

# The Commoner

WILLIAM J. BRYAN, EDITOR AND PROPRIETOR

VOL. 15, NO. 9

Lincoln, Nebraska, September, 1915

Whole Number 677

## A Few Taftisms

Ex-President Taft made a speech at the San Francisco exposition on September the second, and the readers of The Commoner may be interested in digesting a few Taftisms that appear in the press reports. First, he is in favor of a large increase in both the army and navy. Among other additions he favors an increase in the navy of nearly 20,000 sailors and 900 officers; an addition to coast defense to the extent of 10,000 artillerymen and 600 officers; and an increase in the "Mobile Army" of 50,000 troops and a quadrupling of the military officers. After giving these figures he thinks "the program I have proposed, modest as it is, will certainly increase the total of the army and navy appropriations \$150,000,000.00 for each of the three years and probably more." (As we are now spending about \$250,000,000.00 on the army and navy, Mr. Taft's modest proposals would increase the expenditures 60 per cent.) A part of this sum, he thinks, can be raised by increasing import duties, and a part of it by a tax on incomes. In defending the increase in taxes he delivers himself as follows: "The payment of the tax, however small, makes the man a better citizen." My, what good citizens our people ought to be by this time after the opportunities the republican party has given them to pay taxes! How much better does Mr. Taft want to make our citizens? "To assume," he continues, "that the plain people are unwilling to pay increased taxes in case of national need is to distrust them and to ascribe to them the lowest motive for political action."

Of course the plain people are willing to pay any tax that may be necessary, but the plain people may not look at the matter from exactly the same point of view as the builders of battleships and the manufacturers of armor plate, ammunitions and arms; and the patriotism of the plain people will not be called into question merely because they are disinclined to enrich army and navy contractors and provide a few more life tenure offices.

His address as reported, concludes as follows: "Let us exclude politics from the question of preparedness. Let us accept the cost. Let us insist that congress and the administration manifest the courage to incur the odium of unthinking and unpatriotic men who would resent contributing to such a cause. Let us insist that congress and the administration shall defer to the judgment of real expert naval and army officers and boards as to how we should prepare, and shall not allow the dangerous little knowledge of committee chairmen and civilian politicians, ignorant of our needs, to obstruct the work of proper national defense."

This contains three propositions. First, that politics are to be excluded from the question of preparedness, and yet other republicans are insisting that the republican party shall conduct its next campaign on the issue of preparedness,

Second, he insists that congress and the administration have the courage "to incur the odium of unthinking and unpatriotic men who would resent contributing to such a cause." This is rather a sweeping indictment; those who differ from him as to the necessity of increasing appropriations are condemned both as unthinking and unpatriotic. This is an easy way to dispose of those whose arguments he is unable to answer.

But the third proposition is the most dangerous: "Let us insist that congress and the administration shall defer to the judgment of real expert naval and army officers and boards as to how we shall prepare, etc." It will be a sad day for the taxpayers when they delegate to army and navy experts the right to decide HOW MUCH they should spend on preparation. A tailor is a good man to consult as to the way clothes should be made but we do not let him decide the amount to be spent for clothes. So with our naval tailors—we shall consult them as to the best way of spending the amount appropriated, but they can not be trusted to decide the amount to be appropriated. These officers hold life positions and are not only exempt from the vicissitudes of those whose incomes are contingent upon the season and business conditions, but they are soldiers by profession, and incline towards the settlement of disputes by force rather than by peaceful means. They are trained to serve WHEN THEIR SERVICES ARE NEEDED, but unless our whole theory of government is to be overthrown the taxpayers, speaking through their representatives, retain and should retain the right to say how much preparation we need and what portion of our annual income shall be devoted to getting ready for war.

A comparison of the views of ex-President Roosevelt and the views of ex-President Taft, will convince any careful reader that the difference between them is not a matter of principle but a matter of language and a matter of amount. They both belong to the jingo class; they are both moving in the same direction. Mr. Taft moves more slowly than Mr. Roosevelt, and Mr. Roosevelt more noisily than Mr. Taft.

W. J. BRYAN.

## "Interests" Behind Intervention

The Chicago Tribune is supporting its demand for immediate armed intervention by quoting the opinion of several persons whose names are not given. One Chicagoan who has "interests" in Mexico is quoted as saying: "I have hundreds of names of people with interests in Mexico, and I believe I am correct in saying that every person of my acquaintance wants intervention but is afraid of retaliation by Mexicans if he comes out and says so."

Here we have the explanation: Everybody who has "interests" there wants intervention. It is not in the name of humanity, or for the welfare of this country, but for the benefit of those who have "interests" there. A few Americans have invested money in Mexico, and the rest of the people are expected to make the investment good. What difference does it make, according to these, how many lives are lost—lives of others do not count. It is another instance where the government is asked to put the dollar above the man. No wonder the Tribune wants to prepare for war. But does it understand what a war with Mexico means? It means war continued for an indefinite period, with enormous expenditures and the sacrifice of thousands of lives; it means a carpet bag government and the arousing of hatreds that will last a century; it means the exciting of suspicion throughout Latin America, which will undo all that has been done during the present generation; it will mean the introduction of religious questions into the politics of the United States. This is too high a price to pay for the privilege of helping a few Americans with "interests" in Mexico.

It is one thing to protect our citizens from lawless bands that cross the border—we are now doing that—but it is quite a different thing to invade Mexico and visit punishment upon a whole nation because a few irresponsible bandits have committed depredations on this side of the line. Watchful waiting is to be preferred to a policy that would unite a neighboring republic against us.

W. J. BRYAN.

## A Word of Warning

If any democrat, in office or out of office, imagines that the democratic party can be frightened into frenzied preparedness he is making a serious mistake. We are now spending more than two hundred and fifty millions a year on the army and navy—ten times as much as we are spending on the department of agriculture. We have been "getting ready" by gradually enlarging the appropriations. Why get excited now? Our preparedness is increasing RELATIVELY as other nations exhaust themselves. No nation wants to engage in war with us—no war is in sight or even probable, unless we deliberately invite it by falsely accusing other nations of being enemies, and by making hatred a national policy.

The rank and file of the democratic party are producers of wealth—not manufacturers of arms and ammunition—and they will not consent to the taxes necessary to meet the program of the jingoes. The masses favor peace and know that "preparedness" is both a burden and a menace.

W. J. BRYAN.

## CONTENTS

- A FEW TAFTISMS
- "INTERESTS" BEHIND INTERVENTION
- A WORD OF WARNING
- THE ARABIC CASE
- TAFT'S DISGRACEFUL CONFESSION
- MADDENED BY SCENT OF BLOOD
- PRESENT PREPAREDNESS
- CAMPAIGN EXPENSES
- THE "BLOOD AND THUNDER" GOSPEL
- PROTECT THE COTTON PRODUCERS
- THE ALTGELD STATUE
- THE ELECTION OF POSTMASTERS
- A NEW DANGER
- A CALL OF THE CAMP
- MR. BRYAN'S LECTURE
- WAR AND ANARCHY
- MR. BRYAN'S POSITION