

Growing Sentiment Against "Preparedness"

B. E. Erickson, Las Vegas, N. Mex.: I have just absorbed the contents of this month's (February) issue of *The Commoner*, and filled with enthusiasm it has left me, I can not refrain from writing a few lines regarding my feelings concerning your admirable stand in relation to the "scaredness" program. Your position has been assailed as one of cowardice and unpractical idealism. In my opinion your standpoint is more heroic and courageous than that of any other public man of today. Your uncompromising stand for Christian principles in international affairs, as well as in matters between man and man, have kindled within the hearts of thousands of peace loving Christians the deepest feeling of respect, honor and love. Your place within the affections of every right-thinking citizen is daily becoming larger, because of your adherence to truth and Christian principles in spite of all the howling of the jingoes and the friends of the "scaredness" program. I have attempted, for the sake of fairness, to discover some forceful arguments in the speeches and writings of the "scaredness" peoples, but all my endeavors have been in vain. Even the late addresses of the President himself have not succeeded in bringing to my mind a single valid argument for "preparedness." On the other hand every page of *The Commoner* is full of arguments that strike right home to both reason and heart, why the preparedness program is based on a foundation of blindness, dementia, and cruel, selfish interests. I can not help to mention in this connection the admirable address by the Rev. Dr. Hardin of the Third Presbyterian church of Chicago. I have just finished reading it, and it occurred to me that every jingo ought to read it, not on the train or on the street car in a careless, thoughtless way, but in his quiet chamber, giving due thought and meditation to its contents, and letting all the splendid arguments exert their due weight. Anyone who would not be moved in favor of peace and humanism by such a procedure deserves more the name of a brute than that of a man. I can not understand the position of our President at present. I have been, as much as anyone, his admirer until he recently took up his policy of preparedness. I can not see what has changed his mind so radically. It seems impossible that his cool and deliberate mind has been swayed and turned by the rumors of war into really believing that danger of attack upon our country is at hand. There must be some other things responsible for the stand he has taken. My earnest desire is that you may continue to stand unflinchingly and heroically for the principles of peace and righteousness, and in saying this I voice the sentiment of millions of compatriots.

Spurgeon Odell, Marshall, Minn.: May all the prayers and powers for good sustain and uphold your hands in your noble efforts to maintain peace. The great, silent majority is with you. It is hard to get them to give expression to their sentiments in the form of letters and petitions. The present preparedness program, while the great powers are in the throes of death, is an insult to every nation of Europe. It is a threat to seize the markets of the world; it is a challenge to war at the earliest moment they shall have time to accept it. It is a bid for the enmity of every nation of the world. This brief letter needs no answer. I only wish

to let you know that thousands of the humble rank and file are looking on in wonder and astonishment, refusing to believe that such insanity can be consummated.

J. E. Pearce, Norton, Va.: Being the editor of a weekly paper, I am in close touch with the people, and it is safe to say that two out of every three are in sympathy with your views and opposed to the militarist propaganda. Since Wilson has gone war mad, it is up to you to lead the great forces of peace and soberness, or there is no one else to lead them. They are everywhere, but, like sheep without a shepherd, but they will hear your voice, one and all of them, and follow you.

William E. Williams, Chicago, Ill.: I never voted for you as I have always voted republican in national issues. But let me now express my utmost appreciation of your stand on military expenditure. You are absolutely right. We are less in danger now than at any time in the last fifty years. I hope God will continue to give you strength to fight against military slavery in the United States.

Joe Bule, Hillsboro, Tex.: "Righteousness exalteth a nation," burdensome taxation never. The free, independent and home loving citizen is the nation's best defense. Therefore, instead of burdening the shoulders of the home builder with taxes to build warships, for wars that may never happen, why not aid in the building of homes by making the burdens light. And instead of building warships build ships of commerce. That would enable the home builder to send his products safely and at a reasonable rate, to the markets of the world. A battleship is a continuous burden and tax-eater so long as it is afloat. A ship of commerce (might be used otherwise in case of war) is a revenue producer, instead of a tax-eater so long as it is afloat. And, when it has gone down to a watery grave, it will be remembered by the good that it has done, and not by the burdens imposed upon the shoulders of those who love and make the home. The people are neither free or independent who are burdened with taxes; and that government, like the individual, who is a gun toter, is usually a coward.

A. H. McCarty, Fort Worth, Texas, addressed the following letter to Hon. J. H. Davis, M. C., house of representatives, Washington, D. C.: Fidelity to my convictions requires that I extend you my endorsement of your attitude and action toward the "preparedness" propaganda now being foisted on the country. To me this policy means, if carried out, not only the destruction of the prestige of the democratic party, but the destruction of democracy itself in this country. Peace and progress are synonymous; war and waste are their antonyms; construction and destruction can not proceed together, they are as incompatible as freedom and slavery, in fact their meaning is the same; war destroys freedom and through enormous debts enslaves the people. War means debt in the shape of bonds, the word bond signifies bondage, the antithesis of freedom. As to "preparedness," all Europe has been preparing for fifty years; look at Europe now. "The mills of the Gods grind slowly, but they grind exceeding fine." No man or nation can destroy his neighbor, its neighbor, with impunity. The carnivorous animal that preys on the

weaker inhabitants of the jungle must some day be eaten himself. The law of compensation is universal, "as ye sow, so shall ye reap." We of the United States have taken first rank as a nation of progress. Why should we now reverse this policy, turn our backs to peace, progress and production, and start on the back track to destruction, death, and damnation? Congress, by enacting the proposed "preparedness" legislation, would practically throw down the gauntlet and challenge the world to war. A declaration of war would be no more illogical, it would be merely a jump backward instead of a more leisurely walk. We are being constantly reminded of "our national honor." If this phrase means anything it is in the same category with the "personal honor" of the duelling code, and is outlawed by the same principles. We also hear much about "international law," "civilized warfare" and so forth. These have been proven nothing more than conventional phrases. Law implies reason, consideration for the welfare and rights of others, the settlement of differences by the arbitration of juries; it means civilization. War means the suspension of law and reason, and the substitution of brute force; it is not civilized, it discards every teaching and principle of civilization. Law is essentially a product of civilization, when nations go to war they cast aside civilization, they know no law, hence international law has no application or meaning to nations at war, and "civilized warfare" is a misnomer, there can be no such thing. I have allowed this letter to exceed the original scope intended, but I found it necessary to properly emphasize my abhorrence of this preparedness campaign.

A. F. Vandeventer, Bartlesville, Okla.: I am in full accord with Mr. W. J. Bryan on the question of preparedness. I find this also to be true with many people. The people are not to be stampeded with the cry that is now being raised to commit our country to militarism. Only that nation can survive which is built upon justice not only to its own people but to all the world. If force could perpetuate nations Rome would have survived and Greece would still thrive. They were swept away and force could not preserve them. We should learn from history that we can not survive at the point of guns for the more we arm the more we increase the war spirit, and thereby enhance the danger of war. I enclose five subscriptions, the work of ten minutes.

A. F. Sanderson, Buena Vista, Miss.: I am proud of the fact that Mr. Bryan opposes the frenzied craze for "preparedness" that is being fostered by the plutocratic manufacturers of war junk. The agricultural south and west bear the burden of the war taxes, and a few rich manufacturers in the east and northeast would get the money. The daily papers are under the magic spell that gold always produces. No information antagonistic to the plans of the "preparedness" champions and dollar seeking patriots is allowed to pass the censor of the "preparedness" campaign. The uniformity with which the daily press is proclaiming the necessity for "preparedness" shows how servile our American newspapers are. It would no doubt produce a sensation if it could be learned accurately how much money some of the daily papers are receiving for space on their editorial pages

where they print daily ready-made editorials on "preparedness," or entertain a nervous public with raw head and bloody bones stories of some foreign enemy that is going to invade America. The public needs correct information on this insane "preparedness" that has been worked up by those who are coining blood money and want their traffic to continue to prosper. Those who are truly patriotic ought to organize a bureau of information. The people are all right, but need correct information. The war news from the European war centers is not more carefully sifted and censored than is the ready-to-print literature furnished the daily papers by agents who are nothing but advertising bureaus for the war trusts. This "preparedness" campaign is a nation wide conspiracy as dangerous to democratic ideals as the Cataline conspiracy at Rome. It is a money-made scare which depends on gold and panic to accomplish its ends. It is going to take the best Americanism that we have to defeat the sinister forces now at work to overthrow democracy in America. Give us a great standing army, a great navy and Roosevelt for president and we will be as thoroughly Mexicanized as was Mexico under Diaz. I am grateful to an all wise Providence that defeated Roosevelt in the last election, and I am grateful to the same Providence that has given us a Bryan to fight the "preparedness" crowd.

A. Jablonsky, Olivette, Mo.: I am so pleased with the stand Mr. Bryan takes on "preparedness," and the fight he is making against it, that I feel like helping the cause along by securing a few new subscribers. Herewith club of five.

E. W. Newman, San Diego, Cal.: I am thoroughly in sympathy with Mr. Bryan's views on preparedness. If one tenth of the effort were directed to the cause of disarmament that is expended in the false cause of preparedness, I believe it would be an example to the world that would teach men to think that we should be "our brother's keeper." The old plan which Mr. Bryan opposes so courageously teaches that we must be prepared to be our neighbor's butcher. The lesson of each plan is absolutely unailing in its effect.

C. C. McLean, Greensboro, N. C.: The people are with you in the fight against the proposed expenditures for war purposes. If there ever was a time when America should go on in the even tenor of her way, it seems to me it is now.

H. Everett Farnham, St. Joseph, Mo.: The tide for preparedness seems to have passed in this "neck of the woods," and about the only one who seems to be prominently worried about his country's safety is the president of the Swift & Company bank of this city, who is trying desperately to galvanize the corpse. Of course, he does not commit himself as to whether he expects to enlist right away himself. Am delighted with the current issue of *The Commoner*, and believe that advocates of peace are bound to win.

J. H. Simpson, Hornbrook, Cal.: I admire your stand on the preparedness plan, and believe nine out of ten of the common people are with you. I firmly believe what you have done in the past and trying to do now the greatest good to the common people of any man living. If it is wrong