24 DREADNAUGHTS, 350 DESTROYERS, FOR UNCLE'S NAVY

Fleet's Strength in 1920 Will Be Twice That of Last Year

MERCHANT SHIP INCREASES

No Let-Up in Nation's Aim to Put the Flag Again on All Seven Seas

[BY CABLE TO THE STARS AND STRIPES]

AMERICA, Dec. 12.—Our Navy has not only become decidedly big, but the House naval committee, considering naval appropriations for 1920, has developed the fact that the American Navy, in that year, will be double what it was in 1917.

No comparison has been made public as to capital ships, but announcement has been made that the number of all ships will be about 800. Twenty-four dreadnaughts have been planned for the fleet by 1920. These now number 19, and five others will be built before July, 1920. Three hundred and fifty new destroyers also will be completed by that time.

Not Enough States for Names

Rear Admiral Taylor, chief of the construction division, enumerating the vessels added or to be added, named 350 submarine chasers, 112 patrol boats, 35 or 40 submarines, 50 mine sweepers, and the five dreadnaughts, three of which, the Idaho, Tennessee and California, are now nearing completion.

The 350 destroyers will increase our Navy by 250 and will probably give us a fleet of that type of vessel well up to our position as a naval power. Secretary Daniels recently appeared before the naval committee and pressed the continuation for three years of the naval building program. The entire program will give us a final result of 51 dreadnaughts, all of the first rank, and we shall not have enough State names to go around.

The Government building of merchant ships is continuing steadily, and no suggestion has been made by anybody that it be stopped with the passing of the war emergency. Wooden ships now are eliminated, and everything is centered on large freighters and similar steel shipping. While this whole matter will become a matter for congressional decision with the ending of the war, it seems altogether probable that we shall continue a large shipbuilding program up to the limit of all possible commercial usefulness.

The Flag on all the Seas

America is thrilled at the knowledge of its flag on all seas again and will not yield it. Chairman Hurley of the Shipping Board urges that the La Follette seamen's act shall have a practical test under normal conditions before it is modified or repealed. He says his mind is open about it, and that he wants to make the American merchant marine as good an American machine as possible and truly American in operation and living conditions with the support of an intelligent public behind it. He says:

Then if we cannot keep these ships on the ocean without the coolie and his bowl of rice, it will be time to go to Congress and ask for help. The La Follette act has not yet been tested because of abnormal conditions. I am even a little prejudiced in favor of the act because it raises human standards in ocean transportation and industry. I personally believe good human standards are not only desirable, but also that they work better than poor human standards.

In another statement Chairman Hurley indicates that he expects to propose that a world's standard for seamen's wages be adopted. Such an international agreement would, of course, eliminate the cheap labor competition which hitherto has confronted American shipping.

D.D. BACK AGAIN ON PUNISHMENT LIST

For Soldiers Convicted of Offenses Involving Moral Turpitude

Dishonorable discharge from the Army has come back again onto the list of military punishments as a result of the approach of peace. G.O. 217 specifically states that so much of a previous order fom G.H.Q. as requires the retention of general court-martial prisoners with their oganizations and the non-imposition of the discharge, is revoked.

Soldiers in combat units who are sentenced to confinement for more than six months will not be retained with their units, the order goes on to say, but will be sent to the Military Prison Camp at St. Sulpice, just outside Bordeaux. No sentence, the order adds, should impose more than six months' confinement at hard labor unless the sentence also includes dishonorable discharge.

The discharge in disgrace is to be imposed, the order directs, on soldiers convicted of larceny or other offences involving moral turpitude, with the addition of such confinement sentences as their cases may warrant. It is further directed that reviewing authorities should freely exercise the power of suspension given them by the 52nd Article of War, as amended by the Army Appropriation Act of July 9, 1918.

All general prisoners, and all prisoners having on the receipt of G.O. 217 more than six months' confinement to serve, and now retained with their units, are to be sent to St. Sulpice. Their commanding officers are ordered to send to the commander of the prison camp, in addition to the papers required by regulations, reports showing the prisoners' conduct while in confinement, the character of the work done, whether in combat or otherwise, and such other facts as may indicate whether or not remission of all or a part of the sentences should be made.

Y'S THIRD ARMY PLANS

American plays, vaudeville and moving pictures will be transported up to the regions abaft the Rhine by the Y.M.C.A.'s entertainment department as fast as they can be transported up there.

Edward D. Cray, the first regional Y secretary of the S.O.S., has gone into the region of occupation to do what he can in the line of hiring German movie houses and theaters in which to put on American shows. Where these cannot be obtained, the Y huts will be used.

REIMS CATHEDRAL, LA GRANDE BLESSEE

Monsieur Huart's Story

Oui, Monsieur, I call her la grande blessée of the war. But see how from among the tumbled stones she still holds her head high; she is only wounded, not dead.

For four years I have lived in Reims, my abri, the sacristy; and, day by day, I have watched as my gothic home has crumbled away about my ears. Over four thousand shells have fallen within a stone's throw of the towers, they say—eight hundred of them in the cathedral itself. How well it has withstood this siege! They built strongly in the thirteenth century. She is so immense! Tiens! Look at those buildings, there all about us how they have been shot to dust. Have you seen a single whole house in this city, Monsieur? Scarcely one among the fourteen thousand.

It is many a time, though, I thought these spires would mark my tomb. But it was my duty to stay. I am born of Reims, I; and my father died in '70; and my son is of the premier régiment des Chasseurs. Four years in the trenches, he; his father was proud to volunteer to guard the grandest monument in France! For, like the poilus, it is under the government I have worked. My reports are made to the department of the Beaux Arts.

How it has been hot here? Forever the shells have been knocking down that fence, and that fence is necessary to keep people off these grounds. That has been my duty. One must have authority of the Grand Quartier Général to enter here. A hundred times I have patched up that fence, sometimes alone, sometimes with the help of poilus—one was killed right there beside me as we worked—ugh! how his blue coat was spattered with red. Sometimes by day we worked, sometimes at night.

It was at night, too, that we took down the big blass windows, piece by piece, putting back bits of cardboard in the openings so that the Boches would not notice. (They were only a few kilometers over the way there, you know). That time, the pompiers [firemen] helped me. What a work! Parbleu! Forty meters high to climb and no ladders. Like flies, we crawled up and up and hung to the stone work, while every minute W-h-h-h-h—e-e-e-E. . . . Bang; and the old stone chips would fly about! A head off another saint! Pfui! But we saved the finest windows, mon vieux.

Up there among the stone arches will be the hardest part to repair. A 30[illegible] came in there during April, '17.

And here by the Madonna is my collection of the big cochons who didn't explode. La bonne chance, n'est ce pas?

Restore it? So they say. Architects come every day to talk about it.

The roof is gone, you see—the big fire in December, '14, when the place was used as a hospital and filled with straw for the wounded to lie on. Many German wounded were here, too, then.

That's what seered the outside so. You have seen. The fire has burned it white like a skeleton. What a sight! The red flames licking up the pillars to the feet of the saints.

For me, this spring was the hardest. That time I had to leave for two days to get food. Before, I had eaten with the soldiers; but one morning when I went to the popote nothing was there—just a black hole in the ground. At that time there was not a soul in Reims. Every civilian had been evacuated in the night. The town was practically surrounded. Shells popped in on me from every side. I went to sleep with the whistle of them and left off trying to count their number. And not a bite to eat.

How I missed my old cook, she who had cooked for me all during '16. Ah, that was sad. First her home was burned, and then her little boy, he was killed by a shell. Pauvre gars! It was too much; she left.

Yes, Monsieur, la grande blessée. But I have decorated her—you saw? The rosette of tri-color flags high up over the round window. At eleven o'clock on that day I did it.

They float proudly up there, the colors, where silently she looks about in dignity over her ruined city; don't you think so?

MEDICO COLONEL HOT AFTER COOTIE

Old Bill Louse Wins Two Whole Paragraphs in G.O.

Old Bill Louse, the well-known shirt-and-man-eating rodent—or is it insect?—it not going to be allowed to get away with it much longer. Two whole paragraphs of G.O. 216 are devoted particularly to his Cootie-ship, and in them is the announcement that a full colonel of the Medical Corps is detailed for duty "in charge of all activities with reference to the delousing of the armies."

"The health of the troops," says the General Order, "largely depends upon the completeness with which delousing and bathing is done, especially during the coming period of diminished activity and relatively permanent stations."

The cootie-commander of the A.E.F., Col. H. L. Gilchrist, is also charged with the supervision of the degassing service's equipment and personnel, which service is, by the terms of the order, attached to the Quartermaster Corps. With it will be incorporated the degassing equipment and personnel hitherto operated by the Salvage Service.

FRANC MOVING UP, RISE TO CONTINUE

Gain of 25 Centimes Already Scored in Reckoning Army Pay

YANKS ARRIVE TOO RICH

Paper Money Plan Was Under Consideration in Days Before Armistice

The armistice, and the general indications of "continued fair" on the victory barometer which were evident before November 11, have raised hob with the franc. The franc is not what it used to be. Or, rather, the good old American dollar is not what it used to be. But the armistice and the victory are not wholly to blame. The American soldier has been bringing too much money to France.

Meanwhile, the franc continues its joyous course upward toward normal, which is 5.18 and a fraction to the dollar. The Q.M.C. is now converting dollars into francs to the tune of 5.45, as against 5.50 in the weeks immediately preceding October 31.

It seems a long way back to the heyday times of 5.70, when a buck private's $33 were handed out to him as a munificent total of 188.10 francs. That same $33, on the November payroll, was worth only 179.85 francs.

5.70 Highest Mark Reached

Five seventy was the highest pitch the dollar ever reached, so far as any A.E.F. salary is concerned. A few American treasury checks have brought as high as 5.80. The 5.70 rate held for about 15 months, when it slid down, or rather up, to 5.65. This break in the line was followed by a rupture to 5.50 and now to 5.45.

Financial quotations, like the date of the peace treaty, are nothing for mere man to prognosticate, but before long it will take fewer than 5.45 francs to buy one O.D. dollar.

The sad part of the whole sad story is that tthe rise of the franc is not primarily due to the victories of the Allied arms. All these have helped, but the real offender is the American soldier. If he would only come to France broke, all might be well. But he doesn't.

The Q.M.C. estimates that the amount of paper money, meaning good old American greenbacks, brought into France by the inpouring American Army has averaged $10 per man. This is without counting officers. Count the officers, who are far fewer in number but manage to tote more of the stuff with them, and the grand average rises to $15.

Where the Dollars Go

Arrived in France, the soldier sells the dollars for as much as he can get for them—probably around 5.30, sometimes even less. The result is the establishment in France, through American treasury notes, of a substantial credit balance against the United States.

The $10 average, too, does not include the money which the soldier may have brought with him in traveler's checks.

Prior to the armistice a plan was being considered whereby troops in the army zone—troops, that is, in the line or not very far behind it—might have been paid wholly in paper money. A French financial commission, which had been considering the question with American and British military officials present in an advisory capacity, was debating the practicability of issuing paper notes of half franc, franc and two franc denominations.

This step would not have been taken because of any depreciation of French currency. The reason was the shortage of actual metal.

Silver at High Premium

Silver itself now commands all over the world a higher premium than it has in generations. The New York quotation is over a dollar an ounce. There is still a long way to go, however, before the value of the silver in the coins of any country reaches the face value of the coin.

It was in order to get metal for new coins that the half franc, franc and two franc Napoleon III pieces were recently called in and demonetized by the French Government. The announcement that, after a certain date, coins of the empire would be worth only a fraction of their face value had the immediate effect of releasing from many an old stocking and garden wall a flood of silver that, returned to the French mint, is already reappearing in the form of specie of the familiar current design.

LETTER OF SYMPATHY

Maj. Gen. John Biddle, commanding Base Section No. 3 (England), has received from the British Admiralty a letter written by Mrs. Winifred Davidson, wife of Captain Davidson of the British Navy, requesting that an expression of her sympathy be conveyed to the relatives of the Americans who lost their lives in the wreck of the steamer Otranto.

She also expresses her pride "that Captain Davidson is buried with so many of the American soldiers he tried so hard to save."

A detachment of American Engineers stationed at the Knotty Ash embarkation camp, near Liverpool, formed the burial party that cared for the victims of the Otranto disaster, which resulted in the greatest single loss of American troops en route to Europe. The burial party, probably the largest ever made up in the A.E.F., went out to the island of Islay, off Liverpool, to lay the men from the Otranto to rest beside many of their brothers who were lost on the Tuscania.

FRONT CHEVRON PLANNED

A distinctive chevron to be worn by men of the A.E.F. who saw service in the front line or in actual combat is under consideration, but no decision upon it has been announced yet. Whether or not a chevron for officers and men mobilized in the United States who did not get to France will be authorized is now being considered in Washington.

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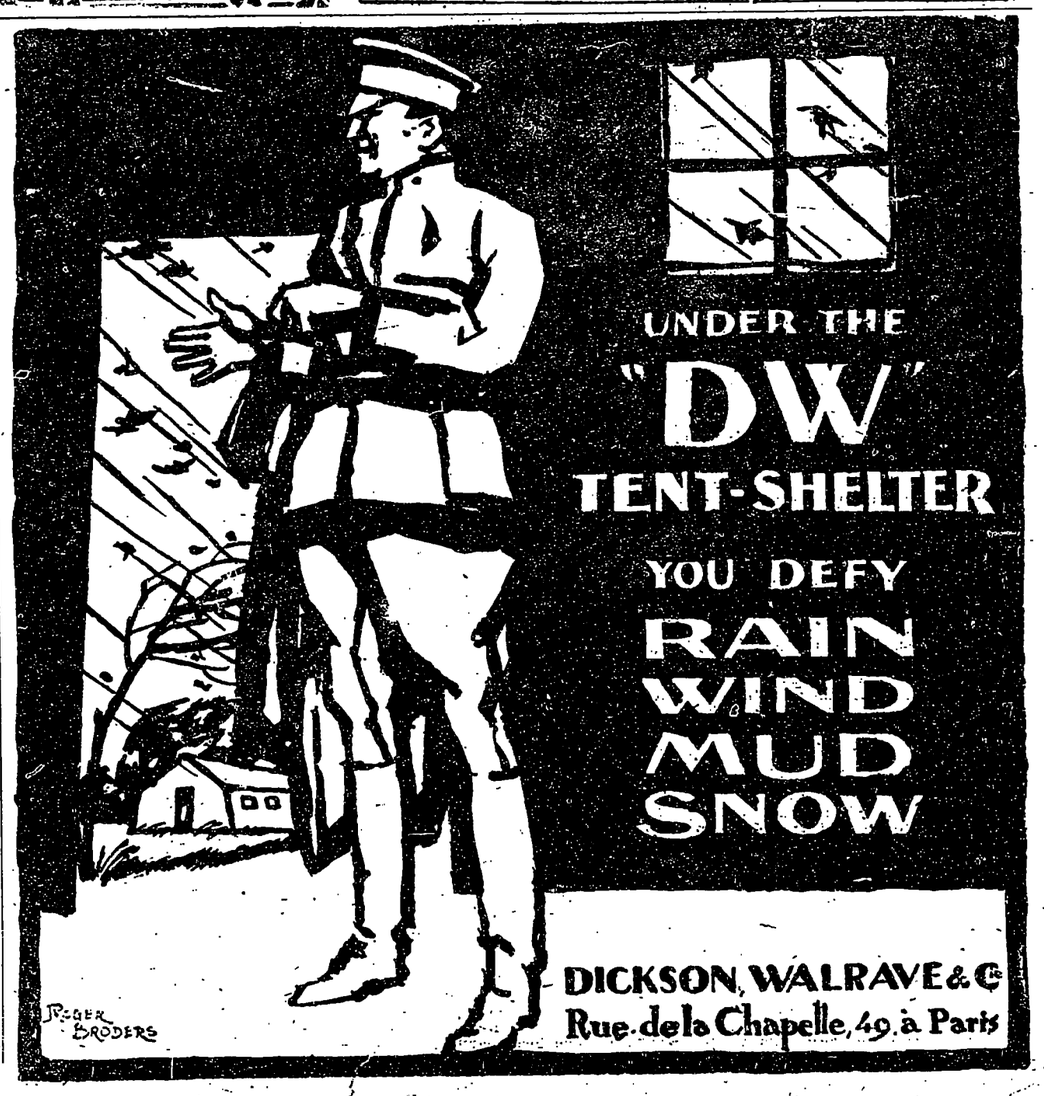

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