

AMERICAN SYSTEM

How the U.S. might reconstruct Nicaragua

With the end of generations of looting of Nicaragua by the Somoza dynasty, the tasks of rebuilding the country into a productive nation have become more urgent. The United States has a special responsibility as the industrial power of this hemisphere to lend its resources to the reconstruction of Nicaragua.

The political precedent for such a policy can be found in America's own period of Reconstruction, when, after the Civil War, proponents of the American System proposed a program for rebuilding the South. Pennsylvania Congressman William D. Kelley was such a leading proponent of industrializing the South. A close associate of Abraham Lincoln and Pennsylvania economist Henry Carey, Kelley maintained throughout the Civil War that Britain's attempt to impose free trade on the U.S. had provoked the bloodshed. That same British policy backed the Somoza regime, aiding the devastation of Nicaragua's population.

The following selections are taken from a speech Kelley gave in Montgomery, Ala. on May 16, 1867.

We have gone through a war unparalleled in history by the breadth of its theatre, the number and valor of its armies and the results of which in the long future of our country are destined to be more beneficent than those of any other war. While we rejoice that it is over, and deplore the fact that it

could not have been averted, we have the satisfaction of knowing that the sufferings attendant upon it mark the birth of a new and grander nation than the world has yet seen. . . . Let us therefore, hope that in this war we have gone through the throes of the birth of a new and noble nation.

. . . To return to the contrast between your State and New England. She has no copper, lead, or gold, while nature has given them all to Alabama with lavish hand. I have been surprised in the last hour by discovering, through the kindness of your Governor, your capacity to supply the country with sulphur. Many of you probably do not know, indeed, I apprehend that few of the best informed of you know, how primary an element of our life this is. A philosophic statesman has said that the best test of the advance of a people in civilization was to be found in the quantity of crude brimstone consumed per capita by its people. It enters into our chemicals, our clothes of all descriptions, and almost every department of science and the mechanic arts; and if you but develop your resources in that behalf you will bring within your limits millions of dollars which we now send abroad every year for its purchase.

We turn our coal and iron to most profitable account. You permit yours to slumber in their native earth. Availing ourselves of their power, one man with us does the work of a hundred with you.

. . . We strive to develop and convert to immediate profit our coal and iron beds by connecting our city and great thoroughfare railroads with roads from every pit's mouth and have thus tempted from England, Scotland, Wales and the iron districts of Belgium and Germany the most skillful of their miners and workmen in metals.

. . . While we thus add to our wealth we cheapen the conveniences and comforts of life. Let me illustrate this by some facts drawn from other states. . . .

The whole North is divided into districts, not congressional, not senatorial, not legislative, not judicial, but school districts; and every man throughout the state is taxed in proportion to his wealth to build schools, furnish books, and pay teachers so that every child, however, poor, that is brought into the State, may receive a full elementary education; . . . We hold all places of honor or profit open to all our people and thus stimulate every man or boy to give the State the best results of his industry, enterprise or genius. . . . Thus we draw from, or rather create upon even the sterile soil of New England, products that bring us in return the best results of the industry of all other people;

. . . Our prosperity is the result of our development of *man*, by giving him a fair field for the exercise of all his energy and talents; and you lag behind because your system repressed man's energies, restrained his enterprise, and contracted the field of his usefulness.

. . . The people of the North want peace and amity to pervade the whole land, but they feel that these blessings, with general prosperity, can only be assured when all shall acknowledge that the protection of the liberty of the citizens is the highest duty of the Government. . . .