

Claude Kitchin's Statement on the Nation's Preparedness—He Gives Facts

Mr. Editor:

The Seven Seas Magazine, the organ of the Navy league (the organization which has created, by deception and misrepresentation, the apparently big sentiment for the militarism and navalism now proposed, and which seems to have stampeded many patriotic, and usually level-headed people) declared in its October issue that I had the right "to vote for or against" the preparedness measure, but that I had "neither the right nor should he (I) be allowed even to discuss it in the House," etc. I trust, however, that the press of my state, though most of it differ widely with me, will not refuse the privilege which I ask, to express through it to the people some of the reasons for my position and give SOME OF THE FACTS with respect to the questions which has been withheld from, or certainly not given to the public. I ask this privilege, with confidence that it will be granted, especially in view of the fact that many of the state papers have severely criticised me, some going to the extent of bitterly denouncing me. I have no criticism to make of the press and the people in the state who differ with me. Having heard only one side, and owing to the tons of literature of deception and misrepresentation on the subject, being poured out daily to the people by the metropolitan press and magazines—many, perhaps, innocently—and by the so-called "Patriotic societies," of which the Navy league is the head, it is but natural that a large majority of the people should oppose my position. With your permission, I shall now proceed to give some of the facts and reasons which impel me to oppose the big military and naval program which will be proposed to congress.

1.—AS TO THE ACTUAL CONDITION OF OUR NAVY

All the talk and writings by the press and the so-called "Patriotic societies" about our "utter helplessness," our "dangerous unpreparedness," our "defenseless condition," our "growing weakness," our "having fallen to the third or fourth grade of inferiority in naval strength," etc., is pure tommy-rot, BASED NOT ON A SINGLE FACT.

Let it be first understood that in the "preparedness" program the navy of Great Britain is eliminated. This was so testified by the secretary of the navy, Admiral Fletcher, and other naval experts, and even by Hobson, in the hearings before the Naval committee at the last session of congress, all declaring that we do not need or desire a navy as strong as hers. Notwithstanding the metropolitan press, magazine writers and the "Patriotic societies" and our Navy Year-Book (which was exposed in the last congress, and will be so exposed in the next, as unreliable and misleading,) THE FACT IS, that we have, built and building, THE STRONGEST AND MOST POWERFUL NAVY IN THE WORLD, except that of Great Britain (which is eliminated as above stated). OUR NAVY IS STRONGER THAN THAT OF GERMANY, FAR SUPERIOR TO THAT OF FRANCE, MORE THAN TWICE AS STRONG AS THAT OF JAPAN OR OF ANY OF THE OTHER NATIONS. Admiral Fletcher, the highest active officer in the navy, commander of the Atlantic fleet, the man who will have to do the fighting if any is to be done, (whose judgment on naval subjects the secretary of the navy, before the Naval committee, declared he had sooner take than that of any man in the world) expressly declared, at the naval hearings during the last session of congress, that we had a navy, "SUPERIOR TO THAT OF GERMANY OR ANY OTHER NATION, EXCEPT GREAT BRITAIN." In answer to the question, "If in a war with Germany, could our navy successfully resist that of Germany?" he answered "YES." Captain Winterhalter, another naval expert, testified: "JUDGE WITHERSPOON HAS

PROVED THAT OUR NAVY IS SUPERIOR TO THAT OF GERMANY AND I AGREE WITH HIM." Admiral Badger, ex-commander of the Atlantic fleet (a member of the General board of the navy) declared that no one had ever heard him say that "Germany had a superior navy to ours."

The facts of records, the tests laid down by naval experts here and abroad, and the naval authorities of the world (all of which I have before me as I write) confirm the truth of this testimony.

The armored fleet of Germany, consisting of battleships, dreadnaughts and predreadnaughts, armored cruisers and battle-cruisers (built and building) in number is 52 (to say nothing of the vessels lost since January 1, 1915.) The fleet of the United States, of the same vessels, is in number fifty-six, with over 40,000 more tonnage. (Number and tonnage, however, are not the criterion of superiority). Of twenty of Germany's battleships listed by our Navy Year-Book, sixteen are not able to go more than 1,000 miles from base to engage in naval warfare. Not one of the sixteen carry coal enough to go from Hamburg or Bremen to within five hundred miles of New York and return (to say nothing about being employed in a naval engagement.) The Oregon, which some of our naval experts say is obsolete, and not listed by our Navy Year-Book (the Indiana and Massachusetts not listed also) in every characteristic of a fighting ship (bigger guns, heavier armor, stronger ship) is far superior to ANY ONE OF THE TWENTY GERMAN BATTLESHIPS LISTED BY OUR YEAR-BOOK. Four of the German ships listed by our Year-Book as dreadnaughts are in reality not dreadnaughts, and are shown by one of the highest naval authorities in the world (Jane's Fighting Ships) to be DEFECTIVE, UNSUCCESSFUL SHIPS, and so known to be by every student of naval affairs. The last five dreadnaughts authorized by congress are superior to any six dreadnaughts Germany has, built or building. Our ships are better, larger, stronger and more heavily armored. Our guns are larger, stronger and more effective. Of the big guns of the ships, twelve inches and over, we have 284, while Germany has only 194 (built and building.)

If the navy of Great Britain is to be eliminated in the "preparedness" program, which our naval experts say it should be, and if we have a navy now SUPERIOR TO THAT OF GERMANY OR ANY OTHER NATION IN THE WORLD, except Great Britain, FOR WHOM OR AGAINST WHOM DO WE PROPOSE TO PREPARE by the fabulous increase of our naval appropriations which the proposed program requires?

WE ARE PREPARED.

Instead of "our navy growing weaker," as the metropolitan press, the "Patriotic societies" and the jingoes and war traffickers would have the people believe, it is GROWING BIGGER, STRONGER, MORE EFFICIENT AND BETTER EQUIPPED EVERY YEAR. In the two years of Wilson's administration the naval building program authorized is TWICE AS LARGE AND COSTLY AS THE LAST TWO YEAR'S OF TAFT'S ADMINISTRATION, AND LARGER AND MORE COSTLY BY \$8,000,000 THAN THE ENTIRE FOUR YEARS OF ROOSEVELT'S LAST TERM, AND PRACTICALLY AS LARGE AND COSTLY AS THE ENTIRE FOUR YEARS OF TAFT'S ADMINISTRATION. There is today OVER 50 PER CENT MORE CONSTRUCTION GOING ON FOR OUR NAVY THAN ON THE 1ST DAY OF MARCH, 1913, or at any other time in the history of our country. We have nearly 100 per cent more torpedoes, mines, mine layers, powder and other munitions than we had on the 1st day of March, 1913, and steadily increasing them. We have under Mr. Wilson's and Mr. Daniels' administration, FOR THE FIRST TIME IN YEARS, THE FULL COMPLEMENT OF ENLISTED MEN AUTHORIZED BY LAW.

WE ARE PREPARING.

In view of the foregoing facts, was not President Wilson right when he said in his message to congress December, 1914, in opposing the program of the Hobsons and Gardners: "LET

THERE BE NO MISCONCEPTION. THE COUNTRY HAS BEEN MISINFORMED. WE HAVE NOT BEEN NEGLIGENT OF NATIONAL DEFENCE."

2.—AS TO THE ENORMITY OF THE PROPOSED PROGRAM—WHAT IT IS:

The heretofore large and growing expenditures for our navy had aroused the people of the country into asking, "where shall it end?" Secretary Daniels, in his report to the last session of congress, December, 1914, said (and he was but substantially repeating what had been said in the British parliament, the German reichstag, the French assembly, and by prominent statesmen the world over relative to the armament expenditures of their respective countries for the last several years): "The naval appropriations in our own country HAVE DOUBLED IN A DOZEN YEARS, and have gone up by leaps and bounds in other countries. IF THIS MAD RIVALRY IN CONSTRUCTION GOES ON THE BURDEN WILL BECOME TOO HEAVY FOR ANY NATION TO BEAR." In his report of December, 1913, he says: "The growing cost of dreadnaughts, of powder and of everything that makes an efficient navy, gives reason to pause. THE HEAVY EXPENSE commands national and international consideration. Ten years ago our largest battleships cost \$5,282,000. The next dreadnaught will cost \$14,044,000." (The dreadnaughts hereafter to be authorized will cost from \$18,000,000 to \$20,000,000, and in an interview the secretary says all ship materials and munitions of war have gone up over 30 per cent.) He asks "When is this ACCELERATING EXPENDITURE TO BE REDUCED? If it is not hastened by appeals for the peaceful settlement of national differences, the day is not far distant when the GROWING BURDEN OF TAXATION FOR EXCESSIVE WAR AND NAVAL EXPENDITURES WILL CALL A HALT."

Now, in the face of the deplorable truth recited by the secretary; in the face of the fact that we have a navy superior to that of Germany or any other nation, except that of Great Britain; in the face of the fact that our navy is growing larger, stronger and better equipped than ever before; in the face of the fact, as the President declared both in his message to congress December last and in his recent Manhattan club speech, "WE ARE THREATENED FROM NO QUARTER," the proposed "Preparedness" program at one bound—one year — INCREASES our already immensely large naval appropriations MORE THAN OUR TOTAL INCREASE FOR THE LAST FOURTEEN YEARS; more than the INCREASE BY GERMANY THE WHOLE FIFTEEN YEARS PRECEDING THE EUROPEAN WAR, AND MORE THAN THE COMBINED INCREASE OF ALL THE NATIONS IN THE WORLD IN ANY ONE YEAR IN THEIR HISTORY (in times of peace)!

The five-year program INCREASES OUR NAVAL APPROPRIATION OVER FORTY TIMES MORE THAN THE INCREASE BY GERMANY IN FIVE YEARS PRECEDING THE EUROPEAN WAR; and \$200,000,000 MORE THAN THE COMBINED INCREASE OF ALL THE NATIONS OF THE WORLD FOR THE FIVE YEARS PRECEDING THE EUROPEAN WAR; and OVER \$50,000,000 MORE THAN THE COMBINED INCREASE OF ALL THE NATIONS IN THE WORLD FOR THE WHOLE PERIOD OF TEN YEARS IMMEDIATELY PRECEDING THE EUROPEAN WAR!!

Add to this the fact that prior to the beginning of the European war we were expending annually on our navy from \$20,000,000 to \$30,000,000 MORE THAN GERMANY OR ANY OTHER NATION (except Great Britain) was expending on its navy.

FOR THE TEN YEARS PRECEDING THE EUROPEAN WAR WE HAD EXPENDED ON OUR NAVY OVER \$300,000,000 MORE THAN GERMANY OR ANY OTHER NATION (EXCEPT GREAT BRITAIN) HAD EXPENDED ON ITS NAVY! And yet the metropolitan press, the magazine writers, the "Patriotic societies" and