

We Can't Do Business

ARCHAIC IS THE NOTION that trade is the process of exchanging goods and services for goods and services. While instances of trade as a political weapon appear in history, always with deleterious effects on the people who tried it, only in the present century has the use of the politico-commercial technique become almost universal. The present war is one result; another is the poverty and the degradation of the people of those countries—especially Germany and Russia—in which trade was completely absorbed by the political machinery.

History records that every attempt of one country to impose its will on another country by use of trade restrictions has been a boomerang; the country most hurt was the one which tried it. Jefferson's Embargo in 1807 wrought havoc on Ameri-



can business even though, in his case, it was forced upon him by interference with American shipping by both England and France. Hitler's use of trade as a political instrument, besides reducing the economy of the German people, was the proximate cause of the present war.

In business—which is the natural mechanism for exchanges, for it is nothing but the methodology of man's impulse to seek satisfactions with the least effort—we trade with those who are both willing and able to pay their bills. Their political beliefs, their moral conduct (save where it throws light on their ability to pay), their creed, race, color or mannerisms do not determine their desirability as buyers or as sellers.

When government controls or interferes with trade, profit is no longer the prime consideration; the purpose then is to impose a political idea on a foreign government. Without exception it will be found that a government which attempts to control or direct foreign trade for political purposes also uses its power to control business within the country. That is, its international policy is merely an

extension of its internal policy. And because in both cases the legitimate purpose of trade has been frustrated, labor and capital which produce the things that are used for trade are the poorer.

Up to within recent years political interference with trade, both international and internal, has been frowned upon in this country. After the last war we were told we could not do business with Russians because our government did not like their government's ideology. For fifteen years this interference with trade continued. Then we changed our policy. Two years ago we abrogated our treaty relations with Stalin, because we did not like his politics; two months ago we decided that his politics are all right, and trade with him is legitimate again.

Now we are told that we cannot do business with Japan. Whether this inhibition will have the desired effect of restraining Japan in its imperialist policy, or will have to be implemented with more force, remains to be seen. But, of one thing we can be certain: that this political interference with trade will cause American unemployment, raise American prices, increase American taxes, make for less American satisfactions. That these are the things in which we as laborers and as capitalists are primarily interested has been demonstrated. American industry did not stop trading with Japan of its own free will and American women did not refuse to buy Japanese silk.

Oil for the Rich

HEADLINER HAROLD L. ICKES, new federal boss of the nation's oil, says we've got to cut down on our consumption of petroleum. "Gasless Sundays" he promises. If he makes good on it, when will a fellow who works all week get a chance to enjoy his jalopy? Will the kids ever get a ride in the country? Will the girl friend never realize the dream of romance that for six days buoyed her soul behind the sewing machine?

Every restrictive measure, every prohibition, every political act gives some an advantage over others. Those who can fill up the automobile on Fridays or Saturdays and stay off the roads until Mondays will hardly be affected by the Ickes plan. Of course, Ickes and his gang will call them the "dirty rich" or the "opulent slackers."

But really, the rich aren't a bad sort. They're just like all of us, trying to satisfy their desires. If they seem to take advantage of the rest of us—*cherchez la politique*.