SYSTEM IN OUR WAR
An Interview with Acting Secretary Benedict Crowell, Who Tells of a Year's Changes in Baker's Department

The War Department of the United States is no longer a military group. It is a business concern. A year ago we were all emphasizing the fact that the country had undertaken something for which there was no precedent, that everything was different. So it was. But there is as much difference between the methods of the War Department today and those of last Spring as there was between those of last Spring and the activities of 1898. With the ending of the first year of the enterprise, the Government has done what the Congress and the public have insisted all along should have been done before the country could get its business of army-making and fighting on a sound basis.

All of which is not a declaration that blunders have ceased and that the War Department has reached 100 per cent efficiency, for that would be boasting and predicting—two things which went out of fashion in Washington about the middle of the Winter, when the Senate began to reveal to the country that much of the boasting had been hollow and that predictions had not been made good. It is, on the contrary, merely a declaration that the War Department, after a year of struggle and experimentation, has had its great metamorphosis and caught up with the familiar phrase that this is a war of industries and production.

According to supporters of the Administration, the credit for the change belongs to Newton D. Baker, the Idealist, because, when he realized as Secretary of War that the whole business could not be put through as a piece of idealism, he called in business experts. He did that from the outset, it is true, but the experts were badly handicapped for a long time by the methods that were not thrown overboard at the start. Now that has been changed, too. Mr. Baker is in France, but before leaving he had things adjusted so that the machinery would run on in his absence. That in itself may be cited as a bit of evidence that things have changed and improved greatly. A year ago practically nothing could be done, no matter how trivial, without the personal attention and consideration of the Secretary of War. So a good many things did not get done on time, even with Mr. Baker working till midnight seven days a week.

But now it is asserted by those on the inside that the little things and the big things are getting done, even with Mr. Baker abroad and with the Assistant Secretary of War, Benedict Crowell, acting as head of the department. Furthermore, there is more harmony nowadays between the War Department and the Government than heretofore, as is evidenced by the recent arrangement for weekly conferences between the department chiefs and the Military Affairs Committee of the Senate and House.

Mr. Crowell was one of the business and industrial experts called into the department last Fall to help reorganize. It was he who saw two days ago in an interview that the War Department had become a business affair. He cited the aircraft work of the army as an example.

"A year ago," said Mr. Crowell, "there were eleven officers, all strictly military men, and about 1,000 privates in the aircraft work. Now in that branch of the war business we have thousands of officers and 100,000 men. But 96 per cent. of those officers are trained business men and engineers from big civil enterprises. Most of them are in military uniform, but that is merely a matter of form that does not go to the substance of the business."

"And this change that has come over the aircraft division in its personnel is illustrative of what is being done or has been done by Mr. Baker throughout the department. There is very little about it today that is military, on this side of the Atlantic, except the outward form, the dress and the assumed military ceremonial. Under all that is the same sort of spirit and energy and organization that is indispensable to the successful business enterprise. The great military work of America, the work of the soldiers, is being done in France. In this country we have settled down to the purely business undertaking of produc
YEAR'S IMPROVEMENTS IN WAR DEPARTMENT.

Lean red tape and simpler procedure.
More systematic organisation in each branch.

Adaptiveness for the division chiefs.

Team work and its evidences.

Creation of the War Council as an effective board, which holds sessions every day.

Co-operation with Congress through weekly conferences with Military Affairs Committees of the Senate and House.

Prepared to have two more Assistant Secretaries, one for social and welfare work in the army, the other for directing purchases and supplies.

BY THE EDITORIAL DEPARTMENT.

ample, the line of liaison from the division of purchases and supplies to all supply bureaus and purchasing agencies of the army, to the War Industries Board, and all related Government agencies.

Further co-operation of the War Department, reorganized on a business basis, with those organizations vital to the movement of all equipment to troops here and abroad, is shown by the liaison line from the Director of Storage and Traffic. That line connects the storage and traffic business of the War Department directly with the Shipping Board, the Director General of Railways, and the Quartermaster General.

"Major Gen. Goethals is the Assistant Chief of Staff in charge of storage and traffic, and, as such, has full control over all priority of both storage and traffic, to and from, embarkation, and overseas points. General Goethals is also still acting as Quartermaster General, a place now not so vital under the reorganization as his office of Assistant Chief of Staff in charge of storage and traffic."

It is interesting to recall that in all the months of investigation and criticism not a word of fault was uttered by anybody with reference to the quality or quantity of the food supplied to the soldiers in the camps and cantonments. Credit for that belongs to General Sharpe. It was because of the recognition of General Sharpe as a member of the War Council, not because it was desired to find a shelving place for him that the case of General Crozier was prevailed on in the case of General Crozier.

"The War Council was created because the President had heard a great deal of talk about the lack of expert advice in the War Department who would have time to study. Up to the present the Department has been entirely free little time to think about big problems and do nothing else. Everybody was so busy doing something different that the Department was in the position of working against the national interest in order to carry out the work of the government. Everybody had too much detail to look after to be able to do any thinking or constructive work. The situation was a whole and make a careful, thoughtful study of it. So the situation as a whole, the Department's constructive work, and Mr. Baker organized it solely because of that need and not to provide a standing army organization."

"This council is in session every day and is one of the most effective war agencies in the country. There is no man on it who does not bring to its deliberations and conclusions some study and experience not only in the country and the army. It consists of the Secretary of War, the Assistant Secretary of War, "Major Gen. Crozier, Chief of the General Staff; General Crowder, Judge Advocate General and" General Goethals. They are one of the great leaders who is devoting his life to the military welfare of his country. The men, Shattick, Weaver, and Pierce, and Charles Day, an able engineer drafted from the Shipping Board, are the expert counsel to the War Department as a member of its War Council."

"Of course, I can anticipate your questions about red tape—poor, old, and much-abused red tape—which are always sure to come for the most part from men who have just entered the service in subordinate capacities after having been at the head of big industrial and business concerns, where they were more or less independent. They are in those very concerns, if they were successful and systematically managed.

"The only man who is entirely free of red tape that I know of is the man in a business of his own small that he needs no assistance. The instant he hires his first clerk his red tape begins, whether he is conscious of it or not. The rule that requires that clerk to be at work at a certain hour or that requires that he make a record of his sales is red tape. Of course, it is a necessary thing. It grows with the business, and the business of the American War Department has become a gigantic thing, requiring many rules and regulations to save it from far worse confusion and delay than was ever charged against red tape. We have simplified these rules wherever that could be done without destroying their usefulness, and we have cut out much that was outgrown and reduced the requirements for duplicated and overlapping paper work to a minimum."

"Of all, which I think, gives ample assurance that are in better shape to enter on our second year of war than we were at the beginning of the first year. Every process has been improved. Last September the country was loud with its praises of the manner in which General Pershing took charge of his first draft. He has worked every minute since them to improve on that method, and his plan for second draft will carry none of the defects of the first. If it develops defects of its own then the War Department is accepting nothing as final or as the last word of perfection in any of its operations. It cannot stand and at any moment during the progress of the war."