SOME THOUGHTS ON NEUTRALITY

What is neutrality? Is it a certain approach to Peace? Could it, by any possibility lead to war - the very thing we seek to avoid?

Why do we believe it is a sound policy?

According to dictionary definition, neutrality means to give no active assistance to either or any belligerent force.

Why is such a system helpful to our country? Obviously because it keeps us out of involvements that tend to militate against our peace.

Ours is a peace-loving nation. Only once in our history have we ever fought a war that was motivated by aggrandizement - our conflict with Mexico. There may be cynics who may add that the war with Spain brought us new lands but that was not, I take it, our primary purpose. We may say safely that war is not a part of our national policy. We can assert that our record bears that out. And, finally, we can recall the doctrine of Woodrow Wilson, universally accepted by our nation, that never again would America acquire a foot of territory by war or by forceable annexation.

It becomes logical, therefore, to bend our every effort to the maintenance of peace as our dominant national principle. Admitting that neutrality is a necessary and
essential and an imperative factor in the achievement of our purpose, there can be no dissent from the wisdom of adopting it.

**WHAT PRICE NEUTRALITY?**

Now comes the **rub**. How shall neutrality be defined by statute? How shall it be applied? What price are we willing to pay for it?

If Neutrality and Peace are synonymous are we ready, as a nation, to embark upon or to commit ourselves to a method of achieving peace at any price? Are we ready to abandon, if necessary, the preservation of national honor to achieve our end? And do we realize that the very effort we make toward neutrality might easily become the direct cause of war? Think that over - it is wholly true.

In posing these questions, I do not advocate a course, nor do I wish to create the impression of the impossibility of accomplishment. I set them forth for the consideration of our people so that they may not be deluded by the rosy promises of unilateral action, ignoring the difficulties that impact upon the rest of the world may readily bring.

Does neutrality concern itself only with the question of property and is it to ignore the matter of life? We may arbitrate dollars but we cannot arbitrate death. It was not the first but the second that brought us into war with Germany. It was a continual violation of our national and natural rights by the German government that brought about a state of mind in which there was an agreement that neutrality was no longer possible and that war had become inevitable.
If it be true that it takes two to make a quarrel, it takes two to preserve neutrality. The principles we lay down for our guidance must be obligatory upon ourselves and must, too, be respected by those from whom we are withdrawing.

NEUTRAL IN SPIRIT

True neutrality goes deeper than the denial of business with a belligerent. I quote from the words of an immortal American, Woodrow Wilson:

"I venture, therefore, my fellow countrymen, to speak a solemn word of warning to you against that deepest, most subtle, most essential breach of neutrality which may spring out of partisanship, out of passionately taking sides. The United States must be neutral in fact as well as in name during these days that are to try men's souls. We must be impartial in thought as well as in action, must put a curb upon our sentiments as well as upon every transaction that might be construed as a preference of one party to the struggle before another.

"My thought is of America. I am speaking, I feel sure, the earnest wish and purpose of every thoughtful American that this great country of ours, which is, of course, the first in our thoughts and in our hearts, should show herself in this time of peculiar trial a Nation fit beyond others to exhibit the fine poise of undisturbed judgment, the dignity of self-control, the efficiency of dispassionate action; a Nation that neither sits in judgment upon others nor is disturbed in her own counsels and which keeps herself fit and free to do what is honest and disinterested and truly serviceable for the peace of the world.

"Shall we not resolve to put upon ourselves the restraints which will bring to our people the happiness and the great and lasting influence for peace we covet for them?"

(An appeal for American Neutrality by the President, in the Senate, August 19, 1914)
THE EUROPEAN MENACE

Looking behind the present drama we see, black and portentous, the European scene. We see treaties violated and new concordats entered into by the violators with the very ones with whom they are in violation. It is our effort, at the moment, to express in new words the fixed and traditional policy of America; to be insulated against the quarrels and politics of Europe and the laws of expediency which govern there. Seemingly our task should be easy; actually, it is extraordinarily difficult but try we must. Once there was a time when we could say we would have no part in influencing the conduct of European nations. That course has become difficult.

Our participation in the Great War, which was inescapable, brought about a condition from which we may remain aloof but which, in all accuracy, we must admit that, however unintentionally, we had a part in bringing into being. It is true that the program this country helped enact might have developed differently had certain responsibilities been accepted. But that course was negatived by the votes of the people. That referendum made it increasingly clear that Washington's policy of no foreign entanglements was to be revivified and continued.

Now we are learning how hard it is, albeit however wise it may be, to vitalize a principle laid down 140 years ago under conditions from which those existing today show a difference that taxes the uttermost imagination. Then we were three months away from Europe. Now we are aware instantaneously of its shifts and menaces. The interdependence of the world,
from an economic standpoint, has changed the scene, so much so that no part of it can be affected without all suffering. Then we were UNIMPORTANT. Now we are ALL-IMPORTANT. Every move everywhere has as its postulate the effect upon America. To bring us in or to keep us out is the thought of every country contemplating the possibilities of war. We must fight to win a war, and we must fight just as hard, though with different weapons, to preserve peace. Neither victory is to be achieved solely through our own volition. The repercussions of our policy upon the world inevitably have their effect upon ourselves.

A TWO-EDGED SWORD

Keep this thought in mind: that a strict neutrality, while helpful to us at a given moment, might work a grave injustice which, in time, may react heavily to our disfavor. For example, the embargo of actual weapons of war, now in force, works out to the assistance of a well-armed country like Italy and to the embarrassment of a poorly-armed country like Ethiopia. Were China to resist invasion by Japan, we, by our declaration of neutrality, would be giving aid to the latter by declining to supply the former which needed weapons of defense. To a lesser degree this comment applies to an embargo on money and credit, which would be among the first to be denied - and properly so - to belligerents.

HONOR TOO GREAT A COST

In approaching the process whereby we shall win peace by preserving neutrality, let us consider for a moment conditions under which we might find our efforts nullified.
Let me quote the words of President Wilson in a letter to Senator William J. Stone, dated February 24, 1916:

"For my own part, I cannot consent to any abridgment of American citizenship in any respect. The honor and self-respect of the nation is involved. We covet peace and shall preserve it at any cost but the loss of honor. To forbid our people to exercise their rights for fear we might be called upon to vindicate them, would be a deep humiliation indeed. It would be an implicit, all but an explicit, acquiescence of the violations of the rights of mankind everywhere and of whatever nation or allegiance. It would be a deliberate abdication of our hitherto proud position as spokesman even amidst the turmoil of the war, for the law and the right.***

**It is important to reflect that if we allow expediency to take the place of principle, the door would inevitably be opened to still further concessions. **** What we are contending for is the very essence of the needs that have made America a sovereign nation. She cannot yield them without conceding her own impotency as a nation and making virtual surrender of her independent position among the nations of the world."

I, for one, accept these principles as essential preliminaries to any consideration of our subject. Our economic strength makes that subject all the more portentous, for we touch upon the commerce of the world; we serve all parts of the world. We maintain our standards of life through the business of the world, so much so that even when the most remote regions are affected we, too, are concerned. Our economic sensitivity has become so great as to bring a reaction wherever contact is made or wherever our life touches upon a disturbance.

**NEUTRALITY NEEDS STRENGTH**

Another law that well may be mentioned at this point, governing the situation we are studying, is that any neutrality is good only insofar as the declaring nation can
protect it. It is not enough to put a principle into words, however solemnly they may be expressed; it is imperative that we be capable of backing those words with deeds. We learn again that preparedness is not only the sine qua non in war but the essential element in the protection of peace by the enforcement of neutrality.

We must realize that the very neutrality we seek with the deprivations it imposes upon others might be, in turn, imposed upon us. Let us not lose sight of the fact that to be ready for any contingency we must equip ourselves while time permits, with those essentials we lack and which might be the first to be withheld from us if we should be at war. And even while we are at peace and play a neutral role, we must not forget that the methods we employ against belligerents might be employed by them against us, with a restriction of those commodities which we do not produce within our limits but which are essential to our welfare. I refer to such items as tea, coffee, sugar, rubber, nickel, antimony, manganese, chrome, platinum, tin, mica. These and other essential articles are either not produced in America, or are not yet produced in sufficient quantities. Let it be remembered that we import as much agricultural products as we export. The lack of these things would not only impair our efficiency in war, but would be injurious to our normal industrial output and would therefore affect our standard of living.

One of the by-products of neutrality, strange as it may seem, must be, necessarily, a vast increase in armaments.
Each nation, realizing that in time of war it can no longer expect the normal flow of supplies, will seek to become as nearly self-contained as possible, either through developing resources, or laying up great stores of essentials. Above all, each nation will try to be self-sufficient in a militaristic sense. There is no other way.

**ONE PRICE TOO HIGH**

There is one way to effect neutrality, but I am not prepared to accept it. That is, in time of war, to embargo all shipments of any sort. It is almost impossible to differentiate between war and non-war materials. Obviously rifles, cannons, shot, shell, tanks and the similar implements of war are taboo. But what of foods, of oil, of cotton, of coal, of copper. If foods are to be quotaed and the supply restricted, might we not be delivering the final and most effective blow against any belligerent, by starving them out, with the most pronounced effect upon the non-combatants - the old, the women, the children? In interdicting the weapons of death are we also to deny the flow of the sources of life?

To you in the South, my beloved homeland, there is an immediate question to be answered. That has to do with cotton. The South is really a one-crop region; its cotton fields bring it its living. The crop is an essential to life and has become an essential in the enginery of war. How can we work out a scheme that will enable us to say one bole is virtuous and helpful and shall be permitted a world market, while its sister bole is given over to destruction and shall not be
picked. There has been much talk of sanctions with respect to oil, and there have been only a few references to cotton. Yet, it is our greatest cash crop, one of our principal exports and certainly essential to life in the locality in which it is grown.

I do not urge that the South protest against the proposed regulations. I suggest these points as being worthy of grave discussion before we adopt a policy so drastic as to threaten the economic and social fabric of this section.

**CAN NEUTRALITY LEAD TO WAR?**

If we decline to accept the principle of embargo, which was, at another time in our history adopted as a national policy and was attacked as being cowardly and later withdrawn, then what system shall we devise? There are contained in the bills now pending before the Congress several suggestions that should be cemented into the statutes. But in reducing neutrality to codified form, we must bear in mind there is always the danger of having our action, however well intended, regarded as a war-like measure by those against whom it is enforced. We have before us at the moment Italy's ultimatum that the application of sanctions to oil will be regarded as tantamount to a declaration of war which will be answered by military reprisal. If the present war should spread, which God forbid, and England or France or Germany or other nations be involved, what is to prevent one or all of them from declaring our acts of neutrality to be acts of war against them? What if reprisals follow?

What is to be done?
Shall some nations adhere rigidly to the codes they have adopted and run the risk of embroilment, while others preserve an independence of action and continue their shipments? It seems to me that on the question of adopting sanctions that bear upon a nation's essential requirements, there should be world action. In that way all would be concerned, instead of a few. There would be safety in numbers. I doubt that any government, however mad its course might be, would plunge itself into a war against the world. In concerted action lies perhaps the real safeguard against the danger of neutrality being treated as a war provocation.

To gain the support and cooperation of the other nations of the world we must be the exemplar of right action. That does not imply an unattainable idealism; it requires common sense and fairness and a devotion to the principles that have guided us as a nation. We threaten no country; we are the bearers of the olive branch. We honestly seek peace, not only for ourselves but for others.

As the President said the other day: it is the autocracies which threaten our peace. It is against them that we must guard and act.

**PREPAREDNESS IS ESSENTIAL**

If we want peace, we must be prepared. If we are forced into war, we must be prepared. Neutrality has to do with both conditions. It is not the philosopher's touchstone, which some have painted it as being, enabling us to remain at peace merely by declaring it to be a national policy. We are
learning that neutrality is fraught with dangers and we should learn how to be ready to meet and conquer those dangers.

Sometimes the obvious needs restatement, and so I think myself justified in saying that under the operation of our neutrality laws there must be a determined insistence upon those rights that are specifically reserved to us as a nation and as individuals. If American lives are lost; if American goods are destroyed in spite of our neutrality, there must be a forthright insistence upon responsibility and satisfaction. This should be clearly understood so that there may be no specious pleas made by offenders who deliberately violate a policy that we have adopted as a safeguard. Let such destroyers of our peace be warned that we shall brook no contempt. Let them understand that the life of an American is sacred. But, too, let it be made plain to those adventurers who seek a profit, regardless of the consequence, that they must stand upon their own; that the protection of the flag goes only to those who prove their worthiness by obeying the letter and spirit of our declared policy.

**LAWFUL BUSINESS TO GO ON**

It might be that under the operation of the new law a certain amount of business, lying in the twilight zone, might still be done. But these enterprises must always be without the possibility of embarrassment to the country. Possibly the method may be what I have called the "Cash and Carry" or "Come and Get it" plan. In any event, it must be clear that an American who travels on the ship of a belligerent country does
so at his own risk. It must be equally clear that goods shipped to or for a belligerent country is done, if it be done at all, solely at the risk of the seller. But, as I have said, the nation's protection must cloak citizens on neutral ships sailing to neutral ports. Further, national protection is due to American business engaged in its lawful occasions. And, this guardianship follows whether the travel is by water, on land, or through the air.

**DISCRETION TO PRESIDENT**

Should there be any discretion accorded the President? If so, should it not be within the limitations imposed by the intent of the Congress. It is an open secret that the State Department feels it is under the necessity of having a certain latitude within which to prepare against quickly arising situations that might affect deep national interests although at the moment we might not be directly involved. Further, under too rigid and mechanical an application of our policy, the Executive might be prohibited from action which, if taken in time, could prove the preservative of peace.

We shall, in all probability, make up our own list of what is contraband. There are many precedents to direct our course, precedents created over many years by international action. But the lists become antique as science and industry progresses. What was commercially insignificant yesterday may be finally important today. We need not trouble ourselves here with this question. That decision will rise above petty interests, and I think we may safely assume that it will be
predicated upon national welfare. The effect may be momentarily hurtful but that cost is not too high a price to pay for peace.

"TAIKING THE PROFITS OUT OF WAR"

These thoughts that I have laid before you are not new to me. They may not represent a final expression capable of immediate translation into action but they have the importance, at least, of coming to you from one who for almost twenty years has concerned himself with the theme of "Taking the Profits out of War." I had a part in preparing America for its share in the conflict that shook the world. I was called to my position of Chairman of the War Industries Board by Woodrow Wilson, who assigned to the body of which I was the head, the task of mobilizing men and materials. I like to think our job was well done, and in that belief I have the corroborative testimony of General Pershing and General Harbord who were actively in the field; of the then President of the United States; of the "Father of Victory", Clemenceau, Premier of France; of Winston Churchill, British Minister of Munitions during the war; and finally, our chiefest enemy, Von Hindenburg. So, I do not speak to you as one unversed in his subject, although I confess myself perplexed as to the solutions of some of the problems that confront us.

SANCTIONS MEAN DANGER

And the most inchoate of all is that of sanctions. That is an old word but new in its use. We have become acquainted with it only since the war. We employed it in other
days as meaning permission. It actually means punishment. As applied to a belligerent it means, a boycott. And we know that boycotts are pregnant in possibilities; that they are rarely confined to immediate effect but ramify into social, political and economic consequences that are cumulative and sometimes devastating.

The past has little help to give us, for the factors upon which history is based have changed. War is no longer a tournament between professional men-at-arms but is, in truth, the impact of civilizations. The old rules of war are no longer applicable, except in certain instances touched by universal truths. It is no longer armies which fight; whole nations go into the conflict.

Let us not be in error as to what one aspect of neutrality means; let me direct your attention to this thought: Business would be dealt a terrific blow, and the pressure from farmers, from manufacturers, from exporters of all kinds would be well-nigh irresistible.

DEATH vs. DOLLARS

The answer to the exporter who protests that he is being ruined because he cannot sell abroad is that in peace as well as in war, every man must accept the jeopardy of his occupation or his situation. If we are dragged into war, the young men will be called upon to lay down their lives, while the business men only face the loss of money. If we are determined to stay at peace, as we should, the loss may be confined to dollars, and money is not too much to pay for national welfare. There is a rule possessing unusual appositeness at the moment. I quote:
"Our chief interest is not in the rights of property but in the rights of men."

If a complete embargo of trade to belligerents be chosen as the most certain way to avoid war, we must, of course, take account of the objection that goods shipped to neutrals may find their way to the belligerents. That can be met by setting up a quota system, permitting neutrals to buy from us merely the amount they normally need, based on an average over a term of years. A board could sit to decide upon the merits of appeals from these quotas - appeals based, let us say, on the plea that the shutting off of other flows of supply had altered the situation.

I grant you that, tempted by high prices, the neutrals would deprive themselves of things they need in order to get big profits by reselling to belligerents. As in the last war, they probably would reship imports, and besides that strip their own countries bare, down to melting copper tea-kettles.

Remember that in this discussion we are assuming that we are not engaged in the hopeless effort to attain an ideal and impossible neutrality; we are, above all, trying to stay out of war. But, we must not let ourselves be made the goat, which would be the case, unless other non-belligerents play the game much as we do.

Also, keep this thought in mind: the number of combatants put in the field by a belligerent is the least part of the numbers a warring nation must provide for. It is axiomatic that every man in the field requires six to eight workers at home to supply him. And, in addition to these members engaged
in military operations, there is the great remainder of the civilian population.

As you can see the problem is difficult but it is not insoluble. Already there are bills before the Congress to carry out our determination to avoid war. Whatever is finally incorporated will doubtless take into consideration the difficulties herein suggested. Certainly we should go the uttermost limit.

We must not mumble, jumble, fumble or tumble into war. We must finally, firmly and unalterably make up our mind that we are to stay out. We must resist all blandishments and avoid all embarrassment. That is to be done not merely by declaration of neutrality but by creating a state of mind that shall be closed and immovable. That way lies our salvation.

TO SOUTH CAROLINA

I cannot leave the state of my birth without expressing to you, my brethren in that bond, my sense of pride in glorious South Carolina. There is an instinct in all of us, going deeper than a tradition, that brings elation on our return to this land of strength, reliance and of a striving for the better things. The scent of the country starts the tears to the eyes of one who see it rarely; that scent is the magic that swings back the gates of time and shows us again young and happy. South Carolina has come far from the hard, lean years it knew when the war between the States closed. She is taking her place in the forefront of America in economic progress and in social reform. She has always been and always will be Home
to her sons and daughters who have remained at their own firesides, and, none the less Home to those of us who have been called away.

May her children bring her pride, in return for the pride she has given them. As she has recovered from the prostrations of the Revolutionary, the Civil and the World Wars, so may we, Antaeus-like, gain strength from contact with her and, emulating her example, bring her new glory.