

Subject: Meetings of the International Chamber of Commerce in Europe.

Before writing this memorandum on the meetings of the International Chamber of Commerce I wish to look at a few notes. I think that in anything that I may publish I should include something on the work and the meetings of the International Chamber, including a few words as to its origin and the principal people who made it such a successful instrument up until the beginning of the second world war.

I attended several of the meetings in Europe as the official observer of the Department of State. The American, British and French groups always took a leading part in the meetings of the chamber. Among the American group Edward Filene of Boston was unfailingly present at all the meetings until his death. John Fahey was another of the unfailing attendants. Eugene Thomas of the Foreign Trade Council and his predecessor, Mr. Farrell always attended. Mr. Louis Kirstein of Boston played an important role. George Morris, a distinguished Washington lawyer, invariably attended. Silas Strawn and Mr. Sibley, who was for a long time Chief Counsel of the International Telephone and Telegraph Company, showed a constant and unfailing interest. Warren Pierson and Wayne Chatfield Taylor were usually there.

Among the British who unfailingly attended the meetings were Sir Arthur Salter and Sir Alan Anderson. Pirelli was for years the principal Italian participant at the meetings.

The importance of the meetings of the International Chamber of Commerce lay in the fact that it was the first international organization to endeavor to get a broader understanding of the principles of private enterprise and a broader and greater movement of trade. They made a valient fight against trade barriers of all kinds. They studied and discussed customs regulations and practices of various countries which served as an impediment to trade. Shipping problems and shipping routes were always on the agenda. The various types of taxation problems which affected international trade were a constant subject of examination and study.

The most important thing about the meetings, however, was that they brought

together leaders of industry, banking, commerce and government from practically all the countries of the world. The meetings usually lasted for a week. While the regular sessions during the week were always of importance, a great deal of attention was paid to smaller group meetings and to social gatherings where the representatives of the various countries got to know each other and had the opportunity to discuss with each other. As a pioneer in this field of international discussion of these major problems of trade and commerce, the International Chamber served a very real purpose. For me it was a wonderful opportunity to get to know some of the leading businessmen in Europe in countries where I had not served and whom I would not have known otherwise. Like some of the other American members who attended the meetings, I became sort of a fixture and a familiar figure. I do not recall how many of the meetings I attended but they were I believe held every two years and I must have attended at least five or six and maybe more. I will check this from my notes.

With the beginning of the second world war the meetings of the Chamber were obviously impossible, and after the war Winthrop Aldrich, then Chairman of the Board of the Chase National Bank in New York, accepted the presidency of the International Chamber and being broadly interested in these major problems of trade and commerce and greater freedom of trade, he spent a good deal of time travelling to various countries during the time that he was the president in order to renew interest in the Chamber. While in many respects the work of the Chamber has been replaced by the various inter-governmental organizations which have been set up to study these problems and by the subsidiary and affiliated organizations of the United Nations, as well as by various organizations in countries of Europe and in the United States and by inter-American organizations, ~~The~~ Chamber in my opinion will continue to play an important role, for it is entirely a private matter and is not connected with government in any way. This provides a free forum for discussion.

The resolutions drawn up at the end of each meeting of the International

Chamber were documents which were seriously studied by responsible people in practically all countries. The progressive importance of these resolutions is perhaps the best indication of the importance of the work which the Chamber accomplished.

After I have consulted my notes I will re-write this memorandum and will speak with more specific reference to the contribution made by certain outstanding Americans, British, French and Italians, Dutch and Swedish members of the Chamber.