

# GERMANY THE NEXT REPUBLIC?

BY CARL W. ACKERMAN

"The world was astonished and surprised at the German move for peace, but no one knew whether it was to be taken seriously. Great Britain instructed her embassies and legations in neutral countries to find out whether the Chancellor really desired to make peace or whether his statements were to quiet internal troubles"

**So Disorganized Had the Situation in Germany Become at the End of 1916 That Chancellor von Bethmann-Hollweg Went to Great Headquarters to Plead With the Kaiser and Von Hindenburg in an Effort to Quiet German Public Opinion**

**Out of This Conference Was Born the Noted Peace Proffer Which Was Denounced by the Allies as an Insincere Proposal—Immediately After That the Official Press Bureau Was Reorganized and a Man Trusted by the Military Placed in Charge**

CONFRONTED by graver troubles within Germany than those from the outside, the Chancellor went to great headquarters to report to the Kaiser and to discuss with Von Hindenburg and Ludendorff what should be done to unite the German nation.

While the army had been successful in Rumania and had given the people renewed confidence, this was not great enough to carry the people through another hard winter.

While Germany had made promises to the United States in May that no ships would be sunk without warning, the submarines were not adhering very closely to the written instructions. The whole world was aroused over Germany's repeated disregard of the rules and practice of sea warfare. President Wilson, through Ambassador Gerard, had sent nine inquiries to the Foreign Office asking for a report from Germany on the sinking of various ships not only contrary to international law, but contrary to Germany's pledges. In an attempt to ward off many of the neutral indictments of Germany's sea warfare the official North German Gazette published an expiration containing the following:

### An Official U-Boat Pronouncement

"The activity of our submarines in the Atlantic Ocean and White Sea has led the press of the entire world to producing articles as to the waging of cruiser warfare by means of submarines. In both cases it can be accurately stated that there is no question of submarine warfare here, but of cruiser warfare waged with the support of submarines, and the details reported hitherto as to the activities of our submarines do not admit of any other explanation, in spite of the endeavors of the British press to twist and misrepresent facts. It is also strictly correct to state that the cruiser warfare which is being waged by means of submarines is in strict compliance with the German prize regulations, which correspond to the international rules laid down and agreed to in the Declaration of London, which are not being any more complied with by England. The accusations and charges brought forward by the British press and propaganda campaign in connection with ships sunk can be shown as futile, as our position is, both militarily and from the standpoint of international law, irrefragable. We do not sink neutral ships per se, as was recently declared in a proclamation, but the ammunition transports and other contraband wares conducive to the prolongation of the war, and the rights of defensive measures as regards this cannot be denied Germany any more than any other country.

Based on this idea, it is clearly obvious that the real loss of the destruction of tonnage must be attributed to the supplies sent to England and not to the attitude displayed by Germany, which has but recourse to purely defensive measures. If the attitude displayed by England toward neutrals during the course of this war be considered, the manner in which it forced compulsory supplies of contraband goods, etc., it can be further recognized that England is responsible for the losses in ships, as it is owing to England's attitude that the cause is to be found.

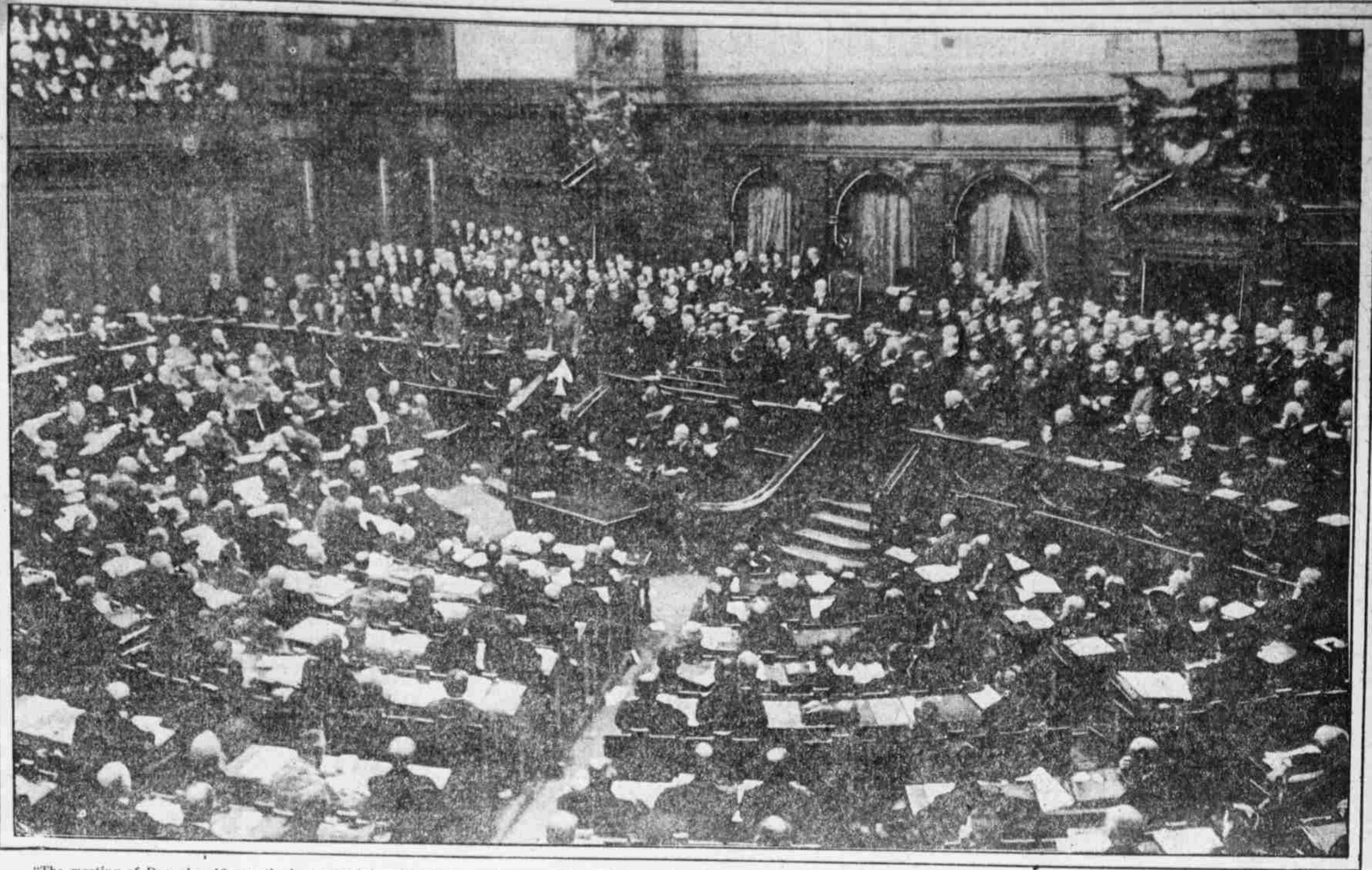
Although England has hit and crippled legitimate trade to such an extent, Germany does not wish to act in the same manner, but simply to stop the shipments of contraband goods calculated to lengthen the war. England evidently is being hard hit by our defensive submarine measures and is, therefore, doing all in her power to incite public opinion against the German methods of warfare and confuse opinion in neutral countries.

Therefore it must again be recalled that it is:

"England which has crippled neutral trade!

"England which has rendered the freedom of the seas impossible!

"England which has extended the risk of contraband wares in



"The meeting of December 12 was the best attended and most impressive one of the Reichstag since August 4, 1914." It was at this meeting that Chancellor von Bethmann-Hollweg, indicated by the arrow, announced Germany's peace terms.

excess of international agreements, and now raises a cry when the same weapons are used against herself.

"England which has compelled the neutrals to supply these shipments of contraband goods calculated to lengthen the war!

"As the neutrals quietly acquiesced when there was a question of abandoning trade with the Central Powers, they have remedies in hand for the losses of ships which affect them so deeply. They need only consider the fact that German submarines on the high seas are able to prevent war services to the enemy in the shipments of contraband goods in a manner that is both militarily and from the standpoint of international law irrefragable. If they agree to desist from the shipment of contraband goods and cease yielding to British pressure, then they will not have to complain of losses in ships and can retain the same for peaceful aims."

This was aimed especially at America. Naval critics did not permit the opportunity to pass to call to the attention of the Government that Germany's promises in the Sussex case were only conditional and that, therefore, they could be broken at any time. The Chancellor was in a most difficult situation; so was Von Hindenburg and the Kaiser. On December 10 it was announced that the Reichstag would be called to a special session on the twelfth and that the Chancellor would discuss the international situation as it was affected by the Rumanian campaign.

The meeting of December 12 was the best attended and most

impressive one of the Reichstag since August 4, 1914. Before the Chancellor left his palace he called the representatives of the neutral nations and handed them Germany's peace proposal. The same day Germany sent to every part of the globe through her wireless stations Germany's note to the Allies and the Chancellor's address.

### Germany's Peace Offer Surprised the World

The world was astonished and surprised at the German move, but no one knew whether it was to be taken seriously. Great Britain instructed her embassies and legations in neutral countries to attempt to find out whether the Chancellor really desired to make peace or whether his statements were to be interpreted as something to quiet internal troubles.

During the days of discussion which followed I was in close touch with the Foreign Office, the American embassy and the General Staff. The first intimation I received that Germany did not expect the peace plan to succeed was on December 14 at a meeting of the neutral correspondents with Lieutenant Colonel von Haeften. When Von Hindenburg became chief of the General Staff he reorganized the press department in Berlin and sent Von Haeften from his personal staff to Berlin to direct the press propaganda. As a student of public opinion abroad Von Haeften was a genius and was extremely frank and honest with the correspondents.

"We have proposed peace to our enemies," he said to the correspondents, "because we feel that we have been victorious and because we believe that no matter how long the war continues the Allies will not be able to defeat us. It will be interesting to see what effect our proposal has upon Russia. Reports which we have received, coming from unquestionable sources, state that internal conditions in Russia are desperate; that food is scarce; that the transportation system is so demoralized that it will be at least eight months before Russia can do anything in a military way. Russia wants peace and needs peace, and we shall see now whether she has enough influence upon England to compel England to make peace. We are prepared to go on with the war if the Allies refuse our proposals. If we do we shall not give an inch without making the Allies pay such a dear cost that they will not be able to continue."

The Foreign Office was not optimistic over the possibilities of success. Officials realized that the new Lloyd George Cabinet meant a stronger war policy by Great Britain, but they thought the peace proposals might shake the British confidence in the new Government and cause the overthrow of Lloyd George and the return of Asquith and Viscount Edward Grey.

(CONTINUED TOMORROW)

## FRIENDS OF MAGISTRATE CARL B. BAKER TENDER HIM TESTIMONIAL DINNER AT MOOSE HALL

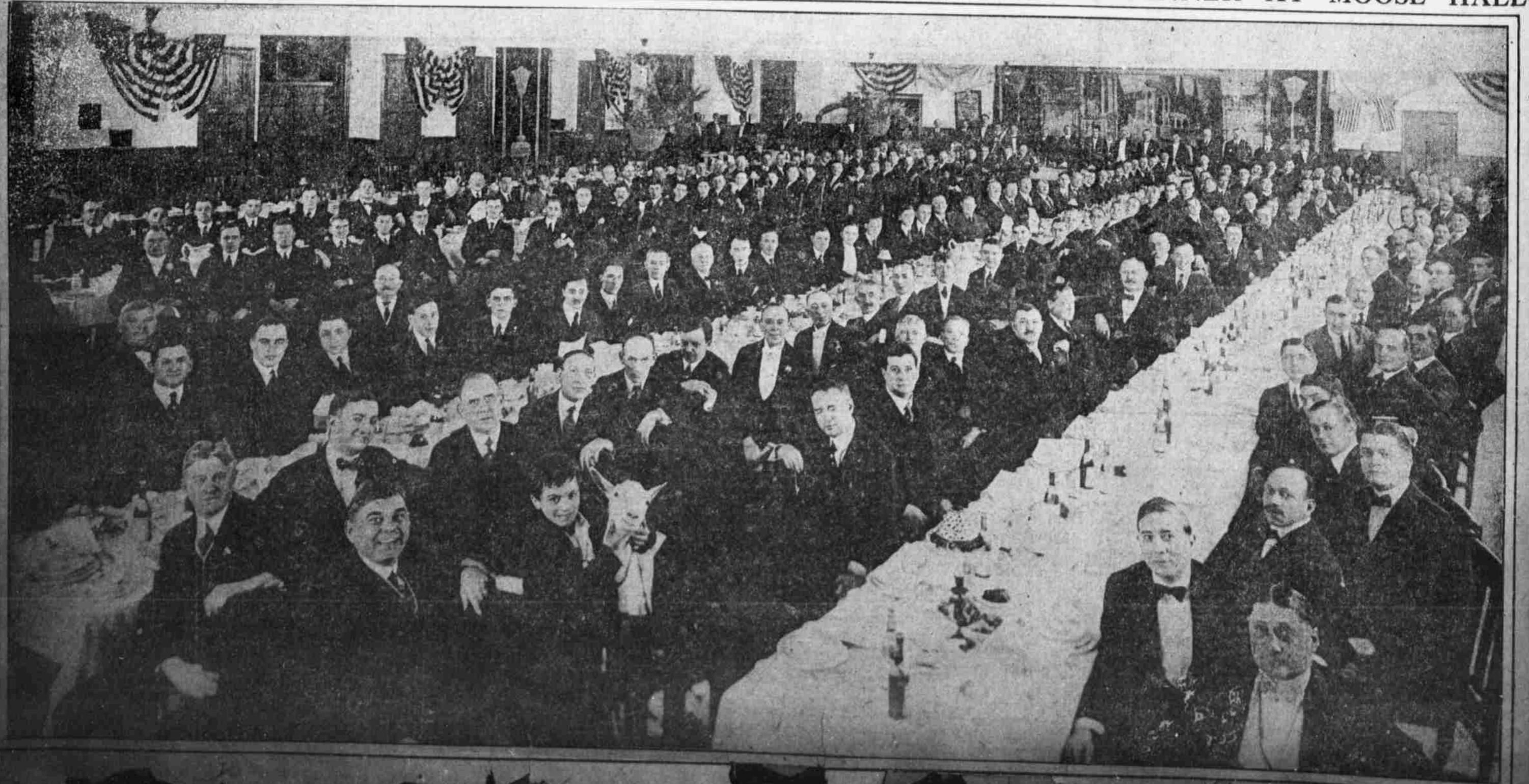


Photo by Hill