

the neighboring states of Montana, Idaho, Oregon, which means, practically speaking, the whole of the Northwest. When you compute the acreage and the number of heads in both areas, it's obvious that we should scuttle Minnesota rather than give up our lines of communication over a third of a continent."

"I won't give up the continent," said Wesley Mouch, staring down at his dish of ice cream, his voice hurt and stubborn.

She was thinking of the Mesabi Range, the last of the major sources of iron ore, she was thinking of the Minnesota farmers, such as were left of them, the best producers of wheat in the country—she was thinking that the end of Minnesota would end Wisconsin, then Michigan, then Illinois—she was seeing the red breath of the factories dying out over the industrial East—as against the empty miles of western sands, of scraggly pastures and abandoned ranches.

"The figures indicate," said Mr. Weatherby primly, "that the continued maintenance of both areas seems to be impossible. The railway track and equipment of one has to be dismantled to provide the material for the maintenance of the other."

She noticed that Clem Weatherby, their technical expert on railroads, was the man of least influence among them, and Cuffy Meigs—of most. Cuffy Meigs sat sprawled in his chair, with a look of patronizing tolerance for their game of wasting time on discussions. He spoke little, but when he did, it was to snap decisively, with a contemptuous grin, "Pipe down, Jimmy!" or, "Nuts, Wes, you're talking through your hat!" She noticed that neither Jim nor Mouch resented it. They seemed to welcome the authority of his assurance; they were accepting him as their master.

"We have to be practical," Dr. Ferris kept saying. "We have to be scientific."

"I need the economy of the country as a whole," Wesley Mouch kept repeating. "I need the production of a nation."

"Is it economics that you're talking about? Is it production?" she said, whenever her cold, measured voice was able to seize a brief stretch of their time. "If it is, then give us leeway to save the Eastern states. That's all that's left of the country—and of the world. If you let us save that, we'll have a chance to rebuild the rest. If not, it's the end. Let the Atlantic Southern take care of such transcontinental traffic as still exists. Let the local railroads take care of the Northwest. But let Taggart Transcontinental drop everything else—yes, everything—and devote all our resources, equipment and rail to the traffic of the Eastern states. Let us shrink back to the start of this country, but let us hold that start. We'll run no trains west of the Missouri. We'll become a local railroad—the local of the industrial East. Let us save our industries. There's nothing left to save in the West. You can run agriculture for centuries by manual labor and oxcarts. But destroy the last of this country's industrial plant—and centuries of effort won't be able to rebuild it or to gather the economic strength to make a start. How do you expect our industries—or railroads—to survive without steel? How do you expect any steel to be produced if you cut off the supply of iron ore? Save Minnesota, whatever's left of it. The country? You have no country to save, if

its industries perish. You can sacrifice a leg or an arm. You can't save a body by sacrificing its heart and brain. Save our industries. Save Minnesota. Save the Eastern Seaboard."

It was no use. She said it as many times, with as many details, statistics, figures, proofs, as she could force out of her weary mind into their evasive hearing. It was no use. They neither refuted nor agreed; they merely looked as if her arguments were beside the point. There was a sound of hidden emphasis in their answers, as if they were giving her an explanation, but in a code to which she had no key.

"There's trouble in California," said Wesley Mouch sullenly. "Their state legislature's been acting pretty huffy. There's talk of seceding from the Union."

"Oregon is overrun by gangs of deserters," said Clem Weatherby cautiously. "They murdered two tax collectors within the last three months."

"The importance of industry to a civilization has been grossly over-emphasized," said Dr. Ferris dreamily. "What is now known as the People's State of India has existed for centuries without any industrial development whatever."

"People could do with fewer material gadgets and a sterner discipline of privations," said Eugene Lawson eagerly. "It would be good for them."

"Oh hell, are you going to let that dame talk you into letting the richest country on earth slip through your fingers?" said Cuffy Meigs, leaping to his feet. "It's a fine time to give up a whole continent—and in exchange for what? For a dinky little state that's milked dry, anyway! I say ditch Minnesota, but hold onto your transcontinental dragnet. With trouble and the riots everywhere, you won't be able to keep people in line unless you have transportation—troop transportation—unless you hold your soldiers within a few days' journey of any point on the continent. This is no time to retrench. Don't get yellow, listening to all that talk. You've got the country in your pocket. Just keep it there."

"In the long run—" Mouch started uncertainly.

"In the long run, we'll all be dead," snapped Cuffy Meigs. He was pacing restlessly. "Retrenching, hell! There's plenty of pickings left in California and Oregon and all those places. What I've been thinking is, we ought to think of expanding—the way things are, there's nobody to stop us, it's there for the taking—Mexico, and Canada maybe—it ought to be a cinch."

Then she saw the answer; she saw the secret premise behind their words. With all of their noisy devotion to the age of science, their hysterically technological jargon, their cyclotrons, their sound rays, these men were moved forward, not by the image of an industrial skyline, but by the vision of that form of existence which the industrialists had swept away—the vision of a fat, unhygienic rajah of India, with vacant eyes staring in indolent stupor out of stagnant layers of flesh, with nothing to do but run precious gems through his fingers and, once in a while, stick a knife into the body of a starved, toiled-dazed, germ-eaten creature, as a claim to a few grains of the crea-