Britain to Germany against the United States....

... In the light of things as they are, for Germany now to achieve victory would mean a frightful danger to this republic. 34

When the Japanese Government denied as "ridiculous" any possibility that it would join Germany and Mexico in hostilities against the United States, the World-Herald was inclined toward a disbelief. It was pointed out that Japan would attack this country if self-interest

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33

Lansing, op. cit., p. 226. Lansing gives the complete text of the note.

34

Morning World-Herald, ed., March 2, 1917.

dictated and that such was possible since she possessed no "Christian system of ethics," Thus the distrust exhibited toward Japan at the start of the war was again made manifest by the Hitchcock publication.<sup>35</sup>

The Omaha Daily Bee viewed the Zimmermann note as being an example of tactlessness in diplomacy as well as a source of embarrassment for German sympathizers in the United States. The local Republican paper added that President Wilson would have promoted the confidence in his armed neutrality program had he mentioned the intercepted German dispatch in his address to Congress on February 26.<sup>36</sup>

The Omaha Daily News asserted that if the United States, in view of the Zimmermann note, were to remain at peace with Germany, it would do so not as a result of any efforts by the Kaiser's government, but in spite of the acts of the Berlin authorities. The News added that the revelation of the proposal to Mexico was an excellent reason why the President's armed neutrality program should be adopted by Congress.<sup>37</sup>

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Ibid., ed., March 5, 1917.

36

The Omaha Daily Bee, eds., March 2 and 5, April 1, 1917. According to Robert Lansing, State Department Counselor Frank L. Polk had informed President Wilson of the Zimmermann note at an early date, apparently before the February 26 address to Congress. While Wilson had been disposed to immediately make the contents of the note public, Polk dissuaded him from doing so until after the return of the Secretary of State to Washington on February 27 from a brief vacation. See Lansing, op. cit., p. 227.

37

The Omaha Daily News, eds., March 1 and 4, 1917.

### Attitudes Toward the March Revolution

On March 16 and 17, 1917, the newspapers carried reports of the abdication of Czar Nicholas II of Russia and the subsequent ending of the three-hundred year old Romanoff dynasty following food riots and a military revolt in the capital city of Petrograd. Dispatches soon followed which indicated that a provisional government composed of some of the leading members of the Duma, or national assembly, had been created, with the view that a republican system was about to be inaugurated in Russia.<sup>38</sup>

All the Omaha newspapers endorsed this change. Hoping that the fall of the Czar meant a gigantic step forward for the cause of democracy, the World-Herald remarked that "...we may expect to see Russia take its rightful place in the sisterhood of peoples, a menace no longer, but a sister indeed."<sup>39</sup>

The World-Herald realized however, that a virtual coup d'état by no means insured the success of liberal government in the Muscovite realm. After observing that the provisional government of the Duma faced a grave problem of supplying the armies and the civil population with food and that it had to hold the support of a citizenry eighty-five per cent illiterate, the Hitchcock journal pointed out that a week of revolution could not undo the evils of centuries of misrule under the czars.<sup>40</sup>

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Morning World-Herald, March 16 and 17, 1917.

39

Ibid., eds., March 16 and 17, 1917.

40

Ibid., ed., March 7, 1917.

The Bee asserted that the Russian revolution was not the surprise that it seemed to be, since, largely as a result of famine and other war-related problems, a Duma majority in 1915 of three hundred members in support of the policies of the government had, within the last two months, been converted to an opposition majority of the same figure. The Bee, like the World-Herald, felt that the revolt was a step toward democracy in Russia, but owing to the densely ignorant status of the population, there was a strong likelihood of an oligarchy of capable men ruling for some time. As the Rosewater paper realistically put it,

... the actual participation of the people [in the government] on a basis approximating republican forms as understood in the United States or France, or the limited monarchy of England, is scarcely within the range of possibilities yet. 41

The Omaha Daily News noted, as did the other two papers, that the new Russian government had a myriad of difficulties to traverse before it would be able to stand as a democracy in the western sense of the word. The News asserted that the Russian Revolution had been inevitable and that it had come in spite of the fact that Nicholas and other autocratic rulers had led their subjects to war as a futile means of stemming the tide of democracy.<sup>42</sup>

When the United States accorded diplomatic recognition to the provisional government of Russia on March 22, the Omaha press was united in praise of the Administration for this act. The News exem-

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The Omaha Daily Bee, eds., March 16, 17 and 19, 1917.

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The Omaha Daily News, eds., March 16, 19 and 25, 1917.

plified local editorial feeling toward the recognition of the new Petrograd government when it commented that "it was essentially our part not only to encourage the democrats of Russia, but also to show the rest of the world our joy that one more autocratic kingdom has gone out of existence."<sup>43</sup>

### The Declaration of War

As the month of March, 1917 passed along, it gradually became apparent that in spite of the severance of diplomatic relations with Germany and the implementation of armed neutrality, the German Government fully intended to sink any American vessel that entered the proscribed war zone. On March 14 it was reported that the American vessel Algonquin was sunk without warning, but with no loss of life. Four days later the press carried dispatches telling of the German sinking of two American ships, the Illinois and the City of Memphis, both of which were westbound from the British Isles and were in ballast. On the same day the unwarned sinking of the American vessel Vigilancia was reported, while later information concerning this incident indicated that it had resulted in the death of two United States citizens. It was in the face of this temerity on the part of the German Government, that President Wilson, after due consultation with his cabinet, on March 21 issued a call for Congress to convene on April 2

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Ibid., ed., March 23, 1917; Morning World-Herald, ed., March 24, 1917; The Omaha Daily Bee, ed., March 24, 1917.

in order "to receive a communication concerning grave matters of national policy which should be taken immediately under consideration."<sup>44</sup>

The press reports stated that the emergency session of Congress, the convening of which had been advanced by two weeks from an original date of April 16, was undoubtedly for the purpose of bringing the United States into the war. Hence with this foregone conclusion, the editorial attitudes of the Omaha newspapers in the period between March 21 and April 6, the day on which war was declared, were predicated upon the assumption that this country would enter the conflict against the German Empire.

The most vital issue in the local editorial columns during these last days of peace was the consideration of the military role which the United States would play in the war. In the very significant editorials, the World-Herald revealed its thoughts not only on the military question, but also upon the relationship of the United States to the Entente powers. As the Hitchcock journal remarked,

It is as nearly certain as anything can be, unless the war is prolonged beyond all reasonable expectations, that no American troops will be sent. . . to perish in the European trenches. That would happen only if we became an ally of the Allies and to any such proposal there would be found in Congress and among the people a very formidable opposition. 45

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<sup>44</sup> Morning World-Herald, March 14, 19, 20 and 22, 1917. Lansing, op. cit., pp. 233, 236-237.

<sup>45</sup> Morning World-Herald, ed., March 23, 1917.



The World-Herald pointed out that any military action that this country might take against Germany would have no relationship whatsoever to such issues as the iniquities of the Reich against Belgium or that of German militarism. As late as March 30, the Hitchcock oracle stated that

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It is just as fatal to be starved by a "mistress of the seas" as to be over run by the armies of the imperator....It is largely due to force of circumstances that the aggressions of one of these groups against the United States are bloody while those of the other group are not....

But even though we warred against the same enemy we would not thereupon become the ally of the entente powers. We would not thereupon become committed to their ends and aims, nor to a sanction of all their wartime policies and methods. 47

During this period The Omaha Daily News demonstrated a clear-cut opposition to conscription for military service. In criticising a bill providing for universal service which was being drafted by Senator George Chamberlain of Oregon, the News remarked that

Conscription would not help much in case of war with Germany. It would not raise an army any more quickly than through voluntary call to arms. Nor is there any likelihood that we would need a considerable army, for there is little thought of sending an army to this country.... Conscription is planned chiefly for the purpose of building and maintaining an army after the war. 48

On the evening of April 2, President Wilson addressed the newly-assembled Congress. After reviewing the history of German submarine warfare, the Chief Executive requested that Congress

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46

Ibid., ed.

47

Ibid., ed., March 30, 1917.

48

The Omaha Daily News, ed., March 27, 1917.

pronounce that a state of war existed between the United States and the government of Wilhelm II, which he branded as being a "a natural foe of liberty." To implement the military action of this country, the President requested that one-half million men be raised "upon the principle of universal liability to service."<sup>49</sup>

In consideration of the military aspects of the President's war message, the News felt that

For the purposes of defense, an army of 500,000 seems ample, and conscription, with all its dangers, appears to be entirely unnecessary to get that number of men.

We ought not to raise by conscription a large army that may be used to put down strikes, for instance.

Nor should compulsion be used to raise an army to be sent over seas.

Conscription is considered justifiable only in case of national danger when a country is "put to it" in the matter of defense. 50

The opposite viewpoint concerning military service was taken during this period by the Bee and finally the World-Herald. In support of a program of universal service, the Rosewater journal proclaimed that

If we are to depend upon our boys to fight the battles the nation maybe forced into, reason requires, that we give them the best possible preparation, as well as the most effective arms and the

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Morning World-Herald, April 3, 1917.

50

The Omaha Daily News, ed., April 4, 1917. See also ed., of April 2, 1917 in which the News branded the draft as "antagonistic to democratic principles."

most serviceable of equipment. This is all [that] universal military training means. 51

The day after the News argued against the request by the President for an army raised according to "the principle of universal liability to service," the Bee took its independent competitor to task on the charge that it was seeking to thwart the military efforts of the United States. After noting that many men were enlisting in the armed services following the President's message of April 2, the Bee asserted that "efforts to discourage volunteering, such, for example, as the cunning suggestion of a certain Omaha newspaper that the proposed army is to be used to put down strikes, come close to the borderland of treason." 52

After war resolutions had been introduced into Congress, the World-Herald spoke in favor of a program for universal military training as embodied in the Chamberlain bill. As it stated,

The World-Herald has never been a jingo. It has opposed large standing armies and the notion of compulsory military service. It has looked with mistrust even upon the much milder proposal of universal training. But in view of the state of the world... it has about reached the reluctant conclusion that the time for universal training is at hand. 53

Thus it can be seen that on the eve of America's entrance into

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The Omaha Daily Bee, ed., March 23, 1917. See also front page cartoon of April 4, 1917, which portrays the above-stated concept.

52

Ibid., ed., April 5, 1917. The Omaha Daily Bee had misconstrued the remarks of the News which had actually endorsed the President's request for a half-million man army. The statement concerning the breaking of strikes by the armed forces was definitely applied to a conscript, and not a volunteer army. Supra, p. 186.

53

Morning World-Herald, ed., April 3, 1917. See also ed. of April 5, 1917.

the European war the World-Herald finally made a definite commitment on the question of universal service while the Bee had endorsed such training since October, 1916.<sup>54</sup> The News then, was the sole local opponent to forced military service.

During the period from March 21 to April 6, 1917, when the Omaha press realized that the entrance of America into the war was inevitable, something of a mild patriotic catharsis was noticeable in the local papers. An example of the rising patriotic fervor during most of this period was to be found in the practice of bordering the front and inner pages of the newspapers with small American flags. In commenting upon President Wilson's war message to Congress, the World-Herald helped propagate the concept that the United States had a messianic cause in entering the conflict. In an editorial entitled "For Liberty And Justice," it was stated that America was to fight against "inhuman aggression" and "autocracy" and that

We are to fight for righteousness. We are to fight for an early peace that will save all Europe from destruction. We are to stand for freedom and equity for all peoples, friends and foes alike, once the war is ended. 55

As a step in the establishment of a new and virtuous world order, the World-Herald indicated that the Hohenzollern dynasty would have to be terminated and a German republic established. After stating that such action would reduce Allied fears of Germany, the issue was

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Supra, p. 145.

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Morning World-Herald, ed., April 4, 1917.

brought closer to home by the comment that

If the existing German government should win the war, and become the dominant force of Europe, the United States would have to reckon with its ambitions and resentment, even if we had kept free of the war to the end. The Monroe doctrine would be in jeopardy at the hands of a triumphant power that held in its heart no love for America. 56

Under the heading, "The Rescue of Civilization," the Hitchcock journal proclaimed that the participation of the United States in the war

...makes German victory hopeless and so, in a few months, must either reconcile the German people to the defeat of their existing government or rouse them to the establishment of a democratic government with which [a] peace of equals would readily be concluded. 57

The Omaha Daily Bee, after asserting that the United States would fight along side the "great democracies of the world," reflected the fervor of the day when it announced, following the Senate vote in favor of a declaration of war, that

When we enlist for the defense of human liberty and for the protection of the lives of innocent people using... the highways of the seas which are the common, God-given heritage of all, we must not go in for a "peace without victory," but for a peace that will accomplish the object and forever prevent another lapse into such barbarism. 58

During the final days of peace, the Bee was the only local paper to comment upon the question of American relations with Turkey, Bulgaria, and Austria-Hungary in the event of war with Germany.

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56

Ibid., eds., April 2 and 5, 1917.

57

Ibid., ed., April 5, 1917. See also ed. of April 7, 1917.

58

The Omaha Daily Bee, ed., April 4, 1917.

Aware of German hegemony in the Central Powers group, the Rosewater journal said that the United States would find it a "delicate," if not impossible task to avoid hostilities with the allies of Germany. As future events proved, the above statement was partially correct, since this country eventually entered the war against the Dual Mon-<sup>59</sup>archy, the second-ranking power of the Central Alliance, but remained at peace with Bulgaria and Turkey.

On April 6, following the vote of the House of Representatives in favor of war and the subsequent signature by the President of the war resolution, the Bee clearly demonstrated the recently-found local belief that the United States was fighting for "democracy" as opposed to "autocracy." In cartoons of that day and the next, the common people of the world were depicted in the process of casting down their rulers who claimed to possess their crowns by the doctrine of divine right.<sup>60</sup>

A similar attitude was reflected in the editorial columns of The Omaha Daily News. As that publication stated the day after Wilson's address to Congress,

This is the hour of the German people. . . . If they should refuse to be further ruled by the iron hand of a monarchy like slaves, but should become rulers of themselves, they would immediately put themselves back in their old place in the estimation of the world and in the friendship of the United States.

For whatever the direct cause for which the United States may enter the war, the. . . issue is bound finally to resolve into one of

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Ibid., ed.

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The Omaha Daily Bee, April 6 and 7, 1917.

democracy against German militarism, with all that the latter stands for. 61

Perhaps of some significance in the formation of local attitudes toward the war were the large advertisements by the "Emergency Peace Federation" and the "American Union Against Militarism," both being New York agencies which opposed the entrance of the United States into the war. In advertisements in the World-Herald and the News, these pressure groups urged the reader to help prevent the loss of American life on the battle fields of Europe by sending a telegram to his Congressman requesting that the impending war resolution be defeated. 62

When on the night of April 4, the Senate voted 82 to 6 in favor of the war resolution and the House sustained this measure by a 373 to 50 vote twenty-eight hours later, the formal entrance of the United States into the great conflict awaited only the approval of the President which was obtained at 1:18 P.M. Washington time on April 6. Among those who voted against the war measure were Senator George W. Norris, and Representatives Charles Sloan, C. F. Reavis, and Moses Kincaid. Thus one-half of the Nebraska Congressional delegation stood in opposition to the war resolution. The only important local editorial comment concerning the Nebraska war vote in

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The Omaha Daily News, ed., April 3, 1917. See also ed. of April 6, 1917.

62

Morning World-Herald, March 31 and April 1, 1917; The Omaha Daily News, March 30 and 31, 1917.

Congress came from the World-Herald, which bitterly denounced the position taken by the above-mentioned men. Especially censured was a speech in the Senate by Norris wherein he asserted that America was being led into war by its booming exports of war materials and provision of credit for the Allies which had caused the nation "to put the dollar sign upon the American Flag." In an editorial entitled "Slandering The Republic," the World-Herald stated that Norris knew that the people of the United States had decided that they must enter the war, yet

Knowing this, admitting it, Senator Norris proceeded deliberately to spit upon that cause.

He did his utmost to make it appear wicked and mean and contemptible. 63

The next day the Hitchcock organ proclaimed that Norris, Sloan, Reavis, and Kincaid had voted

... against solidarity in the government and for division among the people in time of war. They combine their energies to make patriotism seem a hideous thing. They seek to plant in the hearts of the people... the worm of suspicion of their own government, [and] of disbelief in the justice of their own cause. They would stir them [the people] to believe that the Stars and Stripes is smirched with dishonor. 64

#### Chapter Conclusion

It can be easily perceived that following the severance of diplomatic relations with Germany, the Omaha press, regardless of

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Morning World-Herald, ed., April 6, 1917; Norris, op. cit., pp. 190-198.

64

Morning World-Herald, ed., April 7, 1917.



political orientation, presented an almost monolithic endorsement of the policies of President Wilson. The only possible exceptions that might be noted were in the rather equivocal position taken by the Bee concerning the Armed Ship Bill and the opposition of the News to raising a wartime army according to "the principle of universal liability to service" as expounded by the President in his April 2 address to Congress.

Significantly, there was not a great amount of bitterness exhibited in the Omaha papers toward the German Government following the diplomatic break on February 3. Not until the release of the Zimmermann note nearly a month later could it be stated that a clear-cut attitudinal turning point toward the Berlin authorities was attained. When it became apparent that the Germans meant what they said concerning the execution of unrestricted submarine warfare, the local papers calmly accepted the likelihood that the United States would enter the war. It is thus quite important to note that only in the two weeks prior to the declaration of war could the existence of anything approaching a war spirit be detected in the journals under consideration, and clearly, this did not reach, for the most part, a fever pitch.

The war spirit which did develop demonstrated no desire to chastise the German people, but only the German Government per se. In this sense, it was a wrathful spirit, for it was predicated upon the destruction of the monarchical system of government within Germany which was supposedly related in a symbiotic fashion to the

great bugaboo of "Prussian militarism." Undoubtedly the overthrow of the Romanoff dynasty in Russia had a great deal to do with the desire on the part of the Omaha papers that the Hohenzollerns and by association, the Hapsburgs, should justly fall before the relentless spread of democratic and republican institutions. It is noteworthy that the Omaha press did not raise any doubts as to whether a republican form of government would be practicable in Germany while it had exhibited quite logical doubts concerning the immediate workability of such a form in Russia.

The desire to crush "autocracy" and "Prussian militarism" was probably the unifying force which alone could give rise to a war spirit. Such a war spirit was, as the veteran American diplomat George F. Kennan observed, quite necessary if the United States were to enter the world conflict, since a democracy is incapable of a great military effort unless it has a sacred cause for which to fight.

Thus the existence of a war spirit in the Omaha press as elsewhere, seems to have had a strong element of logic behind it. While the sinking of great liners such as the Lusitania or the Ancona could easily fire one's spirit with indignation over the brutal slaying of defenseless noncombattants, these cases were by far the exception and not the rule in German submarine warfare. Very few individuals, especially in the Midwest, could conceivably be deeply

moved over the sinking of an obscure bottom carrying cotton to Liverpool for example. Hence, if the sincerity of the elevation by the Omaha papers of the submarine warfare issue to the question of democracy versus autocracy is open to doubt, it may have been a necessary action if a full support of the war effort by their readers was to be obtained.

A fine example of this crusading spirit in action can be noted in the denunciation which the World-Herald meted out to the four Nebraskans who voted against entering the war. The logic behind this highly intolerant stand on the part of the Hitchcock organ would seem to be that if America were to enter the "great crusade" it would have to do so with a monolithic and unquestioning support thus leaving no sympathy for individuals who were not convinced of the holiness of the cause. Indeed, this philosophy may well have been the basis for much of the blind and unreasoning pseudo-patriotism which lent such an unsavory atmosphere to the history of the American home front during the First World-War and to the "big red scare" period immediately afterward.

## CHAPTER X

### General Conclusions

In the area of recent American History there has risen a widespread assumption that the Midwest has traditionally maintained an isolationist attitude toward foreign affairs. While it is not the intent nor is it within the scope of this work to destroy such a firmly-seated article of faith, the facts as set forth in the preceding pages certainly seem to qualify this dogma.

If the term "midwestern isolationism" raises connotations of disinterestedness, ignorance, or intentional avoidance of the question of America's relations with the outside world, then this study of the Omaha press reaction to the problem of American neutrality from 1914 to 1917 emphatically disputes such an assumption. The mere fact that nearly every day of the thirty-two months of conflict prior to April, 1917, witnessed some editorial comment upon the war by at least one and often all three of the Omaha newspapers does nothing to sustain any argument to the effect that the Midwest had very little interest in the war. Since there were literally hundreds of editorials in the Omaha papers which dealt with the various phases of the war having no bearing whatsoever upon the question of American neutrality, it will be realized that a consideration of the great conflict was based largely upon the factor of general reader interest and by no means solely upon its relationship to the United States.

If "midwestern isolationism" meant that the Midwest still adhered to Washington's admonition to his countrymen that they should avoid "entangling alliances" with the European powers, then the existence of such attitudes on the part of the Omaha press during the period under consideration is not easily denied, but can be qualified. Yet this "midwestern isolationism" as exhibited by the Omaha papers seems to have been nothing other than hard-boiled, grassroots political realism. The common realization that war came to Europe in August, 1914, as a result of such deep-seated causes as militarism, and commercial and colonial rivalries, and not as a result of the nefarious combination of ogre-like monarchs indicated that the Omaha press was quite aware of the facts of European political life. Likewise, when the local papers constantly informed their readers that one camp of belligerents did not possess a divine dispensation of truth, justice, and morality as opposed to the other, this political realism was again most plainly evident. In adhering to the President's supplication to be "impartial in thought as well as action," the Omaha newspapers may well have been partially motivated by such a mercenary desire as not to alienate the large number of local readers who were partisans of the Central Powers. The fact remains, however, that a comprehensive spirit of neutrality did prevail in these journals until it was inevitable the United States would join the ranks of the foes of Germany. When this attitude of detachment was abandoned late in March, 1917, the Omaha press was keeping in step with facts as they existed and realized that

adherence to anything but the spirit of the times was infeasible, unpatriotic, and therefore dangerous.

Thus it is the contention of this work that Midwestern thought as reflected by editorial comment in the Omaha press was isolationistic in the sense that it was aware of the fact that the origins of the European conflict and the war purposes of the belligerents by no means warranted the intervention of the United States unless it were necessary to defend traditional neutral rights on the high seas.

That this attitude was essentially idealistic and therefore flexible was further demonstrated in the admission by these newspapers that the United States should abandon the avoidance of "entangling alliances" dictum of George Washington and unite with the rest of the world in a post war organization designed to keep peace. In no sense does it seem that the isolationism of the Omaha newspapers was founded upon a spirit of stubborn provinciality.

Perhaps in one respect the Omaha papers were not typical of other Midwestern publications in regard to the neutrality question. Since the owner of the World-Herald, a paper which during these years was well on its way to becoming the most powerful publication in Nebraska, was the second-ranking member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, matters pertaining to external affairs undoubtedly were brought closer to home in the local editorial columns than they might otherwise have been. Naturally editor Newbranch kept the expressions of the World-Herald in line with the attitudes

of Senator Hitchcock. Thus any attack by the Bee on the actions of Nebraska's senior Senator was an attack upon his rival newspaper. Hence, on occasion, this gave rise to a heightened acrimony. Significantly, The Omaha Daily News, in spite of its open animosity for Hitchcock, never attacked him or his paper on questions of foreign affairs during the neutrality period.

While it was plainly evident that political affiliations or orientations were quite as important as regional factors in determining the attitudes of the Omaha papers toward the problems of neutrality, there was no slavish conformity to the attitudes of the party leaders. This was most clearly illustrated in the positions of the World-Herald and the News on such major questions as the exportation of arms and munitions, the Gore and McLemore resolutions and the preparedness question.

The World-Herald undertook its crusade to prohibit arms and munitions exports to belligerent nations in the face of a contrary position on the part of President Wilson and Secretary of State Bryan. Indeed, the differences between the Hitchcock journal and the Administration reached the point at which the World-Herald branded a note to Vienna by Bryan's successor, Robert Lansing as being "strongly inapplicable" since the message had defended American arms and munitions exports to the Allies. If the World-Herald and the News sought to steer a course of equivocation which would avoid open conflict with that Administration on the Gore and McLemore resolutions designed to keep American citizens from traveling on armed

belligerent vessels, it was obvious that the true sentiment of these publications coincided with that of a large number of Congressional Democrats who favored prohibiting such travel so as to insure that the nation should remain at peace. While the News strongly endorsed the foreign and domestic policies of President Wilson, a major exception was to be found in the fact that this journal viewed the preparedness program with a high degree of suspicion and on the eve of the entrance of the United States into the war, expressed an open opposition to the Administration plan to raise a great army by conscription.

Since the years in which America was striving to stay out of the great world conflagration fell within the heart of the progressive era and witnessed the Wilsonian "new freedom" at its apogee, the neutrality question often became philosophically entwined with these currents of domestic thought. As Frederick L. Paxson noted,

... in the decade of debate over the principles that ripened to endow the Progressive Party, the whole progressive movement acquired a pronounced anti-business slant. . . . The muckrakers had alleged the sins of big business, and had sometimes proven them. It was essential to much of the progressive argument that business was bad. . . . When now business settled down, and discovered that despite the war there was money to be made, and banks and manufacturers and shipping agencies became interested in contracts for belligerent supply, it was easy for the accustomed opponents of big business to assume that business was once more working for its own advantage and against the common good. A war mind pattern, reflecting a conviction that the war was a money-makers war, developed out of progressive thought. <sup>1</sup>

In Omaha, the Democratic World-Herald and the highly liberal independent Omaha Daily News frequently illustrated this tendency

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Frederick L. Paxson, Pre-War Years, 1913-1917 ( Boston: Houghton-Mifflin Company, 1936 ), pp. 165-166.



to raise the battle-cries of the progressive and populist periods and relate them to the neutrality question. This was pointedly manifested in the World-Herald campaign to stop arms and munitions exports, in the treatment of the preparedness movement by this paper and the News, and by the latter in its consideration of Allied incursions on American commerce.

Much of the World-Herald argument against the traffic in war munitions was predicated upon the assumption that the only segment of society which benefited through this trade was Wall Street. Likewise the Hitchcock journal argued that the defense needs of the nation must not be allowed to shower vast wealth upon the captains of industry who would exact exorbitant profits from the public treasury and, worse yet, shackle militarism upon the United States as a result of their insatiable lust for money. A similar attitude toward big business as related to the defense question led the News to make the Bethlehem Steel Corporation its special whipping boy and to exhibit a coldness, if not an open hostility, to the preparedness movement. Finally, when the News exhibited little indignation over British interference with American commerce, it assumed such an attitude of calmness partially as a result of its belief that only a small group of wealthy men were sustaining any losses.

In summary, this study of Midwestern attitudes toward neutrality as reflected by the newspapers of Omaha clearly reveals that one phase of history cannot easily be separated from numerous others. Hence, in this one topic there can be observed the interaction of American frontier, economic, political, and social history, and the history of modern Europe.

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