

Congress Debates Manganese Tariff

Economics—Chemistry

Metallic manganese, vitally important in war time, has provoked a small war of its own on Capitol Hill.

The present tariff of one cent per pound applies to ores containing 30 per cent. or more of manganese. Realizing early in the hearings before the House Ways and Means Committee, that it would be hopeless to attempt to increase this tariff, representatives from states where there are large deposits of low-grade manganese ores are now concentrating their efforts on an attempt to have the present tariff made applicable to low-grade ores containing from 10 to 30 per cent. manganese.

Steel manufacturers have bitterly opposed any such change, and have been tacitly upheld in many of their contentions by facts and figures readily obtainable from government departments.

The story of manganese is all bound up with the World War. At that time manganese ore, badly needed for ordnance and munitions, soared from \$12 to \$65 per ton.

Hectically stimulated by this price, American producers of manganese in one year raised their production figure from 31,474 tons in 1916 to 129,405 tons in 1917 and by supreme efforts to 305,869 tons in 1918. Yet imports during these two years did not slump a great deal, in fact there was such a demand that American producers simply could not meet the emergency. Much needed shipping,

according to Dr. George Otis Smith, director of the U. S. Geological Survey, had to continue to be diverted in order to bring in Brazilian ores.

Nevertheless the efforts of the domestic producers during these two years completely stripped many of the known deposits of high grade manganese ores in this country.

Today, it is estimated by a committee of the American Institute of Mining and Metallurgical Engineers that there are only between 578,510 and 1,223,650 tons of recoverable manganese from the reserves of known ferro-grade deposits in the whole country. This maximum amount given would supply the needs of the United States for not more than a few years at the most.

The Geological Survey backs up this statement and the Bureau of Mines further stated:

"Except for the chemical ores produced in the Philipsburg district of Montana, the supply of high-grade metallurgical manganese ores in the United States is meager."

Even the large domestic production in war years—about half of the past 25 years domestic production—in the face of inflated prices, was conducted at a loss and Congress enacted the war minerals relief act under which the manganese miners' losses were reimbursed by the government to the extent of \$2,516,112, the Bureau of Mines pointed out.

Most representatives from states

abounding in low-grade manganese ores admit all this, but maintain that the processes for recovering manganese from the low-grade ores could be developed economically if given sufficient encouragement. Representative William Williamson, Republican, of South Dakota, leader in the fight to force low-grade manganese ores to be included under the present tariff provisions, stated that there are 10 to 25 billion tons of the low-grade ore in the country.

He stated that much low-grade ore is being imported at the present time free of duty, and that producers of high-grade pig iron and steel have found a way to use the low-grade ore.

Were the duty applied to low-grade ores, he maintained, the United States would soon be able to produce all the manganese this country needs and provide for any possible future emergency.

Opposing the change is this statement from the American Institute of Mining and Metallurgical Engineers, that, though the domestic resources of low-grade reserves are adequate, "any effective attempt to force their adaptation to the country's needs beyond the normal development which may be looked for through increase in skill and vigorous educational campaign, would result in a cost so enormous as to be quite disproportionate to the purpose to be served." *Science News-Letter, June 15, 1929*

Meningitis Becomes Menace

Public Health

Such drastic measures as restriction of immigration from the Philippines in order to check the epidemic of meningitis in the west may not be necessary, Dr. Hugh S. Cumming, Surgeon-General of the U. S. Public Health Service, has stated. The officials of the steamship company bringing immigrants, among whom meningitis developed, from Oriental ports have agreed to all the special regulations suggested by quarantine officers of the Public Health Service.

The most radical of these consists in segregation of ships' passengers according to the port of embarkation. This means that all immigrants boarding the ship at Manila will be kept by themselves, as will those boarding at Chinese, Japanese

and Hawaiian ports. The Filipinos, who are extremely susceptible to meningitis, will thus be protected from exposure to the disease through contact with natives of other places where the disease may exist.

Meningitis has been brought into this country through these Filipino immigrants, but health officials are not sure whether the disease was contracted by these immigrants in the Philippines or at various Chinese and Japanese ports where the ships stop on the way to San Francisco and Seattle. No cases of meningitis had been reported in the Philippines before the outbreak on the West Coast of this country. Some meningitis had occurred in Japan, and in China no exact knowledge of health condi-

tions among the natives is available.

The Surgeon-General and other public health officers hope that these new regulations will prove effective in checking the present epidemic.

In California during the outbreak the disease was kept pretty closely within the immigrant Filipino population, because these immigrants were employed on farms where they were under contract and where they could be kept in quarantine by the state health department. However, the condition was so serious that the epidemic was one of the major subjects discussed at the conference of state health officers and the U. S. Public Health Service just held.

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