

Charles Dawes

1925

“The effectiveness of a speech depends largely on the circumstances under which it is delivered, and the existing public state of mind -- not alone upon the competency and sincerity of the speaker.”

Charles Dawes was a statesman who believed in peace. In 1925 Charles Dawes won the honor of sharing the Nobel Peace Prize with Sir Austen Chamberlain, the British foreign minister for their work addressing Germany’s financial **reparations** for World War I.



After the First World War Germany had great difficulty paying the reparations that had been agreed under the terms of the **Treaty of Versailles**. When the German government failed to keep up the payments in 1923 French and Belgian troops re-occupied Germany. This was followed by massive **inflation** and growing unemployment in Germany.

Charles G. Dawes, an American banker, was asked by the Allied Reparations Committee to investigate the problem. His report, published in April 1924, proposed a plan for beginning annual payments of reparations on a fixed scale. He also recommended the reorganization of the German State Bank and increased foreign loans. German politicians like Adolf Hitler and Alfred Hugenberg attacked the Dawes Plan because it did not reduce the reparations total. They also disliked the idea that foreigners would have control over

the German **economy**. Overall, the Dawes Plan was initially a great success; unfortunately, the Dawes Plan was seen as unworkable and was replaced with the Young Plan.

In 1924 Coolidge and Dawes were overwhelmingly elected, winning more votes than the Democratic and Progressive candidates combined. “When Coolidge was elected President the world desired **tranquility**,” Dawes noted in his journal, “a reaction of its peoples from the excesses of war.”

An extraordinarily able organizer and **administrator**, Dawes accumulated a personal fortune in utilities and banking,

1865-1951

- **Successful lawyer, banker, and politician.**
- **Served in WW I on General Pershing’s staff as General Purchasing Agent.**
- **Chaired the Allied Reparations Committee (1923-1924, which developed the “Dawes Plan”).**
- **Vice President of the United States (1925-29).**
- **“Mediocrity requires aloofness to preserve its dignity.”**

having founded the Central Trust Company of Illinois in 1902. He was a man of colorful characteristics, famous for his tart language, and his contempt for **pomp**. He authored several books and wrote the musical composition “Melody in A,” which was made popular in the 1950s under the title, “It's All in the Game.”

Suggested Classroom Activities

Charles Dawes

Vocabulary Terms:

1. **Reparations**
2. **Treaty of Versailles**
3. **Inflation**
4. **Economy**
5. **Tranquility**
6. **Administrator**
7. **Pomp**

Discussion Questions

1. Why was Charles Dawes awarded the Nobel Peace Prize? (Level 1)
2. Describe the plan that Dawes proposed that would allow Germany to pay the reparations for World War I? (Level 2)
3. Why might it be considered controversial to force a country to pay reparations? (Level 3)

Classroom Activity

The ABCDE Approach

The ABCDE approach, developed by William Kreidler, can be used as a regular method for addressing issues in the classroom. Try it as a weekly part of your schedule. Or, if you have community meetings already in place, use it to structure your meeting. If you implement it regularly, then your students can rely on it as a time to address their concerns. When issues arise in the classroom, remind the children that their problems can be brought up and considered during the regular meeting.

Ask the class to brainstorm a list of problems related to the cost of war and who should pay for it and then guide them through a process of choosing one to focus on. You may want to guide them to choose a problem that seems to involve the most people. Explain that if there is not time to talk about all of the issues, then the others will be discussed during the next meeting.

Then address the problem as follows:

Ask, What's the problem? Give the students a chance to talk about the problem and how it affects them.

Brainstorm solution. The guidelines for brainstorming are: Set a time limit of several minutes (3-5 minutes). Encourage the group to share lots of ideas. Record them on a chart or the white board. Don't discuss or judge any idea. The ideas don't need to be "realistic," sometimes even a "silly" idea has a germ of wisdom that can lead to a creative solution.

Choose one. Discuss the ideas. Talk about the consequences of trying out various ideas. Ask: Which have the best chance of working to solve the problem?

Do it! The only way you'll know for sure if it's a good idea is to try it. Set a time limit. It should be long enough to give the idea a good trial, short enough to limit the damage if the idea doesn't work.

Evaluate. When the time limit is up, which is usually in a few days or a week, meet to discuss how effective the idea was in addressing the problem. In some cases, you may need to explore the idea and change it a little to make it fully effective. In other cases, you may decide to go back to the list of possible solutions and try another one. If the idea worked, congratulations! Now you can move on other issues.

Quick Thinking: Standing Up Against Unfairness

Describe a problematic situation (like the ones below) to the class. Give the students, working in pairs, a minute or two to come up with an idea for addressing it the situation. When the time is up, the pairs share their idea with the group. The aim is to generate lots of ideas and get people thinking, not necessarily to come up with the "best" approach. Explain that the students will generate ideas for stopping people from treating each other unfairly. Here are some possible situations that you might suggest for "quick thinking":

- What is the financial cost of war?
- How much do wars cost? Who should pay for the war the winner or the loser?
- What if they can't pay?
- Would you ever wave the payments?

Afterwards, evaluate the workshop as a class. Ask students: What's one thing you learned in today's workshop? It's not easy to stop people when they're treating others unfairly. Can you see yourself using some of the ideas you came up with in "Quick Thinking"?

Technology Option

Goggle Charles Dawes and find three images of him, describe their relevance.