

The Situation

150

(Both sides get this page)

The 1930s The American reaction to such aggression was true to tradition. We made an all-out effort to isolate ourselves from the possibility of entrance into another war. Inspired by the conclusions of the Nye Committee in 1934-1935, the prevailing opinion of most Americans was that we had been naively lured into World War I by warmongering munitions manufacturers who considered profit above human lives.

The neutrality laws Between 1935-1937 rumors of American involvement in the European war were set aside when Congress passed a series of neutrality laws. These measures prohibited the export of arms and munitions to belligerent forces and forbade Americans from traveling on belligerent ships. Now there was an "official" barrier between the United States and the nations at war, a barrier seeming to separate American interests from those of the Europeans, not by an ocean, but by a universe.

Events in Europe Events in Europe during 1937-1938 did little to alter American feelings toward neutrality. England and France maintained a policy of appeasement toward Hitler. They allowed him to occupy Czechoslovakia based on his promise not to acquire any further territory. However, the outbreak of World War II shattered the complacency of western Europeans and Americans. Germany's surprise invasion of Poland in 1939 and the relative ease with which Hitler crushed France convinced many Americans that the Nazis could indeed win the war. Furthermore, if England, which by May of 1940 "stood alone" against German aggression, should fall, what was to stop the Axis from world domination?

FDR reacts These Nazi successes combined with the Japanese sweep southward through China spurred President Roosevelt to pledge "to opponents of force the material resources of this nation." Roosevelt traded 50 "over-age" destroyers to England in exchange for naval and air bases on British territory (the British West Indies, Newfoundland, and Bermuda). England desperately needed the destroyers to combat German submarines; the United States needed the bases as defensive outposts. The so-called Destroyer-Naval Base deal of 1940 was more than a moral decree. Our government was committing itself to a gradual movement from neutrality to non-belligerency (i.e., indirect involvement in the European war). For the second time in the 20th century, the base of United States isolationism had been cracked.

▶ **Drifting toward war** Thus, the United States was embarking on a course of action that would prove irreversible as war drifted closer to America's shores. Throughout 1940, while the Roosevelt administration moved swiftly from a policy of limited assistance to England to all-out aid short of war, the American public never ceased debating whether FDR was a great leader or a great betrayer. This period of time produced two opposing groups, *interventionists* and *isolationists*. Both claimed to speak for the sentiments of most Americans.



Many questions bothered many Americans.

The debate The lines of debate were well drawn by October 1940, and the combatants on both sides were ready to deliver their arguments forcefully and eloquently. Key questions were on the lips of many Americans:

- Will the Axis powers defeat England and China and then look to the western hemisphere for their next conquest?
- Has the United States recovered sufficiently from the worst economic depression in its history, only to prepare for involvement in a major war?
- Is President Roosevelt "willfully" moving the United States toward war, or is he trying to keep the country neutral?
- If the United States continues to aid England, will the Germans consider our actions as a sign of open belligerency and attack us?

These and other important issues raged hot and heavy across the United States in the period of time 1937-1940. It is necessary to point out, without prejudicing the entire debate that will take place, that the majority of Americans believed by late 1940 that their country would eventually be drawn into war. But few people conceived of Pearl Harbor being the provocation because, regardless of whether one was an isolationist or an interventionist, most had thought the issue of war or peace would be America's to decide.

To give you a first-hand impression of the depth and feeling that leading Americans possessed at this time, excerpts from two articles, one by an isolationist (Senator Bennett Champ Clark of Missouri) and one by an interventionist (writer Robert E. Sherwood), are presented. As you read each carefully, strive to understand and feel the emotions and attitudes these men present. If your efforts prove successful, you will be better prepared to debate and learn from the issue of American neutrality in 1940.



▶ **Your debate's scenario** The 1940 debate over American neutrality will take place in mid-October in a large conference room at the elegant Edgewater Beach Hotel on the shores of Lake Michigan in Chicago, Illinois. Since Chicago is considered the "American Capital of Isolationism," this city is an appropriate locale. The debate is being sponsored by Robert E. Wood, who heads the America First Committee—which some people consider to be the "official voice" of isolationism and strict American neutrality. Here is the resolution you will debate: *Resolved—America should actively aid the Allies in their fights with Germany and Japan.*

Isolationism

Excerpt 1

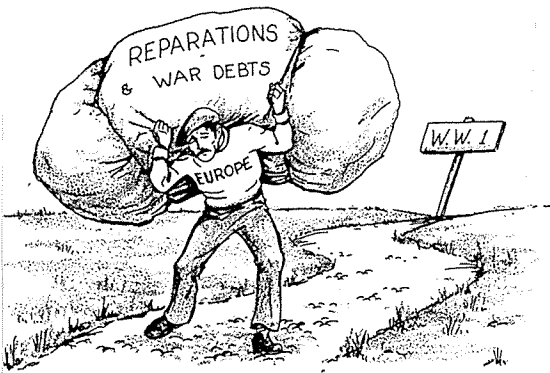
Be sure you examine a world map so that you know exactly where the nations are located that relate to all these questions disturbing Americans in the late 1930s.

Drifting toward war Thus, the United States was embarking on a course of action that would prove irreversible as war drifted closer to America's shores. Throughout 1940, while the Roosevelt administration moved swiftly from a policy of limited assistance to England to all-out aid short of war, the American public never ceased debating whether FDR was a great leader or a great betrayer. This period of time produced two opposing groups, *interventionists* and *isolationists*. Both claimed to speak for the sentiments of most Americans.

The isolationists Who were the isolationists? The regional stronghold of isolationism was the Midwest. Politically, its strength lay with the Republican Party, who had a small, but influential, membership led by senators William Borah, Robert Taft, and Hiram Johnson. These political personalities were joined by many other individuals from all walks of life. Names such as Charles A. Lindbergh of aviation fame, Robert E. Wood of Sears and Roebuck, and Socialist Norman Thomas brought their separate viewpoints to the effort of isolationism. The isolationists, or *noninterventionists* as some of the less conservative of their number were called, believed that their philosophy was a more honest measure of the nation's mood in 1940. They cited opinion polls that showed 80 percent of Americans opposed declaring war on Germany. Adding fuel to their fire, isolationists charged that President Roosevelt was deceiving the American people by continually pledging to keep the country out of war, even though by 1940 he had developed policies that could only be interpreted as acts of involvement.

Another popular isolationist argument centered on the bitter feelings many Americans held toward the nations of Europe because these countries had not paid their World War I debts to the United States. Failure to repay debts, the rise of dictators, and traditional European politics "of the sword" demonstrated once again to the isolationists that Europe was a dying continent. Finally, it would be nearly impossible to dissuade an avid isolationist to abandon his/her conviction to stay out of foreign affairs. After all, great strength and security could be drawn from tradition: the United States had grown up embracing the twin principles of isolation and pacifism; one more European or Asian war was not going to alter these feelings.

How Did the Policy of Isolationism Work?



A. Relations with the League. President Harding believed that the United States should return to its old policy of isolationism. He saw his election victory as proof that the American people thought so too. President Wilson, however, had been just as sure that the United States could not isolate itself any longer. It was too great a power in a world "shrinking" because of modern transportation and communication. Many Americans supported each point of view. The conflict between the two views went on until World War II, twenty years later. Let us try to find out which side was right.

Excerpt 2

President Harding would not allow the United States to have anything to do with the League of Nations. He even gave orders that any messages from the League should be returned unopened. When the question of joining the World Court came up, Harding said "No." The Court was the "back door to the League," he insisted. He meant that the United States would soon find itself in the League if it joined the World Court.

President Harding died suddenly in 1923. His policy toward the League was changed somewhat by his successors, Presidents Calvin Coolidge and Herbert Hoover. They began to send representatives to League meetings, provided these dealt with long-range issues rather than immediate problems. The United States took part, for example, in several talks on disarmament. It also cooperated in some other League activities. In 1926 the Senate voted to join the World Court, but it set certain conditions to protect American rights. Since the Court did not accept these conditions, our country never became a member. Nevertheless, the United States did join the International Labor Organization.

Isolationism

Excerpt 3

3
Senator
Clark

was a
forceful
champion
of the
isolationist
cause. He
had thou-
sands of
followers
throughout
the United
States.



PRO-ISOLATION ... *Senator Bennett Champ Clark ... Harper's Monthly, December 1935*

Is there a way to keep America out of war?

If there is such a thing as intelligence left in the craniums of mankind, a thing so monstrous as another modern World War must be avoided. There certainly is no moral justification for war between civilized nations. No moralist or philosopher worthy of the name in modern times has ever been able to defend it. The veriest jingo in the United States does not dare to stand upon any public platform and attempt to justify war as such. The peoples of the whole world abhor it.

Yet it is apparent to any student of international affairs that the postwar era has come to an end, and that the world is once again in that precarious condition in which the bad temper of a dictator, the ineptness of a diplomat, or the crime of a fanatic may let loose irremediable disaster...

At present the desire to keep the United States from becoming involved in any war between foreign nations seems practically unanimous among the rank and file of American citizens; but it must be remembered there was an almost equally strong demand to keep us out of the last war. In August 1914, few could have conceived that America would be dragged into a European conflict in which we had no original part and the ramifications of which we did not even understand. Even as late as November 1916, President Wilson was reelected because he "kept us out of war." Yet five months later we were fighting to "save the world for democracy" in the "war to end war."

... If we have learned anything at all, we know the inevitable and tragic end to a policy of drifting and trusting to luck. We know that however strong is the will of the American people to refrain from mixing in other people's quarrels, that will can be made effective only if we have a sound, definite policy from the beginning.

Such a policy must be built upon a program to safeguard our neutrality. No lesson of the World War is more clear than that such a policy cannot be improvised after war breaks out. It must be determined in advance, before it is too late to apply reason

Some of us in the Senate, particularly the members of the Munitions Investigation Committee, have delved rather deeply into the matter of how the United States has been drawn into past wars and what forces are at work to frighten us again into the traps set by Mars. As a result of these studies, Senator Nye and I introduced the three proposals for neutrality legislation

Senator Nye and I made no claims then, and make none now, that the neutrality proposals will provide an absolute and infallible guarantee against our involvement in war. But we do believe that the United States can stay out of war if it wants to and if its citizens understand what is necessary to preserve our neutrality. We feel that the temporary legislation already passed and the legislation we shall vigorously push at the coming session of the Congress point the only practical way....

Isolationism

Senator Gerald P. Nye of North Dakota was a leader among those in Congress who feared America would be dragged into a second European war. Strict neutrality laws, they believed, would keep America out of any future conflict (page 716). In May 1935 Nye addressed a meeting of peace groups on the topic "How to Keep America Out of War." After repeating the belief that World War I had been a fruitless waste of lives and resources, he made the following plea.

The hour for action is now. Why not make the most of it?

Today we think of public enemies as those who threaten and kill for profit. With a war looming on the European horizon, let us broaden our definition. Public enemies should be those among us who do the things which result in having other people killed for their own profit.

Public enemy no. 1 should be the munitions maker, who wants to sell his powder and poison gas, and sends it in American ships, wrapped up in the American flag, manned with American seamen, to be sunk by submarines and bombing planes. The result of his act will inevitably drag us into war.

Public enemy no. 2 is the banker who raises money to pay for the munitions and who speculates in the stocks of the war babies [industries] steel, gas, and chemicals, and who lures the people into believing there is both profit and honor in this blood money—until that time when he can no longer tell the difference between profit and honor.

Public enemy no. 3 is the industrialist who knows that the only way to get fascism established in America is to get the country into a war with all the military dictatorship that involves.

Public enemy no. 4 is the American who goes into the war zones to make money, recklessly indifferent of the consequences to his nation and to hundreds of thousands of men better than himself.

In conclusion, we ought to be ready to face facts. We should be seeking profit from experience. If we will but do this we will fight with determination for legislation such as will greatly simplify our task of trying to stay out of another war.

Robert A. Dickey

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The Isolationist Position

Charles A. Lindbergh, 1941

At a mass rally in New York City in April 1941, Charles A. Lindbergh argued in favor of an isolationist foreign policy.

We have weakened ourselves for many months, and still worse, we have divided our own people, by this dabbling in Europe's wars. While we should have been concentrating on American defense, we have been forced to argue over foreign quarrels. We must turn our eyes and our faith back to our own country before it is too late. And when we do this, a different vista opens before us.

Practically every difficulty we would face in invading Europe becomes an asset to us in defending America. Our enemy, and not we, would then have the problem of transporting millions of troops across the ocean and landing them on a hostile shore. They, and not we, would have to furnish the convoys to transport guns and trucks and munitions and fuel across three thousand miles of water. Our battleships and our submarines would then be fighting close to their home bases. We would then do the bombing from the air and the torpedoing at sea. And if any part of an enemy convoy should ever pass our navy and our air force, they would still be faced with the guns of our coast artillery, and behind them the divisions of our Army.

The United States is better situated from a military standpoint than any other nation in the world. Even in our present condition of unpreparedness no foreign power is in a position to invade us today. If we concentrate on our own defenses and build the strength that this nation should maintain, no foreign army will ever attempt to land on American shores.

War is not inevitable for this country. Such a claim is defeatism in the true sense. No one can make us fight abroad unless we ourselves are willing to do so. No one will attempt to fight us here if we arm ourselves as a great nation should be armed. Over a hundred million people in this nation are opposed to entering the war. If the principles of democracy mean anything at all, that is reason enough for us to stay out. If we are forced into a war against the wishes of an overwhelming majority of our people, we will have proved democracy such a failure at home that there will be little use fighting for it abroad.

The time has come when those of us who believe in an independent American destiny must band together and organize for strength. We have been led toward war by a minority of our people. This minority has power. It has influence. It has a loud voice. But it does not represent the American people. During the last several years I have traveled over this country from one end to the other. I have talked to many hundreds of men and women, and I have letters from tens of thousands more, who fell the same way as you and I.

An Isolationist's View of Lend-Lease

Burton K. Wheeler, 1941

Burton K. Wheeler, *Congressional Record*,
77th Cong., 1st sess. (speech of January
12, 1941), Appendix, pp. 178-79.

The Roosevelt Administration's lend-lease policy was sharply criticized by Senator Burton K. Wheeler, a leading isolationist in the Senate.

The lend-lease policy, translated into legislative form, stunned a Congress and a nation wholly sympathetic to the cause of Great Britain. . . . It warranted my worst fears for the future of America, and it definitely stamps the President as war-minded.

The lend-lease give program is the New Deal's Triple-A foreign policy; it will plow under every fourth American boy.

Never before have the American people been asked or compelled to give so bounteously and completely of their tax dollars to any foreign nation. Never before has the Congress of the United States been asked by any president to violate international law. Never before has this Nation resorted to duplicity in the conduct of its foreign affairs. Never before has the United States given to one man the power to strip this Nation of its defenses. Never before has a Congress coldly and flatly been asked to abdicate.

If the American people want a dictatorship--if they want a totalitarian form of government and if they want war--this bill should be steamrolled through Congress, as is the wont of President Roosevelt.

Approval of this legislation means war, open and complete warfare. I, therefore, ask the American people before they supinely accept it, Was the last World War worth while?

If it were, then we should lend and lease war materials. If it were, then we should lend and lease American boys. President Roosevelt has said we would be repaid by England. We will be. We will be repaid, just as England repaid her war debts of the first World War--repaid those dollars wrung from the sweat of labor and the toil of farmers with cries of "Uncle Shylock." Out boys will be returned--returned in caskets, maybe; returned with bodies maimed; returned with minds warped and twisted by sights of horrors and the scream and shriek of high-powered shells.

Considered on its merits and stripped of its emotional appeal to our sympathies, the lend-lease-give bill is both ruinous and ridiculous. . . .

It gives to one man--responsible to no one--the power to denude our shores of every warship. It gives to one individual the dictatorial power to strip the American Army of our every tank, cannon, rifle, or anti-aircraft gun. No one would deny that the lend-lease-give bill contains provisions that would enable one man to render the United States defenseless, but they will tell you, "The President would never do it." To this I say, "Why does he ask the power if he does not intend to use it? Why not, I say, place some check on American donations to a foreign nation? . . .

I say in the kind of language used by the President--shame on those who ask the powers--and shame on those who would grant them.

Can and Should Huge War Profits Be Curbed

Senate Munitions Committee, After Long Investigation, Answers Yes

THE Senate munitions investigating committee has nearly completed a report, the importance of which cannot be overestimated. The main features of the report are being put in the form of a bill, which will soon be debated in the Senate. Because this bill will be so far reaching

as well as high prices for the things they bought. Their living costs increased enormously.

Well, what about all this! It has long been known that certain classes of people reap huge profits during a period of war. What does the Senate Munitions Committee propose to do about it? As we have said, the committee has not yet made its final recommendations to Congress. Last week, however, Mr. John T. Flynn, who is a well-known writer on economic issues and who has been engaged by the Senate committee as a special adviser, gave his views on the subject. He told how he thought the government should prevent the making of large profits in case the United States should again get involved in a war. Briefly, his plan is as follows:



JOHN T. FLYNN © U. & U.
As he appeared before the Senate Munitions Committee.

In nature, it is expected to stir up considerable discussion, both in Congress and in the country at large. It will be the result of a thorough investigation by the Senate Munitions Committee, which is headed by Senator Nye of North Dakota. The committee has studied such questions as these: Can and should the profits be taken out of war? Should those people who stay at home during a war be allowed to make large sums of money while those who are sent to the trenches make only a very small amount and are in constant danger of losing their lives or becoming permanently disabled? If people knew that they would make even less in time of war than in time of peace, would they not be more determined than ever to keep this country out of foreign conflicts?

Senate Munitions Committee

In delving into these questions, the Senate Munitions Committee has spent months of study. It has questioned some of the leading industrialists of the country. It has revealed that enormous profits were made by big corporations during the last war period and that exorbitant salaries were paid to high officials of these corporations. Although munitions and steel companies led the parade of profiteers, practically all business enterprises greatly increased their earnings. They were able to charge higher prices for their goods and services because of the greater demand, both here and in Europe, for all kinds of supplies. In spite of the fact that business profits soared rapidly, however, the Senate committee learned that wages of workers rose rather slowly in comparison. Moreover, workers were at an added disadvantage because they had to pay higher rents,

the government would prevent any individual from making more than \$10,000 a year by placing an income tax of 100 per cent on all earnings above that amount. Profits made by corporations would be kept down to a low level by taxation. In addition, stiff income taxes would be placed on everybody earning \$1,000 or more. Business men and corporation officials could not refuse to contribute their services under these conditions, because they would be drafted by the government, just as men are drafted into the army.

Flynn's Plan

This, in brief, is Mr. Flynn's plan. He would give the government vast power to control profits and to dictate how industry should be carried on. Mr. Flynn looks at this problem from several different angles. In the first place, he thinks it is unjust for people who do not go to war to reap huge profits while their less fortunate countrymen on the battlefields are being blown to bits . . . pathetically crippled . . . shell-shocked. He thinks the least that people who stay at home can do is to turn over nearly all their profits to the government in order to pay for the war. During the last war, the government had to borrow huge sums

of money from the people and it is still paying them interest on this money. If we get into another war, Mr. Flynn would have the government meet the necessary expenses through taxation instead of through borrowing. In other words, he would have the people pay for the war at the time it is going on rather than run up huge government debts to be paid by future generations.

The significance of Mr. Flynn's plan is this: Business interests, instead of gaining by war, as they have in the past, would stand to lose heavily. If they knew that their profits would be practically wiped out in the event of this country's engaging in a foreign conflict, it is fairly certain that they would exert all their influence in the effort to keep us out. And their influence, of course, is powerful. They own most of the large newspapers, radio stations, and motion picture houses. If they should throw their combined efforts behind a movement to keep us out of war, there can be no doubt of the tremendous influence they would have over the mass of people.

No Profits—No War?

This is not to say that all wars are started by big business interests and that such interests always support a war because they stand to gain by it. On the contrary, most business men believe that in the long run it is to the country's best interests, as well as to their own, to stay out of foreign conflicts. But they would be more anxious than ever to back a peaceful policy if they knew that in time of war their profits would be greatly cur-



THEIR CODE!
—Talbut in Washington News

tailed. So would those selfish financial interests which actually do strive to produce the war fever among people in order that they might reap higher profits.

Mr. Flynn's plan, however, strikes not only at those with large incomes. As we pointed out earlier in this article, he is in favor of placing heavy taxes on every income of more than \$1,000. He thinks that people with lower incomes would also think long and hard before supporting a war if they knew that they would be taxed heavily. We see, therefore, that Mr. Flynn's proposals are designed to accomplish two things: First, to eliminate the injustice of huge profit-making at a time of great national disaster—all wars can be thus classified—and second, to remove an important incentive for supporting war, namely, the possibility of making big profits.

What is the chance of Mr. Flynn's proposals being adopted by Congress? First of all, of course, they must be approved by the Senate Munitions Committee. The committee has already indicated that it will adopt the proposals and include them in a bill which is soon to be sent to the floor of the Senate. In fact, the committee wants to go even further. It is working out a plan for dealing with profits in war supplies in time of peace. The committee believes that if munitions manufacturers were unable, either in time of peace or war, to make large profits by selling war weapons to the government, they would not be so likely to carry on undercover campaigns, as some of them have always done, in favor of maintaining a powerful army and navy.

Up to Congress

As to the question of whether or not Mr. Flynn's proposals, as well as those of the Senate Munitions Committee, will be adopted by Congress, we must wait for an answer. There will undoubtedly be a hot contest over this issue when it comes up for de-

(Concluded on page 6, column 2)



THE PROFESSIONAL VENTRILOQUIST

—Carmack in CHRISTIAN SCIENCE MONITOR

mittee of his own working on this problem. His committee is headed by Bernard Baruch, New York financier. General Hugh Johnson is also a member. The Senate Munitions Committee was displeased when it learned that the president had appointed the Baruch committee. Members of the Senate group feel that any proposals sponsored by Mr. Baruch, since he is a wealthy financier, would be only mild compromises.

In fact, Mr. Baruch's views on this question are already fairly well known. He would have the government, if we should go to war, prevent prices from rising above what they were at the outbreak of the war. The Senate Munitions Committee does not believe this plan would be effective, because business interests could still make bigger profits than they could in time of peace. Even though they did not raise their prices, they could sell more of their goods, for there is always a greater demand for supplies during a period of war. If they sold more of their goods, they would naturally make more money. So the Nye committee thinks that the Baruch plan would not accomplish what it is supposed to, that is, the elimination of excessive war profits.

Nevertheless, many favor the Baruch plan because it is not so drastic as Mr. Flynn's. It is expected to be put in the form of a bill and introduced in the House of Representatives in a few days.

PROPOSALS MADE TO REMOVE WAR PROFITS

(Concluded from page 3)

bate. Since it would strike a crippling blow at all the powerful business interests in time of war, it can be expected that there will be a great deal of opposition from this quarter. Some of the opposition will be on selfish grounds, but not all of it. There are many people who sincerely feel that it would be dangerous for the government to limit incomes so drastically in the event of war. They argue that at the very time when private industry should be in a position to expand in order to supply war needs, the government would be placing serious obstacles in the way.

President Roosevelt has not taken sides on this issue as yet. He is in favor of the government's controlling war profits in some manner or other, but it is not known whether he wants to go as far as the Senate Munitions Committee does. As a matter of fact, the president has had a special com-

ISOLATIONIST WORKSHEET

EXCERPT 1

A) Who were the key isolationists in America during the 1930s, and how popular were their ideas?

EXCERPT 2

A) How did Harding lead the United States towards isolationism?

B) What steps towards some involvement did Coolidge and Hoover take?

EXCERPT 3

A) Why should America avoid war?

B) What lesson should America have learned from the first World War and how did the American Senate take steps to avoid future war?

EXCERPT 4

A) Who are the people that may start another war and what should be done to stop them?

EXCERPT 5

A) What is Lindbergh's strongest point in favor of isolationism? Why?

EXCERPT 6

A) Why was Lend Lease considered to be a dangerous policy by American isolationist?

EXCERPT 7

A) What were Flynn and Nye's major findings regarding munitions?

B) Do you agree with their findings? Why/Why not?

C) What are the purposes of Flynn's proposal?