The Twentieth Century Germany

A Chat With Privy Councilor Lewald, the Kaiser's Imperial Commissioner General.

Germany at St. Louis—Our Workingman and His German Brother—Labor Matters—What Germany is Doing in Workman Insurance and Old-Age Pensions—Our Trade and How the Tariff Blocks It—Do Expositions Pay? The Kaiser as America's Friend—Germany's Foreign Trade and Her Colonies—Something About the Big Cities and Other Matters.

(Special Correspondence of the Deseret News by Frank G. Carpenter.)

ST. LOUIS.—I give you today a chat with Dr. Theodor Lewald, the Kaiser's commissioner general, on the Twentieth century Germany. Dr. Lewald is one of the high officials of the German empire. He is connected with the Interior department, and is one of the imperial privy councilors. He was commissioner from Germany to the exposition at Paris, and he has had everything to do with the exhibit at St. Louis.

GERMANY AT ST. LOUIS.

Before giving my talk with him I would say a word about the German exhibit. It is one of the finest and most complete of all sent in from abroad. The emperor is anxious to increase the friendly relations which obtain between the United States and Germany, and he has done all in his power for the St. Louis exposition. This can be seen by visiting the imperial rooms copied after some of the most famous apartments of the imperial palaces. The emperor has sent over his own paintings and tapestry from his own palaces for these rooms and in one of them are cases containing his wedding presents. Indeed, the pavilion vies in beauty with many of the palaces of Europe, showing the glory of their historic past.

The exhibits in the other buildings show the live up-to-date, scientific, passing, industrious, thrifty Germany of today. It would take columns to describe them, and I will only say that they indicate the wonderful advance that that nation is making along educational, industrial and social lines. I am told that the German government has spent more than $1,000,000 on its exhibit outside the money spent by the individual exhibitors.

OUR WORKINGMAN AND HIS GERMAN BROTHER.

The first part of my talk with Dr. Lewald was devoted to the American workingman in comparison with the German. Dr. Lewald had to use the American laborer to put up his great buildings and to arrange his exhibits. He don't think much of him. Said he:

"I can't understand how the United States can hold its own in the markets of the world, if the labor conditions of St. Louis are typical of those of the rest of the country. We have had a terrible time here whenever we have had to employ American workmen. We used them in erecting our buildings and the wages were outrageous. We have paid one dollar an hour to common mechanics who in Germany would be considered second-class workmen. They work only eight hours per day, and if we found fault with their work or asked them to remedy any defects in it they would throw up the job and leave. They seemed to have no desire to please us, and their sole object was to put in the time and get the money. One of our German mechanics, who came over with us, thought the conditions outrageous. I don't know that similar ones prevail throughout the United States, but if they do they can not but work to your industrial injury."

"What is your situation as to labor matters, Dr. Lewald?"

"We have our troubles, too, but we are far better off than you are. Our people are more willing to give a fair day's work for a fair day's pay, and they are yearly becoming more skillful through our technical schools, which are now to be found in every industrial center."

"Is there an exhibit of these schools here?" I asked.

"We have no exhibit of our technical high schools, but one of the common technical schools, which are found all over the empire. I doubt if the industrial exhibits would encourage the establishment of such schools elsewhere. They are intended to make better German workmen, and in this way better products for export. We do not, naturally, wish to help the United States, as one of our competitors in the markets of the world. We have exhibits, however, showing what we are doing in the technical high schools, and also our progress along to have of workmen's insurance and for the protection of the laboring man."

WORKINGMEN INSURED AND PENSIONED.

"What are you doing in insuring your workingmen?"

"More than almost any other country," was the reply. "The movement for workmen's insurance began with Emperor Wilhelm I. He proposed it in a message in 1881, and the sentiment in favor of it has so grown since then that we have a regular system of insurance under the control of the government, by which every German workman receives financial assistance in case of accident, sickness and invalidity or old age. More than $900,000 is daily spent in this way upon the protection of our workingmen, and in a single year something like five million persons receive help of one kind or another from this source. In the 17 years from 1885 to 1901 50,000,000 people were so benefited. They received all told about one billion dollars.

"The money for this insurance fund," continued Dr. Lewald, "is raised by a tax of about 4 per cent on the wages of the employes, two-thirds of which is borne by the employes and one-third by the employer. In addition to this there are workingmen's clubs which give benefits to their members in sickness, and we have associations providing for indemnities in case of accident or death.

"The insurance against invalidity includes old age. Every German workman over 70 gets a pension, and if one of the insured becomes an invalid through accident he, also, is pensioned. There are now more than 12,000,000 persons insured as to invalidity.

"In addition to this the insurance fund has accumulated a reserve capital of about $375,000,000, which is being used for the general benefit of the workingmen. Through it we are constructing workingmen's dwellings, hospitals, homes for traveling men, public baths, systems of water works and other sanitary improvements. Indeed, it seems to me that our system of workingmen's insurance is excellent."

DO EXPOSITIONS PAY?

The conversation here turned to the St. Louis exposition, and I asked Dr. Lewald whether he thought that it paid his government and its exhibitors to show their wares at such places. He said:

DR. LEWALD, THE GERMAN CONSUL GENERAL.

"We cannot tell whether this exposition will pay Germany for the trouble she is spending upon it. That is a matter for the future trade to determine. There is a prejudice against American expositions among our manufacturers, owing to your high duties. They say, 'What is the use of our trying to compete when we are taxed 45 per cent by the customs house?' This tax makes it out of the question for Germany to send many of its products to the United States, and the result is that our exhibit here does not adequately represent the industries of the country. It is fine in comparison with that of other nations, but it is limited to a few branches of trade. We have, for instance, a good drug and chemical display and a fine exhibit of art works. Transportation is well shown, and the government exhibit is large. I do not know that the cost of the industrial exhibit will be repaid by a proportionate increase of orders of such goods as are shown. Sometimes it pays, sometimes not. We had a great difficulty to get our manufacturers to exhibit at Paris, but those who did so got a large business. Take the inventors and makers of Kaiserzinn, for instance. They had a big trade during the fair and at the close they opened an establishment in Paris near the Opera, and they are doing business there still. One of our piano factories made a great deal of money from the French through his display at Paris, and this was the case with many others.

"Indeed, the trade between Germany and France was perceptibly increased by the exposition. Before that time it was almost stationary at $50,000,000. During the year of the fair it was $70,000,000, and after the fair was over the trade dropped to about $62,500,000, where it now rests. This shows an annual increase of about $12,000,000 in our French sales since the exposition."

THE KAISER OUR FRIEND.

"The profits of these expositions are not only commercial," continued Dr. Lewald, "they are political and social as well. That fair at Paris did much to wipe out the hard feeling the French held as to the Germans. We made many friends there, and as a result the anti-German sentiment is dying out. Our exhibit here at St. Louis is largely a matter of international friendship. The emperor and his people look upon the United States as their friend, and we want to take part in any international affair of this nature fathered by you. At the present time the United States is much looked up to in Germany and American goods are very popular. Indeed they are quite the mode."

GERMANY'S FOREIGN TRADE.

"What does our trade with you amount to?"

"In 1903 it was about $313,000,000, of which more than $250,000,000 was made up of our purchases from you and a little over $112,000,000 of what you bought from us. We buy more than twice as much from the United States as we sell to it. We buy more from it than from any other nation, and next to Great Britain we are your best customer. It must be remembered, however, that much of our purchases consist of food and raw material, and that we sell you chiefly manufactured articles."

"Is Germany's foreign trade increasing, Dr. Lewald?" I asked.

"Yes, indeed. Very rapidly. It amounted to 8,000,000 tons in 1850, and altogether to $2,800,000,000. Our trade began to develop about 25 years ago, and it has steadily increased since then so that it now amounts to almost $50 for every man, woman and child in the country. We are rushing out everywhere in our search for profitable investments. We are doing all we can to increase our foreign market, and we are selling a great deal by improving our shipping. We receive now about $70,000,000 a year from our shipping industry. As to our German investments, it is estimated that $4,000,000,000 worth of German capital is so employed and that half of this is in countries outside Europe.

"One of the most interesting features of our foreign trade," continued the imperial German commissioner, "is that its character has changed. About a generation ago we shipped agricultural products abroad. Now one-fourth of all the food we consume is imported, and our exports consist of manufactures. We are receiving our importations of manufactures from year to year, and we are more and more supplying our needs from goods made at home."

THE AMERICAN PIER IN GERMANY.

"How about the American show?" I asked.

"That is an anomaly which our people cannot understand. They say there is no reason why every dollar it should be sold in such quantities in Germany. We have the same in that that you have. We import our machinery and our manufacturers are competing with yours. Nevertheless, your show continues to consume $18,000,000 worth of our goods every year. I can only explain it on the fact that our people show in such large quantities that you may be able to make them cheaper."

GERMANY'S COLONIAL MARKETS.

"How are your colonies doing, Dr. Lewald?" I asked.

"Fairly well," was the reply. "We have this will pay us in time. We have a vast territory in our colonial possessions. They are altogether more than a million square miles, or more than five times as large as Germany itself. We are developing some of them and prospecting others. In German East Africa we are raising cotton, and in German Southwest Africa we are experimenting with cattle. Some of these lands are such that we do not know yet just what they contain nor what they will produce."

"What kind of cotton are you raising, Dr. Lewald, and do you think you will ever be able to get along without our raw materials?"

"The cotton is said to be very good," was the reply. "But I doubt whether we will raise enough for our mills. The United States will, I believe, always be the chief cotton country of the world."

GERMANY NOT CROWDED.

"Is not Germany overcrowded?"

"I do not think so," said the imperial German commissioner. "We have a large population in proportion to our area, but so far we have plenty of room. We have now almost 59,000,000 people. This is 29,000,000 less than the United States, and we are increasing at the rate of two or three millions a year."

AMERICA A GERMAN NATION.

"How about your emigration. Is it as great as in the past?"

"No; business is now good, and everyone has plenty to do. Our emigrants increase during hard times and fall off when times are good. So far you have had the bulk of the Germans who have gone abroad. It is estimated that 5,000,000 of our people have come here since 1820, and that now one-sixth of all your population have German blood in their veins."

"What kind of Germans come to this country?"

"A very good class. The best we have too. The money to go is dear, and they do not consider it worth while to come unless they do more than just leave their fatherland. Many come from all parts of Germany to America. We are now having a considerable number of men who have been in the army in the office. But that is going out as we change and we make 180 at 120."

"The city has grown at the expense of the country?"

"Yes, it has grown away from the country because it was after left. Since 1871 the city population has added 16,000,000."

"Give me the size of your largest cities, Dr. Lewald," said I.

"I will reply to that offhand," said the imperial commissioner, "with only the immediate suburbs. The city of Berlin has now 2,000,000, Hamburg, 1,000,000, Leipsic, 500,000, Dresden, 500,000, Cologne, 500,000, Munich, 500,000, Breslau, 470,000, Frankfort-on-the-Main, 450,000, and six other cities over 200,000 each. We have 1,000 towns having between 5,000 and 100,000 and 24 more than 100,000 each. Altogether there dwell one-sixth of our people in cities of more than 2,000,000 people."

THE GERMANS AS FARMERS OF THE FUTURE.

"I suppose the process in this city is indicative of the change of Germany from an agricultural to a manufacturing nation?"

"Yes. At the time of the Franco-Prussian war a great many of our people were engaged in farming. Today there are more working at industrial pursuits than upon the farms, and the farm population steadily decreases. The tendency is to large factories rather than small ones. It used to be that we had a vast number of workmen who carried on their trades in their own homes, and there were many small manufacturers. These are decreasing, and establishments manned with large capital are increasing."

"How about your trusts?"

"We have some, but not as such a mess as yours."

"Have you many rich men?"

"We have many well-to-do men, a German standard, and very few rich from the American standpoint. We have you know, no income tax, and we can tell just what every one owns. According to the assessments in Prussia, which country has about three-fifths of our people, there are a large number of millionaires, but a million marks is equal to only about $250,000, so that they do not represent a very great amount after all."

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