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## GERMAN METHANOL INDUSTRY MENACE

NEW SYNTHETIC ALCOHOL

Can Be Produced Cheaper Than Wood Alcohol and Fear Is That This Business Will Be Ruined

Revolutionary development of the chemical industry promised by the commercial production of a synthetic alcohol in Germany has taken American manufacturers of wood alcohol and other commercial solvents un-awares. In three months the domestic industry, with an investment of \$100,000,000, has been placed absolutely at the mercy of German competition, Secretary of Commerce Hoover declared recently. Synthetic product is methanol, and salvation of the domestic industry rests entirely upon production in this country of the product that Germany alone now is supplying said Secretary Hoover.

Fortunately for American manufacturers, the Chemical Foundation holds a basic process patent, filed in the United States several years ago and sold to the Foundation together with other patents by the government during the Wilson administration. The E. I. du Pont de Nemours Co. and several other American manufacturers now are investigating prospects for the production of methanol in the United States, said the secretary, according to the New York Commercial.

**U. S. Caught Napping**  
American manufacturers might have forestalled the German industry by undertaking production of the synthetic product several years ago, as the patent rights were available to them, but were loath to change over and, heedless of the menace, were caught napping when the American market was flooded in February with the German product, it was said in the Chemical Division of the Commerce department. Importations of methanol last year totaled only 48 gallons, valued at \$29. In January imports totaled 40 gallons, valued at \$26. These importations, in all probability, were merely samples, according to the chemical division.

The amazing importation of the German product commenced in February when the total entered was 62,971 gallons, valued at \$29,420, or approximately 46 cents a gallon. In March imports totaled 69,886 gallons, valued at \$26,976, or 37 cents a gallon. A significant feature of the March importations is the reduction in value per gallon. The German manufacturers claim the cost of production is from 18 to 26 cents. A specific duty of 12 cents applies, and transportation to United States costs about 3 cents, it was learned at the Commerce Department.

**Tariff Can't Help**  
As the price of domestic wood alcohol is 70 cents, at which the manufacturers declare they are losing money, it will be seen that an increase in the tariff, even of 50 per cent, the maximum under Section 315, will not suffice to protect the domestic industry, unless it starts the manufacture of the same product, it was explained in the Chemical Division.

Prior to the war, Germany exported from 25 to 30 per cent of the total consumption of wood alcohol in the United States, but since 1914 the chemists abroad have been experimenting extensively and many patents have resulted, of which methanol is one. The synthetic alcohol is the product of carbon monoxide and hydrogen, subjected to a high temperature and high pressure in the presence of a catalyst. It was evolved as a result of the fixation of nitrogen, carbon monoxide being substituted in combination with hydrogen.

**Portends Advancement**  
"A cheaper alcohol for industrial purposes presents a large vision of industrial advancement," Secretary Hoover declared.

T. W. Delahanty, of the Chemical Division, said there was no question that if methanol is made cheaper it will enter into wide use not only as a solvent but as a motor fuel.

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## TELEPHONE CO. TO SPEND MILLIONS

More Than \$110,000,000 To Be Expended in Next Five Years, Report

More than \$110,000,000 will be spent by the Illinois Bell Telephone company in the next five years, to build extensions and additions to its plants to supply the ever increasing demand for service from the citizens of Illinois. A total of \$22,810,360 was appropriated in 1924 for this work, and more will have to be expended in 1925 and each of the years to follow.

The telephone company differs from other businesses in that the more business it does, the greater the cost per unit or service becomes. More telephones mean additional calls and necessitates more equipment and additional employes to handle them. The average investment in 1920 was \$125 per telephone; in 1924 it was \$145, and it is estimated that it will be \$175 in 1929.

The need of maintaining a proper depreciation fund was demonstrated during the latter part of last December when Illinois was visited by a severe sleet storm. Damage of more than \$1,000,000 to telephone systems was suffered in a few hours. More than \$1,000,000 to telephone systems in various parts of the state and toll and long distance lines were considerably hampered. A depreciation reserve is one of the cost of maintaining service, and it takes a costly storm like that one, to point out some of the cost of telephone service.

A new election law in Egypt greatly restricts the right of suffrage by requiring both candidates and voters to fulfill certain educational and financial qualifications. Egypt is evidently getting as progressive as Virginia and South Carolina.

George F. Olvane, Tammany leader, says that Al Smith can be nominated and elected President in 1928. So far there have been no echoes from Mr. Bryan and Mr. McAdoo.

The government will no doubt try to supply the increased demand for dollar bills, but up to now the American people have shown ability to spend them as fast as they can be printed.

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