

Examples From Abroad

By Henry Ware Allen / Wichita, Kansas, 8 March, 1934 (print date: 10 March, 1934)

We Might Profit by Following Some Customs of Other Countries.

To the Editor of the New York Times:

While we Americans have many reasons to congratulate ourselves upon the advantages of living in the United States, nevertheless there is always danger in too much complacent self-satisfaction. Too much pride is apt to precede a downward tendency. It is well to perceive those things in which citizens of other countries are more fortunate than ourselves.

For example, in Sydney, Australia, there are no taxes on houses. This is a definite encouragement toward building operations, better homes and lower rent. Recently in Chicago a large edifice, the Medina Building, was reduced from twelve to two stories because of excessive taxation on the larger building. Ten stories of valuable building were actually destroyed because of our irrational system of taxation.

Ireland has the proportional representation system of voting, which Samuel Seabury recently recommended for New York City, and which is far superior to the system generally used in America. While we in this country have been very active in the promotion of conferences for the reduction of armament, Denmark has gone ahead on the principle that "the way to disarm is to disarm," and has practically reduced its army and navy to a police basis. Incidentally, no other nation has taken any advantage of Denmark on that account.

It is also to be observed to the credit of Denmark that instead of invoking a protective tariff against American cereals, these imports from the United States were made welcome, and the farming industry was changed accordingly to the advantage of all concerned. This is in strong contrast to the demand of American agriculture for government help.

But perhaps the greatest contrast, to the disadvantage of the United States and in favor of a foreign country, is the civil service system of Great Britain as contrasted to the spoils system of the United States. When a party change is made in England not a

single postmaster loses his position, whereas in this country a change of party involves an enormous and a most uneconomical change of thousands upon thousands of public officials, high and low, greatly to the detriment of the service and with enormous extra expense to the taxpayer. In all probability the past year has witnessed the most flagrant system of the spoils system in our national history. Would we not do well to learn from our cousins across the sea?