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Lend-Lease Birthday

Congress Gives Two-Way Results
Critical but Friendly Going-Over

The debate, early in 1941, had been prolonged and acrid. Would the President's proposal to make America the Lend-Lease arsenal of democracy engulf the nation in war? Wasn't it too late to help beleaguered Britain and its allies? Yes, vociferously replied the America Firsters and No Foreign Warriors. Not necessarily, retorted the Secretaries of War and Navy and the Chief of Staff. Their word prevailed: healthy Congressional majorities passed the bill deftly tagged H.R. 1776. On March 11, 1941, the Lend-Lease Act came into being.

Last week, on its third anniversary, Lend-Lease was once more before Congress. Originally a two-year measure, it was extended last year to June 30, 1944. Now the question of its further extension pended. Renewal of the act appeared assured. For this time the question of American entry into the war was no longer debatable. In addition to some of the original sponsors, there were others who appeared before the House Foreign Affairs Committee: Under Secretary of State Edward R. Stettinius Jr., Lend-Lease Administrator during most of its three years, and his successor, Foreign Economic Administrator Leo T. Crowley. In sum, they said Lend-Lease was still an "investment in American security"; indeed, it was even more—" a major weapon in our arsenal for victory."

Added to their voices was that of the President, giving Congress his fourteenth quarterly Lend-Lease report, as required by law. Said Mr. Roosevelt: "If it were not for Lend-Lease, our own expenditures of lives, materials, and money would of necessity be far greater."

Horn of Plenty: Three hours after Lend-Lease became law, the first "loan" was made. Gun-hungry Britain received 28 PT and PTC motor torpedo boats, 3,000 depth charges, and some medium-caliber naval guns, gun mounts, and ammunition for its merchant ships. In the first month of the program, its administrator disbursed $18,000,000 of its original $7,000,000,000 appropriation.

That was a mere trickle of the gusher to follow. By January 1944, $19,986,000,000 in American aid had gone out —14 per cent of our total war expenditures. To the original recipients—Britain and Greece—had been added China, Russia, Latin America, the Free French, and a host of smaller nations.

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Lend-Lease

Staggering in their immensity, these were some of the new facts and figures released on Lend-Lease:

- Of the 150,000 planes we built since March 1941, 21,000 went to our Allies under Lend-Lease—cash value, $1,700,000,000.
- The Navy transferred nearly 1,400 ships worth more than $1,000,000,000—everything from aircraft carriers to corvettes to landing craft—to the Allies, most of them to Britain.
- The United Kingdom alone since March 11, 1941, to the first of this year received materials worth $6,594,550,000.
- After October 1941, the beginning of its part in Lend-Lease, the Soviet Union was given 8,400,000 tons of supplies worth $4,243,804,000. These included 7,800 planes (3,000 flown across) and 2,250,000 tons of food.
- China got a total of $200,995,000 worth of help.
- Our naval repair facilities sent back into the war one battleship, four cruisers, three destroyers, three submarines, and six tankers—all owned by the French, and scores of British ships, including the Illustrious, Malaya, Resolution, Rodney, and Royal Sovereign.

Two-Way Street: A variety of charges—some later refuted—met Lend-Lease along the way: the British were labeling our goods as their own, selling them, and reaping the benefits; our shipments to North Africa found their way to civilian black markets. One charge, current after the tour of the five senators, was that British Middle East oil reserves were accumulating at the expense of ours.

But the basic complaint against the program called it a one-way street, with Uncle Sam, as usual, at the dead end. To this fundamental objection revelations of a "steadily increasing volume" of reverse Lend-Lease last week offered concrete offsets:

- From June 1, 1942, to the first of this year, the United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand, and India spent $2,094,872,000 on goods, including more than 1,250,000,000 pounds of food, for our forces and merchant marine overseas.
- Our other two main allies, both overrun, could ill afford reverse Lend-Lease on a similar scale. But China insisted on giving the Fourteenth Air Force the 28 surviving planes of the 100 original Flying Tigers—for which it had paid cash; Russia provided ships, stores, repairs, and other services, for American ships in her ports. And overwhelmingly tipping the balance was their contribution on the battlefront: killing Japs and Nazis who might otherwise kill Americans.

Significance

By and large Congress believes Lend-Lease has justified itself as a war meas-

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ure. This opinion, cutting across party lines, was typically voiced by Rep. Karl E. Mundt, Republican member of the House Foreign Affairs Committee: "In the main, Lend-Lease has done a good, clean, efficient job of delivery." Whatever thievery and wastage has occurred is held inevitable in a program of such magnitude. And reverse Lend-Lease, notably in the cases of Australia and New Zealand, is considered generous.

Congress therefore will not be hostile when the question of a year's extension of Lend-Lease comes to the floor. But it will be thorough—for with the act's third anniversary has come a changed war outlook. The nation is now certain of victory and may well feel differently about Lend-Lease as a postwar measure bound up with the global problems of relief and reconstruction.

One poser: the closer the victory, the greater the domestic demand for goods now being lend-leased abroad—non-military supplies, radios, foodstuffs, farm and road machinery. Another: Lend-Lease will inevitably tie in more and more with continuing postwar programs of relief and rehabilitation, but its final accounting will have to come alone. At some point the nation will begin to see a limit to the resources it can supply others.

Thus the watchful air of Capitol Hill is already apparent. A key to its final attitude—perhaps in a Republican-ruled Congress—appeared in the warning of an influential GOP Senator, Arthur H. Vandenberg: "While full repayment in cash or kind is obviously impossible, we cannot altogether ignore the law's intent that compensation be made. But computing the offsetting factors involves metaphysical bookkeeping, because the inventory of contributions is a matter of argument, not of fact. And there's no way of evaluating blood."

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