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BUSINESS -- GOVERNMENT COOPERATION  
IN TIME OF WAR

by

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President, Chamber of Commerce of the United States

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BUSINESS - GOVERNMENT COOPERATION  
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I am sure we are all agreed that no nation in our present industrial era can defend itself against the warlike aggressions of other nations without having the full cooperation of its own business and industrial groups.

America's participation in the World War demonstrated how essential to victory are the industry, commerce, banking, transportation and other business activities that make up our peace-time economic life.

As we glance over the European and Oriental scene, it is apparent how nations standing in constant threat of aggression tend more and more to apply to their industrial life government controls, dictated by existing or anticipated military necessity.

It has seemed to me that dictatorship, with the concentration of a nation's economic forces, even in peacetime, under the will, or even the whim, of a single individual, increases the possibility of war between nations. The separation of economics from political life, which obtains in a democracy, seems to me a greater assurance of non-aggression and of the maintenance of peaceful international relations.

In America we are fortunate in that the threat of war is usually remote. We are not beset by neighbors intent on invading our territory or annexing our states. When we think of our defense lines we usually think in terms of a defense line hundreds, if not thousands of miles at sea.

I mention the above because we have developed in America an economic life which no existing military necessity requires should be under constant government domination or control. Free private enterprise, with its appeal to individual initiative which has made America the leading business nation of the world, has not had to be curbed or brought under government ownership in order to provide adequate defense against threatening neighbors.

We are thus on a different footing from some of the European nations where international political differences require that certain industries be constantly and accurately geared into the military machine.

The problem of industrial mobilization in the United States therefore has been one of drawing up plans to meet a possible future emergency rather than one to coordinate economic life to a war that is always just around the corner.

The government's industrial mobilization plan is itself built around the principle of throwing our economic resources into wartime gear in such a manner as to assure the quickest possible ending of a war and at the same time as small a disturbance as possible of normal economic peace-time operations.

A plan of this sort, flexible enough to meet changing conditions that arise at any time of war activity, must appeal to any fair-minded man. When a democracy goes to war, it is usually because public opinion has become not merely favorable to such entry but because it has become insistent upon it.

In thinking over this problem of industrial mobilization - one which existing legislation places upon the Assistant Secretary of War - I began to scan our own organization to see just what our part might be were such an unwanted emergency as war brought upon our nation. I appreciate that the office of the Assistant Secretary already has contacts with industries essential to defense in every part of the country. Many of the concerns that have been contacted are members of our organization.

Yet every great emergency hatches a thousand and more problems of the most unexpected sort - problems which require the utilization of the most effective machinery available for the gathering of required information, the solution of urgent problems, and quick action.

In an organization like our own, with more than a thousand member chambers of commerce throughout the United States, and with more than four hundred trade associations, in vital branches of American business life, we have what comes pretty close to being an ideal setup for quick action and effective cooperation.

In each one of our member organizations we have constant contact throughout the year, not only with the president of the organization and with the secretary, but also with an officer known as a national councillor, who

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might be termed a liaison man from his organization to the National Chamber, tied in closely with all Chamber activities throughout the year.

In time of emergency also we could cooperate with the government through our Division Offices, located in New York, Atlanta, Chicago, Dallas, Minneapolis, and San Francisco, each under the executive direction of a vice president of the Chamber.

The Chamber's contact with business life has also been developed effectively during the past two decades through the operation of eleven service departments, representing the major economic functions of American business. Let me mention these briefly to you in passing, telling of some of their activities which might have a bearing upon the problems you are considering here in the Army Industrial College.

An Agricultural Department constantly at work upon the coordination of the multitude of common interests between agriculture on the one hand and commerce and industry on the other.

A Construction and Civic Development Department concerned with construction in all its phases - housing, public works, regional and city planning, and other activities devoted to building up communities.

Our Commercial Organization Department is a focusing point for the many chambers of commerce and similar organizations that work jointly under our federated body.

Within the field of the Domestic Distribution Department come the many problems incident to the movement of goods from the producer and manufacturer to the American consumer. Keeping in mind the constant changes in the methods of doing business, you can appreciate how important the ideal of cooperation is in this field.

Our Finance Department, in its program of fostering sound financial policies and practices, comes in contact not only with government agencies in this field, but also with commercial and savings banks, business companies, investment banks, finance companies, and other agencies dealing with finance and credit. Under this

Department come also the questions of taxation, whether international, federal, state or local.

In the Foreign Commerce Department are handled a wide variety of matters of export trade, import trade, tariffs, international treaties, sources of raw materials, and other phases of our relationships with foreign nations.

Our Insurance Department has contacts not only with the various types of insurance enterprises but also with the many agencies that are working to reduce fire hazards and to conserve health throughout the nation.

Probably of major interest to you would be our Department of Manufacture, because of its wide-spread contacts with manufacturers, trade associations, state and regional manufacturers' associations and similar groups. The subject of employer-employee relations, apt to be of major importance during a period of emergency, has the constant consideration of this Department, as do also various questions in the field of industrial expansion, improvement and rehabilitation of industrial equipment, location of enterprises, and similar items of direct relation to industrial efficiency in time of war

Natural resources - frequently the backbone of a nation's ability to continue military operations, come within the province of our Natural Resources Production Department. This section of our Chamber deals with industries producing such basic raw materials as coal, timber, oil, natural gas, iron, copper, cement, and various other products. It deals also with water power and reclamation.

Previously I have mentioned our Department in which the functions of chambers of commerce center. We have a similar Department - our Trade Association Department - in touch with the hundreds of trade associations inside and outside our membership, with up-to-the-minute information as to functions, procedure, and organization of such groups

Finally, you will find in our Transportation and Communication Department men who have contact with our railroads, electric railways, highways, water transport, aeronautics, waterways, port terminals ocean shipping, postal service, telephone, telegraph, cable, and radio. These service functions, essential as they are in time of peace, are even

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more so in time of war.

I can complete this picture of our possible part in your picture by stating that each of these Departments I have mentioned is not only staffed by trained men but has the guidance and advice of a Department Committee, composed of some ten to twenty business men experienced in the respective fields. And in addition, we have some fifteen or more special committees, dealing with topics of present-day interest - a number that could be quickly doubled or tripled if national emergency made such action advisable.

Taking this cross-section of business organization, project your minds if you will, to a cross-section of American business from coast to coast and from border to border. It is a great, voluntary, yet effectively coordinated business system. It has displayed unexampled efficiency. It is a system which operates best under the hand of those who throughout the years have come familiar with its intricate mechanism. With little readjustment - with guidance as to what its job is in supporting military operations - it can be highly effective in defending America against all comers.

In our national interest it is of highest importance to preserve the efficiency, flexibility, and enthusiasm of our American business system. What helps business contributes to American progress. What helps business assures continuance of an effective business mechanism. What helps business contributes to national defense. And what helps business helps you men upon whom our nation relies when crisis or emergency comes.

Discussion Following Lecture  
"Self-Government of Industry"

by

Mr. George H. Davis

President, Chamber of Commerce of the United States

The Army Industrial College

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Colonel Jordan: Mr. Davis has agreed to answer any questions the class may wish to ask.

Mr. Davis: With one exception. I brought my gang with me - if I can not answer the questions I will turn them over to my gang - (pointing to Mr. Bacher and Mr. Snow of the staff of the Chamber of Commerce of the United States).

Q. Mr. Davis, would you mind saying something about the activity of the trade associations during the World War?

A. That is a pretty big subject. I do not know just what part of them you refer to. I told you that I was a farmer and a grain handler. Our own trade association was given the job, by Mr. Hoover, of handling the grain of the country. You will remember that we sent the wheat over to the other people and we lived on corn. That was organized down to the nth degree voluntarily. We have what is called (of which I am unfortunate enough to be Vice-President) the Terminal Elevator Grain Merchants Association. We represent about three hundred million bushels of storage. We had our officers and a director in each terminal market and it was a very simple matter to get the groups together and get Mr. Hoover's and Mr. Barnes' wishes and put them into effect. The only rift we had was when an order came out from Washington that nobody could buy a car of corn without some particular authority,

that had not been appointed yet, giving an okey. The Army needed beef and pork occasionally and we could not see that it was helping win the war by starving cattle and hogs, so we had a row. I happened to be the man who came down here and explained it. It was just one of those things; nobody knows how they happen, but it happened. Some fellow did not know what he was talking about and put out the order to let the cattle and the hogs starve until they got around to furnishing the corn. With that exception, which we ordered our people to disregard - we went ahead and fed the cattle and the hogs - we functioned a hundred per cent. I do not know whether that answers your question or not but that is what we did in the grain business.

Q. Yes sir. That answers my question.

Q. Mr. Davis, high morale in the soldier is very necessary in war, and one of the things that affects the morale most are letters of distress from home. We are very much worried about prices during war time and their effect on the families. Would the Chamber of Commerce back up a plan, brought out either by the War Resources Administration or some other source, of the President during the war to put a ceiling on prices?

A. That is another pretty big order. I am against anything artificial. I guess I will have to do as some of my predecessors have done - answer that personally instead of for the Chamber. We do not give decisions in the Chamber of Commerce without consulting all our members. In the last analysis, the United States Chamber of Commerce is simply the Washington representative of about sixteen hundred organizations and we do not make snap judgment on a question. We have a committee that investigates it thoroughly; we submit it to a referendum, and then if the

majority vote for that it becomes the policy of the association. We have no formal expression of policy now on that particular question. I will again refer to my crowd over here and see if they remember anything different. Normally we are for voluntary action. We are not a dictatorship yet in this country, and if our campaign keeps on going we will never be a dictatorship. It would have to be rather a dire condition before we would favor an artificial ceiling on prices. I will tell you why. You will pardon me for referring so much to the grain business but that is all I know - grain and farming. You overlooked one thing. I was on the agricultural committee for many years; those other committees were just sidelines. Mr. Hoover put out an edict that you could not trade in corn over one dollar and twenty-eight cents a bushel. I was one of a committee of three that came down and explained to him that the minute you put an artificial control over grain you paralyzed the market immediately. If you do not believe what I say, just put your mind back to the Farm Board. We told them the same thing. In the A.A.A., George Peek wanted to fix the minimum wheat price at ninety-six cents and they say you could trade over that all you wanted to. I said: "George, it will not only be the minimum price but it will be the maximum price and the only price." The minute you put a controlling finger on as delicate a mechanism as the grain market you paralyze it. Why? Because every one quits right there. They realize that natural forces will not continue to control that market and they say: "Instead of having government by law you will have government by men - all right, you run it." That is what you have today in your unemployment; it is that withering finger of control. Of course in a world war such as we had before, prices went way up before we got into the war. Getting back to that dollar and twenty-eight cent corn, we told

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Mr. Hoover that corn would go to two dollars a bushel, the actual carlots (he was putting his limits on futures); then it would violently go down again when there was a little relaxation in the demand and it would probably ruin a lot of people. That is just what it did do. It went to two dollars and one cent and then went down to one dollar five cents. He had taken away the balance wheel of the future market and that is what caused it. There was the endeavor by every one, because of fear, to protect themselves by carlots of stuff, as we saw it in the N. R.A., that they were not going to need for a year, and then when they had it and some more corn came on the market the market slumped right down to one dollar five cents. With that lengthy explanation, beating all around the bush, I would say that the Chamber of Commerce would hesitate to be a party to any artificial control of prices.

Q. In our peace-time planning work we conduct industrial surveys and make allocations of facilities. Do you think it would be better if we dealt directly with trade associations rather than going to the individual concerns of an industry? I am wondering what your ideas would be in that regard?

A. You are getting a little bit over my head. You must remember, I am a farmer. I would say the trade association, on this theory: that cream rises to the top and in the trade associations you probably find the tops of the manufacturers, the tops of different groups, and there is voluntary cooperation there. The fellow who would not cooperate with his trade association probably would not cooperate wholeheartedly in case of a war. I told you in advance that was a little over my head, but my reaction to it would be that the trade association, unless there was something wrong with the trade association, would be the place to work with them.

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Q. Mr. Davis, what is your official and personal reaction to the A.A.A.?

A. I answered that a while ago - I do not believe in any artificial control. I was here during the formation of the A.A.A. and it was the lesser of two evils. My good friend, Mr. Peek, was determined to have fixed prices. I knew what that would do because of what it did in the Farm Board case. As I explained a while ago, when the government fixes a price it must be prepared to buy all there is at that price and it becomes the only price unless there is a calamity somewhere such as drought, something of that sort, or a world war, a real war of some kind. America has become great through voluntary action and through the free play of every man's brain. I think the American people have better brains and are better trained than any other nation in the world. We may not be quite up on research to the extent the Germans or some one else are, but when it comes to downright ingenuity of getting out of a hole regardless of what it is I will bet my money on the American people and I am not going to be a party to any little thing that would stifle that initiative. That was our birthright and I am going to fight to the last ditch to protect it. You see, I am a farmer - I told you that, remember. You raised your tariffs in '21 and again in the '30's. In those two raises in tariffs you raised your tariffs from twenty-three to about fifty-three per cent average on things that other nations sell us, which affects the farmer. If the other nations can not sell to us they can not buy our agricultural products. I do not want to get into a discussion of tariffs because that becomes political, but I just want to state facts. If you raise that tariff so the man over there can not sell to us and he can not buy from us, it may help the manufacturer. If it does,

then the laborer gets his wages raised. You buy a corn binder over here. It costs about two hundred dollars. If they made it over in the other country, which they do not because we invented it here, the laborers in the various countries would get from one-half to one-fifth the wages that we would get in this country. That is based on the purchasing power of a basket of food, not in dollars exchange, but in the last analysis it is what you can buy with a dollar. If you put that tariff up, which you have, you should give something to the farmer until you reduce that tariff down to where it was, and for that reason a reasonable amount in making the tariff effective to the farmer, I think, is justified. When you begin to carry that to the nth control it is something else. I do not agree with it; I think it is bad policy. I do not think that the United States Army, and if you had some of the Navy here, both together could enforce it, because if you have certain ground that you can not use somebody has to patrol it all the time since if a chicken flies over there then you can not sell that chicken. You would have to have somebody there to see that that chicken did not get over there. If a calf got loose and got over on that ground and the farmer took it back, legally he could not sell that calf. You and I know he would sell it and nobody in the United States Army could keep him from doing it. It will break down eventually, in my judgment. I do feel that it is perfectly fair, until you change those tariffs, to pay the farmer on his share of the grain domestically consumed an equivalent of what you have robbed him of his foreign demand by raising your tariffs. In other words, make the tariff effective to him on only that proportion that is consumed domestically; then let him go ahead and raise all he wants to above that for export at the export price. He knows what it is and he gets it. I do think there is that much merit in it. That is a long answer but I did not want you to misunderstand my position.

Major McPike: Mr. Davis, do you think the policy of government planning will serve to set business going again?

A. You are not going to lead me into politics, are you? Would not my answer to artificial control cover that? There is only one way to handle this unemployment situation. There isn't anything wrong with this country. There is no money crisis; there is no shortage of labor (we have some labor troubles); there is no shortage of materials. There is just one thing lacking and that is confidence. Senator Byrnes wrote me a letter and asked me to appear before his committee on the 23rd of January. I agreed to come; then they got into that filibuster and he asked me to write him a letter. I enumerated in that letter what would help unemployment, and without burdening you with the detail of that, it is simply to have Congress show by action, not by word (we are all fed up on this talk, you know) that they are not going to crucify business, they are not going to pass an arbitrary wages and hours bill that might run our costs way up; pass these appropriation bills; adjourn and go home, and I think you will find business will pick up. It is just a lack of confidence. Merle Thorpe, the editor of our "Nation's Business" takes out a dollar, holds it to his ear, and says: "Why don't you put on overalls?" Then he says: "The dollar says he is afraid to talk." Lots of fellows have spoken out of turn. If I were not a farmer I would be afraid to talk to you folks, but you know they are afraid of us farmers. Does that answer your question?

Major McPike: Yes sir.

Q. Have our neutrality laws had any noticeable effect on our national peace-time economy up to this time?

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A. That is over my head. Maybe Mr. Bacher can answer that.

He is Manager of our Foreign Commerce Department.

Mr. Bacher: I should say, offhand, a very minor effect. I think if you examine the statistics, for instance, of exports and imports that would show up. You will find, of course, that during the past year in the munitions business the demand from overseas has been one of the bolstering elements in the export situation. Probably to the extent that neutrality laws might have shut off shipments from countries to which they apply, you might have had some slowing up, but the demand from other countries that are rearming, not for immediate war but for an expected war, has been so much greater than the demand that might have been closed off by neutrality laws that I do not think to date they have had that effect.

Colonel Miles: I would like to ask, Mr. Davis, if you think the N.R.A. has had a beneficial effect on national associations or a detrimental effect?

A. You fellows are bound to try to draw me into politics one way or the other. I think the same answer - any artificial control. I was Chairman of the Code Authority for the grain trade, and the greatest criticism I had was that we did not spend enough money. I would not meet down here I thought it just took two to travel out to Chicago so we met down there; and we used our trade association to carry on our Code Authority. Some of them, as you know, had great offices here at hundreds of thousands of dollars expense. Every time we met we were criticized for not spending money. I felt that it was just one of those artificial things; that it would not last. In the last analysis, you know, the fellow who has something is going to pay for all this joyride we have had, beginning

with the N.R.A., and I kind of felt the less we spent the better off we would be. To get back to this artificial control, who is going to say what wheat is worth today? It is the market. What is the market? It is simply a meeting place, such as this, where minds express themselves as to what wheat is worth. I remember in the war they stopped future trading in wheat and cotton. What happened? A fellow down in Texas said: "Cotton is worth ten cents a pound." A textile mill up here said: "It is only worth six cents." So they started a great patriotic campaign that we all buy a bale of cotton to help the fellow down south so he could liquidate his debts. We did not get anywhere. We had a few moth-eaten bales of cotton, which we bought patriotically and finally dumped to get rid of - weather beaten, I meant, not moth eaten; it just occurred to me what my bale of cotton looked like. Now what happened? We did not get anywhere on that; it did not do any good. Finally we re-established future trading of cotton and the next day we forgot all about this "buy a bale of cotton" business. It was all solved. The farmer down there looked up and the market was eight dollars ninety-five cents. Well, that is what cotton was worth. He does not know who made it. That is what the minds of the world had made. It was the same with the price of wheat. You hear criticism about this short selling and this fellow and the other; well, the Board of Trade of Chicago has nothing to do with the price. The New York or New Orleans Cotton Exchange has nothing to do with the price. It is simply a meeting place; right here I ask you what you think cotton is worth; you say you think it is worth eight fifty; I ask another person and he says nine fifty; finally you get together and agree, more people think it is worth eight ninety-five so it is worth eight ninety-five. And that is what

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the world is thinking, not just what they think in Washington. When you get into the N.R.A. you have to have a dictator and I am against all dictators, because if I am going to put my dollar out to work I want to put it out under laws, not under men's idea because men's ideas, as we have found, even the highest ideas, change over night and we are left flat.

Colonel Scowden: Mr. Davis, in England I understand they have a Board of Trade which is quite influential with the British government in both domestic and foreign policies, especially foreign policies. I understand that some members of the Board of Trade are rather active in Parliament. What I want to ask is whether or not our government consults the Chamber of Commerce, for example, in negotiating reciprocal trade agreements; or did the members of Commerce consult the Chamber of Commerce before they passed the Neutrality Act? Just what is the influence of the United States Chamber of Commerce with the government?

A. Before we became "princes of entrenched greed" and "economic royalists" there was an open and above board influence. Since things went pretty high hat and artificial, etc.; a one man government, of course we could not subscribe to anything of that kind and we were put in the dog house. We had a lot of company. As regards the London Chamber of Commerce - the British Board of Trade is a government department - Lord Leverhulme was over here recently. I gave him a little dinner up at the Chamber. He was the former President of the London Chamber of Commerce and I went into that subject quite a little with him. You stated it correctly - they do have a great influence. Sometimes we look down on the foreigners but we can learn a lot of things from them. I do not take back anything I said about our brains but our brains tell us that we are

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not too old or too ossified to learn things and we can learn a lot of things about labor and about business from England. They are a long way ahead of us on labor. As you know, they have collective bargaining, but the fellow that bargains on both sides is responsible. Lord Leverhulme told me about how they worked together, particularly on their foreign trade; that there were never any laws passed or anything of that sort without full and free discussion with the Chamber of Commerce. That is our hope in this country. When we sell the jury of forty million that business is what they live on and that what helps business helps them we are going to get back to that basis, and we are going to sell them. We can not have a ten year ailment and cure it in four one-half months, but we are going to keep this campaign going for several years, until we do cure it and get back to normal. Then I hope we will be back on the basis with the government we used to be on and somewhat near the position that England has. Do not get the idea that we have no influence with forming laws in the government. We do. We are down here to do a job, and we furnish departments with many of the facts that they have, particularly in recent months. Our departments, of which Mr. Bacher is the head of one, are called on frequently. I know a lot of Senators. In this so-called tax fight I called the attention of one of them to something and he said: "Write me a letter on that, will you?" I did; and he took it up. We do it every day, officially and unofficially. We want to get a job done - we are the men in the shops who put our ideas out - let the politician get the credit for it. All we want to do is get the job done. I have great hopes along that line and I think we are going to make a lot of progress.

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Colonel Scowden: Thank you.

Q Mr Davis, undoubtedly your personal opinion about an artificial control of prices has been well understood by all of us here; doubtless we may understand that that is applicable in a time of war just as in peace. That is correct, isn't it? or did your remarks have particular application, let us say, to the present time?

A. Particular application to peace. When you are in a war you have got to win it, that is all. When I go into a fight I fight with everything I have. A war is not a picnic, and I would not stand up here and tell you I would not be the fellow to establish artificial prices if that would win the war. In this country we do not go to war to take the other fellow's things away from him; we do not always go in to make it safe for democracy but that is what we thought we were doing. I think you will all agree with me that if we went into a war it would be to defend ourselves or some one that we thought we should defend. I do not believe we ought to go into a war until we just make up our minds that we would win that war, whatever the cost. We could not afford to do anything else. Therefore, I would not want to stand up here and tell you that I would not okey artificial control if it were necessary to win the war. I do not think it would be, but on two or three separate occasions I have changed my mind, under different circumstances, and I might in that case.

Q. Without any attempt to control prices directly or indirectly there are bound to be occasions that will arise which will permit a little exploitation in the way of sounding from the house tops on profiteering. The answer seems to be the control of prices or an excess profits tax.

A. That excess profits tax is the thing. If you put an excess profits tax of sixty per cent on top of normal it takes away a fellow's

appetite to profiteer. It is so much better. What I am trying to say is: Is it going to be your man or my man that says that he profiteers? That is the thing, you see, that ruins us. We get down to the judgment of men, and that has not worked so well. I believe that the tax route on war profit is much safer because there are many complications - you can see what happens here but you can not see what is happening in Kansas City and San Francisco. You issue an order here; most orders are issued right here in Washington, but all the brains do not center in Washington, take it from me.

Q. Mr. Davis, there has been an effort in this country to curtail the production of cotton, and while that curtailment was going on it seemed that some of the other countries have been expanding. I understand England has made a special survey of Brazil. Would you care to say something about what you think the future of the great part of the south and middle south is in reference to the cotton industry? What is going to be the outcome of all this?

A. I have two friends in the cotton business who know a lot more about it than I do (one is Will Clayton of Anderson-Clayton and Company, the people who are operating in Brazil; and the other is Joe Evans, our Vice-President at Houston, Texas) and my cotton knowledge is influenced a lot by their views. I also think that you had better pay the cotton man, just as the wheat man, to offset this tariff, on domestic consumption only, and then let him raise all the cotton he wants to and export it if he can afford to do it. His share of the domestic consumption would only be about half of the cotton that is raised. They say: "They will raise too much cotton." If we do not raise it these other countries will. Brazil did not get very far with their cotton until Anderson-Clayton

and Company of Houston, Texas, went down there and went into business, when the government kept our cotton up here at twelve or thirteen cents arbitrarily. They had a foreign trade in cotton, so they put their men down there; they put in the gins, and now Brazil is furnishing cotton to the world, not in large quantities but that is going on. There is your artificial finger again. You say you can not export it from the United States. Well, the world is not going without cotton just because somebody over here says cotton is worth twelve or fourteen cents and we can not produce it for less. That may convince somebody in Washington but it does not convince the man abroad who wants cotton. If he can not buy it here he knows a lot of other places where he can buy it. I think the only safe way is to stick to your bonuses on the domestic consumption and then let the market alone. The price is what governs these things. When you start to run counter to common sense and human nature you have a man-sized job on your hands.

Colonel Jordan: Mr. Davis, I want to express the appreciation of the College for your coming down here and talking to us, and I want to congratulate the National Chamber of Commerce in having you as its President, sir.

Mr. Davis: Thank you.