

PROBLEM 2—BRITAIN PREVENTING TRADE WITH GERMANY IN EARLY 1915

The U.S. government decided in Problem 1 to allow loans and the sale of goods to the warring countries. As a result, trade has increased enormously, especially with Britain and France.

Meanwhile, the nature of the fighting has dashed early hopes that this would be a short war. Both sides have dug hundreds of miles of trenches on the Western Front in France and Belgium, and estimates indicate that the war could last at least another year.

Now a new challenge faces the U.S.: British ships are preventing U.S. ships from going to German ports or even from going to neutral ports to sell materials that could be used for weapons or munitions. The British argue that materials sold to neutral countries are being resold to Germany. For example, since the war started, Holland is importing eight times as much copper as it normally does. Much of that is being resold to Germany. The

British are also preventing deliveries of food, but cotton is not restricted. The British ships stop American vessels and often take them to ports to be searched. These searches can take weeks or months, during which time perishable goods spoil. When they seize cargoes, the British usually pay compensation to the shipper.

In addition, the British navy has laid mines in the North Sea between Britain and Norway. These mines will further cripple American trade with the Central Powers and may result in the death of Americans.

As President Wilson, how will you respond to British interference in U.S. trade with Germany and neutral countries?

You may ask one of the following questions or create a question of your own:

1. Is giving loans and selling goods to warring countries legal under international law?
2. How does the American public feel about the war, trading with the warring countries, and the British interference with American trade?
3. Is it ethical to trade with warring countries? What if more trade goes to one side than the other?