

What America Must Get in Return

While it has long been apparent that some of the foreign obligations to our country on account of lend-lease would have to be written off, President Truman's dramatic call to Congress to O. K. cancellation has undoubtedly disturbed many of our people.

The old issue raised by the war debts of World War I has inevitably been recalled, even though the two cases differ sharply.

Those earlier debts resulted from monetary advances made by our Government to our Allies to finance the war and were later supplemented by even larger dollar loans for rehabilitation.

Lend-lease, as all know, consisted of material things which we were better equipped to produce than our Allies, such as airplanes, weapons, ammunition and food. Their value measured in dollars was around 42 billions.

But the value of their contribution to winning the war and protecting our land from invasion and saving American lives could not be measured by any financial yardstick.

However, even if our country has emerged from the war the richest in the world—or the least poor—this doesn't mean that we don't have to count our dollars.

We want those nations which owe us money, or the equivalent, to get out of debt, to become self-supporting and to trade freely with us for our mutual benefit.

The debts left by the first World War have been an unending source of bitterness and recrimination. We desire no repetition of that unfortunate experience.

Those war debts of 1917-1920 were incurred by our Allies with full understanding that repayment was expected, and later the terms, including refunding and low rates of interest, were established.

What were the terms regarding the final all-around balancing and settlement of lend-lease debts and credits? There were no terms.

The President of the United States was authorized by Congress to effect such settle-

ments as he deemed best. The agreement between our Government and Great Britain provided that any settlements should promote mutually advantageous economic relations and reduction of trade barriers.

This provision points to the plain duty of President Truman and Congress. If we are to cancel the many billions of dollars technically owing us from lend-lease, then surely Great Britain and the other debtors must accord us in return such concessions as they are able to afford.

They haven't the dollars, but they have air and other defense bases and coaling stations in various parts of the world that are essential to America's safety and welfare.

Noble lords from Britain are about to negotiate with our Government for dollar loans to rescue their country from its admittedly critical plight. Is Britain's new Socialist Labor Government ready to lower its tariffs and to abandon a proposed program of measures to give that nation the inside track on world trade and injure our own? Is that Government, among other radical experiments, going to attempt nationalization of its foreign trade?

Why have the Laborites balked at the Bretton Woods agreements for currency and economic stabilization after we were the first to ratify? The Attlee Government has proclaimed a policy of managed economy, of managed exports and imports. That is its own business—even though it hurts us—but making loans is our business, and we have a right to make them on our terms, not British terms.

Will our loans be used by Britain to make exclusive trade arrangements with her dominions and colonies to our injury? Britain needs American aid and will doubtless get it, but we should first have satisfactory answers to these important questions. Canceling lend-lease debts and making new loans equally call for fair dealing by the debtor as well as the creditor.

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