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BUREAU OF FOREIGN AND DOMESTIC COMMERCE

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OFFICE OF COMMERCIAL ATTACHÉ  
PEKING, CHINA

American Legation.

February 26, 1917.

Subject: Article on the commercial training  
of consular assistants.

Chief, Bureau of Foreign and Domestic Commerce,  
Department of Commerce,  
Washington.

COMMERCE  
APR 12 1917

Sir:

I am forwarding herewith two copies of an article which appeared in a recent number of the British Chamber of Commerce Journal of Shanghai, under the caption: The Commercial Training of Consular Assistants. It is thought that it will be of some interest to the Bureau, and that it may be desired to transmit a copy to the Department of State. The periodical in question is probably rarely, if ever, seen in the United States, and at last accounts the Consulate-General at Shanghai did not have regular access to it. It is doubted, therefore if it has yet been brought to the attention of that Department.

The article deals with the subject from the British point of view, yet contains a good deal that appears to me of interest in the light of American conditions, now that desire to enter the Consular service is becoming more widespread. The suggested course appears to me to be an exceedingly practical one, and every item in it is justified by my knowledge of Far Eastern conditions.

Respectfully,

*John R. Arnold*

Secretary,  
In absence of the Attache.

Memorandum

ON THE COMMERCIAL TRAINING OF CONSULAR ASSISTANTS.

The writer of the foregoing article has kindly given me an opportunity of reading it before publication. His remarks being directed mainly to the requirements of men adopting a commercial career, it is thought that an attempt to apply his recommendations to the Consular service may be of interest.

It is recommended that the commercial training of mercantile assistants should be undertaken before they are sent to China. This will probably not be found to be feasible in the case of Consular assistants. It must be taken for granted that the latter must continue to receive their appointments as the result of competitive examinations and it seems desirable that there should be a break between the continuous book work of their school education and preparation for the examination and the more or less technical training to fit them for the commercial side of their duties. This applies with even greater force to the Far-Eastern Consular services, the members of which have to devote the first two years of their service in the East to the study of the lan-

guage. Some percentage of marks, say 60 or 70 per cent. The

It seems, therefore, desirable that the special commercial training should in the case of Consular assistants take place during their first home leave, which takes place after five years' service. During the three years of actual Consular work they will have been brought into contact with British merchants and will have acquired some appreciation of the problems of British trade, and an insight, however vague, of the way in which business is conducted. There appears to be no reason why the training should be limited to selected individuals. Upon the contrary the knowledge that it was compulsory to take the course would encourage men to take an interest in trade questions before their home leave, so as to come to their training with a better understanding of what they had to accomplish. The course to be gone through need not be a long one. Anything like the three years' course recommended in the article would, of course, be out of the question. The men would be of such an age that the inclusion of academic subjects, such as the theory of political economy, would not only be distasteful but a waste of time. A knowledge of this science is however indispensable, and it is suggested that economics and commercial geography should be made compulsory subjects at the entrance examination for the Consular service, and that provision should be made against candidates passing with only a superficial knowledge of these subjects by laying down

a minimum percentage of marks, say 60 or 70 per cent. The commercial geography of the Far East in particular might well be given a prominent place in the curriculum of student interpreters at Peking.

The commercial course should be as practical and as technical as possible, and it is submitted that far better results would be obtained by providing a special course for Consular assistants only at some educational institution than by selecting lectures from existing curricula. In the latter case lecturers would be obliged to adapt their treatment of the various subjects to suit both consular officials and students whose aim was merely to take a special degree specializing in economics and its branches. By the former method the course would be arranged ad hoc to meet the needs of Consular officials. London is obviously indicated as the place where such a course should be held, and it is fortunate that in the London School of Economics there is an institution to hand where such a special course could no doubt easily be arranged, were His Majesty's Government prepared to pay the students' fees on a sufficiently liberal scale. This is the institution referred to in the article.

The subjects there enumerated, however, deal with the mere routine of a business office in greater detail than is necessary for Consular assistants. All that is required under this head is a general knowledge of how

- (a) a manufacturer, frequently asked to advise on methods  
 (b) a home exporter,  
 (c) an overseas merchant and commission agent

conduct their several businesses, and inferentially what their mutual relations are, including the mechanism of foreign exchange and the theory of large and small scale undertakings as applied both to the production and the distribution of goods.

Commercial law can be struck out, as this forms one of the subjects of the entrance examination to the service.

An elementary course on statistics and their application would be most useful; lectures on currency and banking less so.

An extremely important subject would be the organization of foreign trade, with special reference to recent and current trade tendencies. Closely connected with this would be a course of lectures on the economic position of the Great Powers - our competitors - and their recent commercial history. The same method should also be applied to our Colonial possessions.

More important than any of the above subjects is a knowledge of the main British industries, openings for the products of which it is part of the duty of a Consul to find. The cotton, woollen, coal, iron and steel, agriculture, railway and shipping and other industries could all be treated with special reference to their recent history, foreign competition and elementary technique. Arrangements should also be made for class visits to factories to illustrate this series of lectures.

As a further suggestion for the syllabus of the course it

is submitted that as Consuls are so frequently asked to advise on methods of pushing British trade, a series of lectures on the different methods of marketing different goods in various parts of the world should be included.

In addition to the above there are for Consular assistants in the Far East two extraneous subjects which might be taken up with great advantage to themselves and to British interests - namely economic botany and mineralogy. For students with inclinations towards these two sciences no more interesting or fertile field than China is to be found on the surface of the globe. Their utility will be apparent to anyone who will take the trouble to glance down the list of exports in the Shanghai Customs Returns and ask himself the extent of his knowledge concerning each.

The syllabus outlined above appears a somewhat ambitious one but could be easily completed in six months or two terms of the London University with morning lectures from 9 or 10 to 1 p.m. on five days a week.

The Far-Eastern Consular services are, of course, too small to be able to support such a special course alone, and it would be essential that the Regulations made should include the General Consular Service. Irregularity of men proceeding home on leave presents no insuperable difficulties. If the course was arranged to cover two terms, two courses might be carried on simultaneously, thus:-

1st Term	2nd Term	Third Term
1st half of course	2nd half of course	
	1st half of course	2nd half of course
2nd half of course		1st half of course.

Men would thus be enabled to commence the course at three different times a year. Visits to factories could be arranged for the vacations.

The above is intended to present a general outline of the subjects in which all Consular officials should be instructed and of a scheme by which this might be accomplished.

The details can, of course, only be worked out in London in consultation with the Chambers of Commerce and the University. A service, all the members of which had received such a training, would certainly be in a position to give very material assistance to British trade and to produce, at any rate, a few men who might fairly claim to be "experts."

It is hoped that these two papers will provoke criticism and a discussion of the subject in the columns of the Journal.

CANTON, November 13, 1916.