

Hearing from the People on "Preparedness"

Wm. Madison Hicks, Oologah, Okla., under date of Nov. 23, writes: I was at Coweta last Saturday, and delivered an address on the plan of the President for "preparedness," and the whole country seemed to be aroused against the military scheme, no doubt put on foot by the steel trust. The citizens, without a protesting voice, and without regard to political preference, openly indorsed the stand taken by Hon. W. J. Bryan on this issue. The citizens at Chelsea, White Hill, Sperry and Sageeyah have openly condemned this cringing wall to Wall street, but the great dallies refuse to let the country know what we are doing. I send you a letter from the Star of Kansas City, together with the resolutions passed at Claremore, Okla. The "editorial comment" was a three line sneer at the citizens of Oklahoma.

In southeast Kansas in the last ten days, and in southwest Missouri in the same time, fifty-three public mass meetings have been held condemning the President's plan, and sustaining Mr. Bryan, and yet not one of these resolutions has found its way into print. Is there any way, known to you, through which we can reach the country with our protests? It looks very much like a clear case of conspiracy to fasten a military autocracy upon this nation. With best wishes, and the hope for a living, vital democracy, rather than a system of plutocracy.

Frank Dale, Guthrie, Okla.: I am of the opinion that it is necessary, in order to head off this craze of preparedness, to organize throughout the country a scheme to get before congress and the President the real sentiment of the people. Of course, I have no way of knowing the situation in this respect back east, but out here it is practically all one way; and, frankly the most silly and foolish arguments I have ever read or heard in favor of so-called prepared-

On this and the following pages, we reproduce extracts from a few of the many letters addressed to The Commoner and its editor. Lack of space prevents the publication of more at this time. These letters, coming as they do from all sections of the country, are a good indication of the sentiment of the people on the "preparedness" program now before the country. In many states, mass meetings are now being called to protest against the saddling of a militaristic policy on this nation. Resolutions are being passed by different organizations, and petitions are being circulated among the voters calling for immediate action to head off the movement for increased military expenditures. Let those who are awake to the danger of the adoption of this new policy make their positions known to their congressman and senators. If you have not written a letter to them, or to the President, do so today.

ness are those being disseminated now in the current newspapers and magazines of the country. This must be headed off, and of course you are doing your full share to that end. I can only trail, but would gladly aid in any plan which may be suggested which would lead to bringing this country into sane thought upon this subject.

Geo. N. Jones, Cor. Sec., College Park Assn. of Friends, San Jose, Cal.: At the semi-annual meeting of the above named association, the sixth inst., at the conclusion of the afternoon session, when we were privileged to listen to a most inspiring and instructive account of a recent trip to the Orient and Australia by one of our members, undertaken in furtherance of the spread of the Gospel and the advancement of the peace sentiment, I was asked to write you in commendation of your fearlessness evinced in recent statement declaring your disapproval of the proposed measures to be submitted to congress which have the endorsement of President Wilson, authorizing expenditure of greatly increased sums for arms and equipment to meet the possibility of war. This, we believe, is the surest way to provoke conflict, and a sad retrograde movement of this country, in imitation of those nations already fighting. Our position regarding war is based on the example and teaching of Christ, wherein He expressly forbids the killing of our fellow men, and commands his followers to love their brethren as themselves.

THOMAS E. SCOTT, Keystone, Ind.: There are several addresses and letters in the last issue of the paper that it does seem to me ought to be read and considered by more people than seems likely to be done. They speak on the matter of "preparedness"—for war or peace—in a fundamental, practicable way that very moderate common sense can certainly take account of, and be able to appreciate. Especially it does seem that W. J. Bryan's address at Johnstown, Pa., ought to have a wide reading, by many at least who have not been reading and observing history in its making for the past half or three quarters of a century. Perhaps you may have done so, if not it seems to me you should send off a few thousand of leaflets, or pamphlets of that speech for wide circulation during the next eight months. It is so plain and fundamental and has no flavor of partisan politics about it. In the present state of public opinion on this rush towards militarism the thought I suggest and would emphasize, is an important one. Without doubt it will be an important item in the declaration of all political parties the coming year, but the contest will be between two great parties,

and as it looks now this question of preparedness for war, or for peace, will be the overshadowing thing.

James A. Rice, Canton, Ohio: Your opposition to the so-called preparedness plan deserves the open and hearty co-operation of every true American. The mask should be ruthlessly torn from the men and interests who are responsible for this un-American movement. The President, congressmen, senators, and all, should, be made to see that back of the man and interests that will profit by piling upon the people these unnecessary burdens of hundreds of millions of taxes stand the tariff barons who will in turn and due time step forward with a demand that high and oppressive tariff duties be restored in order that these millions may be provided. And all the time the dear people, by subtle and indirect methods, will be made to stand and deliver.

If the President, and our congressmen and senators who favor this militarist movement, really believe that we are in danger of attack by any other nation or alliance of nations,—and all insist that defense is the only object they have in view,—is there not a better kind of preparedness open to us than through the building of battleships and providing of army and navy equipments which every sane person knows will be on the junk heap and obsolete before any of the nations of Europe now at war can recover from the effects of that war, or could prepare to attack us?

If it be true that it is the man behind the gun that counts for most, that the highest efficiency and loftiest patriotism is found among men of high mental, moral and physical development,—sober men free from temptation and taint of alcoholic liquors, would it not be better to begin our preparation by providing men of this type first of all things? Russia, Germany, France, England, in fact, all of the nations now at war, experienced great difficulty even in the mobilizing of their armies because of the menace of alcohol, and find it a constant hindrance to efficient service in both their armies and navies. Why not destroy the traffic in this destroyer of men and turn our attention to providing men of the highest efficiency before providing the implements for land and naval warfare? Have we not an abundance of time in which to do this and still provide the implements long before we become liable to attack? And implements, too, that will be modern instead of obsolete when needed.

Furthermore, the saving annually of about \$2,000,000,000 now being worse than wasted through the open saloons in our country would be an important item in the way of retrenchment, would it not? Also,

would not good roads for the safe and speedy movement of our army equipment and munitions, and the prompt and orderly mobilization of our land forces and the transportation of supplies to our naval bases, be of great advantage? Out of this saving of \$2,000,000,000 annually we could do much toward providing every section of our country with roads that would not only avail us in times of war but would be of great benefit to business and commerce in times of peace. I believe the people who really bear the burdens of our government, whether at war or peace, would approve of such retrenchment and preparedness as this, if we are to prepare at all.

I regret that on this issue many democrats must and will differ with the President, but our highest duty is to our people and country first. It is a matter for regret, also, that so many leaders in our party, in and out of congress, show so great readiness to encourage a movement that is contrary to the high ideals and purposes of our party. While this is the kind of question that ought never to be made a party issue, none but the blind can fail to see that it will be made so by the enemies of the present administration, and at the first opportunity.

W. Clay Huston, Bellefontaine, O.: I want you to have a word from a Bellefontaine, Ohio, republican, who was a member of the party that displayed the yellow, signifying the gold standard, upon your first visit to our city, as to your recent campaign for prohibition in Ohio. In my opinion no dozen men in the state made as many votes for the cause of prohibition as you did. Your power, when freed from any vestige of political partisanship, is absolutely unlimited so far as human influence does, in my opinion. I am with you in the stand you are now taking on the question of preparedness for war and I hope you will make your fight in such a way as not to give honest, sincere people any excuse for charging it to political preference or prejudice in any manner or form.

H. Everett Farnham, St. Joseph, Mo.: Nothing could be finer than the fight you are making. The Commoner came yesterday, and it is splendid. Start a campaign for a big "On to Washington" edition with which to greet congress! Give the friends of peace a chance to subscribe for a few months at a small cost, and make special prices in bundles. The ammunition is worth using very extensively. Many, many people who can not write letters would be glad, I believe, to aid with subscriptions. Now is the time! Is every member of congress receiving your paper? If not, let's supply them for a few months. Give a lot of people a chance to do a little.

Thomas P. Culliar, Bartlett, Tenn.: Wonder if you remember this: "Not by might (big army), nor by power (big navy), but by my spirit (love), saith the Lord of hosts." Zechariah 4-6.

L. P. Maxam, Clarkston, Mich.: It is with pleasure that I note the stand you have taken in opposition to the war scare to stampede this government into squandering 400 or 500 million dollars on so-called defense. I have heard several people express their opinion that you were right on that question. It is evident

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