

THE CONGRESSIONAL FRONT.
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THE PALESTINE PROBLEM

On at least two occasions in the last two years, the Foreign Affairs Committee of the House reported a resolution re-affirming the interest of the United States in Palestine as a homeland for the Jews. The first time an effort was made to get this measure before the Congress for action, it was tabled at the instance of certain officials in government who were afraid it might embarrass our relations with Britain during the African campaign. The second time, this effort was made, still another department of government appeared before a Committee of the Congress and suggested postponement for fear that other difficulties might result. Thus no action was taken. Recently however, Mr. Earl G. Harrison, one-time Commissioner of Immigration who was appointed by the President as the U.S. representative on an Intergovernmental Refugee Commission reported to the President that persecuted Jews in Austria and Germany who could not be returned to their countries of birth and residence should be evacuated to Palestine if they so desired and that they should be sent there immediately. Thus the Palestine problem comes to the fore and should have early action.

A BIT OF HISTORY.

On November 2, 1917, before World War I was over, Lord Balfour of Great Britain who spoke in behalf of the British War Ministry issued what has come to be known as the Balfour Declaration. It was issued as a mark of appreciation for the services rendered by Jews to Britain in that war and very especially the chemical research work which was done by Dr. Chaim Weitzmann. That Declaration expressed sympathy for the idea of establishing a Jewish homeland in Palestine. But it went further. It stated that Britain would use her best endeavors to facilitate that objective. There was of course the reservation that non-Jewish communities in Palestine would not be prejudiced in their civil and religious rights. When the first World War ended, a provision was therefore included in the League of Nations mandate whereby Palestine was placed in the custody of Britain to the effect that this homeland objective should be carried out. President Wilson gave his sanction and the 67th Congress passed a resolution to the same effect.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF PALESTINE BEGINS.

Jews all over the world saw in this action, the fruition of their age-old hope for a homeland and at once undertook to demonstrate to the world that the soil and resources of Palestine could be developed. Hundreds of millions of dollars of private funds went into the work. Farm colonies and cooperatives were established. There are nearly 250 such groups now. Refugees came from all over the world. The production of rye, wheat, barley, dairy products, canned vegetables, oranges, lemons, and grape fruit grew to an astonishing degree and the quality was excellent. Small industries were established. In the space of little more than 30 years, the modern city of Tel Aviv with a population of 150,000 grew from nothing but a sand dune to one of the finest cities to be found anywhere. A very substantial fishing

industry was established. Where there were but comparatively few Jews in Palestine, the number has now grown to 500,000 compared with 1,100,000 Arabs. But difficulties began.

THE CHAMBERLAIN WHITE PAPER.

The Arabs demurred at the idea of admitting more Jews to Palestine and in response to their protest, a so-called White Paper was issued by Britain in 1939 when Chamberlain was the Prime Minister. It said in effect that after 5 years, there should be no more Jews admitted to Palestine and that during the 5-year period, the number to be admitted should not exceed 75,000. For practical purposes, that virtually put an end to immigration of Jews to Palestine and there the matter rests. Now comes Mr. Harrison, urging that many more be admitted at once, and that places the problem before the world and especially before Great Britain.

SOME PERSONAL COMMENT.

The author of the FRONT spent some time in Palestine in March and April of 1945. He visited with Jewish, Arab and British leaders to get a first-hand story of the problem. He motored over the entire land and inspected its industry and agriculture. He is quite familiar with the historic claims which have been advanced by all sides in the present controversy. There are certain well-established facts which cannot be denied. The first is that Jewish farmers have done an astonishing job in building up the soil and increasing agricultural production; The second is that countless small industries have been established to make this small country as self-sustaining as possible. The third is that with such intensive cultivation, Palestine can support many additional people and would provide safe haven for thousands of stateless refugee Jews in Europe. The fourth is that as Jewish enterprise has brought new and better farm methods to Palestine, the Arabs have been greatly benefited. The fifth is that Palestine is capable of great industrial development. One such is the potash industry which derives a number of valuable salts and minerals from the historic Dead Sea. The function of humankind is to employ its talent, labor and ingenuity to enrich the place where ever it may dwell and this the Jews in Palestine have done in a remarkable degree. Palestine should be opened to further immigration and the covenant which was made in 1917 should be kept. This action should be taken now when the need is so great.