

Peace and Poltroonism

[From the San Francisco Chronicle.]

In branding anti-militarists as poltroons and in coming out flat-footed for compulsory military service in America, Colonel Roosevelt has gone the limit of his moral courage. So brave are those utterances they might almost be taken as an indication that the speaker has no intention of becoming a presidential candidate next year. He is far too wise to believe that anything so reactionary as conscription can be made a winning policy at the coming elections, and he must be fully aware of the fact that an open confession of faith in such a principle is a serious political handicap.

It is not too much to say that world-wide interest will be aroused by this remarkable outspokenness on the part of one who if he has no responsibility has considerable power in American politics. In many foreign countries he is regarded as one of the most representative of United States leaders. If they think of President Wilson as our restraining influence they think of Roosevelt as a great motive power in American thought, and his latest declaration will provoke unlimited discussion.

Indeed, this informal, long-range debate between Roosevelt and Bryan will give the exposition city in which it has been held an enormous amount of publicity.

As for the merits of Roosevelt's new programme, it may be said that charging anti-militarists with poltroonism is as unfair as conscription for America is undesirable.

It is no more cowardice in a nation to prefer arbitration to warfare than it is cowardice in the individual to prefer the machinery of justice to the dueling pistol in a case of slander.

Public opinion suppressed the duel because it was absurd and unjust to match the slanderer who was a good shot with the honorable man who was not. Public opinion may yet take on such an international character that it will see the absurdity and injustice of matching a militaristic nation against a small, peace-loving, industrial community.

Dueling was not killed by ridicule in a day, and warfare may die much harder, but it can be killed by the education of international public opinion.

Coming to compulsory military service as the only efficient means of defending this country, it should be borne in mind that this would not be the same America with conscription. It would still be the land of our living, but a people who have for so long enjoyed the blessings of liberty and who have so long been free from the oppressive burdens of debts for war preparation would not feel the same cause for pride in their country. We are the most patriotic of peoples because we are the most free. Destroy that freedom and you will not entirely destroy patriotism for the veriest slave has something of that instinct but Americans would not feel that they were sacrificing so much when they left their native land to live elsewhere.

"The man who refuses to perform military service should not have the right to vote," says Roosevelt. Is there not a grave danger in handing over political power to the soldier in a land where liberty has been the national ideal from the beginning? If the rifle is to be the means of registration will there not be the possibility of bullets being used when ballots fail? We pride ourselves on emancipation from the conditions

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—Des Moines (Iowa) Register and Leader

which promote revolutions, but if we return to a military basis of government we might easily have such revolutions.

It is one thing to have compulsory military service in Europe, the land of social and political inequalities, and quite another in America, the land of no class or political distinctions.

However, it should be set down to Roosevelt's credit that he lets us know precisely what he means, that his ideal is no longer the free-born, free-living American citizen, but the citizen born to compulsory military service and all the despotic discipline without which the soldier is not an efficient unit of national defense.

TIME PROVES WISDOM OF BRYAN'S PRINCIPLES

The 50,000 people who turned out to hear William J. Bryan in San

Francisco on the fifth of July, were moved by various motives. Some came from affection, others out of curiosity. Some were critical, others cynical. On the whole it was a hostile audience which the Nebraskan faced.

But he won that crowd, not by gifts of eloquence, not by spread-eagle oratory, not by word painting, but by his sincerity. As he told of his vision of a great America, the America giving forth ideas fruitful with blessing to all mankind, the American which may lift the world out of the bondage of hate and lust for power and conquest, the America which will obey the moral law and love her neighbors as herself, the soul of all that is best and noblest in the country spoke through him unto the masses before him.

While we regret Bryan's decision to leave President Wilson's cabinet,

the good he may do for his country in his role of peace evangelist may be of more lasting value. Others may perform the tasks of the diplomat as well as he but none can surpass him in stirring the emotions and directing the thought of the common men and women of America. They know he is their man. He has won their confidence and trust through long years of faithful service.

The world does move. The Bryanisms of twenty years ago are now written into the statutes of the nation. No man was more bitterly maligned than the Bryan of that day. Perhaps again he has sensed correctly a coming world in which fellowship and understanding between all peoples shall take the place of strife and in which the great human family will practice the principles of the Nazarene.—Watsonville (California) Register.