

Dunn Against Militarism

[Extracts from a speech delivered by Hon. I. J. Dunn at Humboldt, Neb., February 4, 1916:]

I am opposed to the military program which in the name of preparedness, it is sought to fasten upon this country. I am opposed to the increase at this time in our army and navy, recommended by the President. When I speak of militarism, I make a distinction between the policy pursued by our government for many years, of maintaining an army and navy sufficient for our needs, and gradually adding to the navy from year to year, and the proposition to spend hundreds of millions of dollars within the next few years for the purpose of making ours one of the military nations of the world.

Preparation for war invites war, excites nations to war, and renders war inevitable sooner or later. The organization of large armies and navies by one nation, leads other nations to prepare for war. When one increases its armament others, who may justly fear attack, feel that as a matter of self protection they must arm and prepare for possible war.

When nations, living side by side, traversing the same seas, and seeking to control the same avenues and marts of trade, spend millions of dollars yearly on armies and navies, the inevitable result sooner or later is war. All nations know this. They organize armies and build navies and prepare for war, because they expect at some time to engage in war.

Preparation for war does not insure peace nor does it render war less probable. Training men to fight, to become efficient in the art of killing human beings, does not tend to preserve peace.

WAR DUE TO MILITARY PREPAREDNESS

The war in Europe is due largely to military preparedness; and to the fear, jealousy and hatreds that maintaining large armies and navies has created among the warring nations. And the jealousy, fear, hatred and suspicion born of militarism, can be traced to the efforts of the war traffickers, who derive enormous profits from war.

If Europe had had neither armies or navies, there would be peace and happiness there today. If it were not for militarism there would be little hatred or ill feeling among the peoples of Europe.

War is always brutal, barbarous and savage. It is at best, legalized butchery. It is an appeal to the doctrine that might makes right. It is without moral force and can not in any sense determine questions of right and justice. The idea that because one nation may be powerful enough to overcome another by brute force, by the shedding of blood and the destruction of human life and property, that it therefore follows that that nation is in the right, is utterly irrational.

One would imagine that in view of what is now going on in Europe, we would hear no more of the doctrine that preparation for war is necessary to preserve peace.

We should prepare for peace, not war.

The policy of universal peace must be adopted some day, else the nations that now constitute the civilized world will return to the conditions of the dark ages, which followed the fall of the Roman empire. Another war such as Europe is now engaged in may produce conditions similar to those of the early centuries of the Christian era.

Preparation for war, in the last analysis, makes war inevitable. Wars will end when the tendency of men and nations is away from war, and in the direction of peace; when the thought and purpose and hope of the peoples of the world is for peace; when men and nations exalt peace and condemn war.

Many of those who now favor a military policy, only a short time ago denounced Prussian militarism as being the cause of the war in Europe.

They now demand that we shall adopt militarism. We are told that unless we do adopt the mad policy that has caused Europe to run red with blood, we are in grave danger.

This military propaganda was conceived in selfishness and greed and it has been promoted by a campaign of falsehood and deception, which for shameless mendacity has had no parallel in the history of this nation. With few exceptions, the daily newspapers of all the larger cities of the country, and practically all of the magazines and periodicals published throughout the eastern half of the United States, have will-

ingly, or through fear of the power of organized wealth, engaged in an attempt to terrorize the nation into adopting this proposed military policy. This propaganda is based on the falsehood that the United States is unprepared to defend itself from attack or invasion; that there is danger of a combination of nations against us when the present European war shall close, and that we would be unable to defend ourselves from attack from any first class nation. This charge is groundless. The fact is the nation is better prepared and more thoroughly equipped to defend itself on land and sea today than at any time during the last 50 years. And, although for more than a century and a quarter no nation has declared war against us, we are actually in less danger from attack than we have been at any time in the past. Every war in which we have engaged since the revolution, we were the aggressor, the one to declare war.

And now, notwithstanding that the highways of time are strewn with the wrecks of nations and of peoples who believed in war, as the only method of settling disputes between nations, we are invited to take up our pilgrimage along the crimsoned, brutalizing pathway of militarism, to mark our milestone in the blood and tears of innocent men and women, as other nations, following the creed of Mars, have done.

The problem confronting us and the world today is whether human reason shall prevail over human passion. If we could take the vote of all the people in the world at present as to whether they desire war or peace, I have no doubt the vote would be overwhelming in favor of peace. Confine it to any one nation, even those at war, and it would still be for peace. If the masses of men favor peace, what forces, conditions or tendencies prevent the wishes of the people being realized? If mankind abhors wars and desires peace, then why can not peace be attained? If we will get a clear understanding of the forces interested in the tendencies which produce war, we will have laid the foundation upon which universal peace and good will may be established.

The danger to us as a nation, if there is danger, is not because of a desire at this time, or likely to be in the future, on the part of any foreign nation to attack us. The real danger is here. It is from the efforts of the war traffickers who are fathering this propaganda of deception and falsehood that they may satisfy their greed for profits. Nothing has occurred even during the present war that will result in serious ill will towards us after the war is ended, unless it be that the war traffickers have furnished munitions to some of the belligerents.

SOWING THE SEEDS OF DISTRUST

One of the purposes indicated by the contents of the thousands of articles published in the press and in the magazines throughout the country during the last twelve months, is to sow the seeds of distrust, hatred and suspicion of other nations among our people. Articles are now being published in the press in some parts of the country describing imaginary invasions of this country by foreign nations, and depicting scenes intended to inflame the public mind against certain other countries, and to create the belief that some nation is preparing to attack us. If there is any treason or disloyalty to America in connection with the military propaganda, those who are responsible for the things I have described are the guilty ones. Hatred and suspicion of other nations may plunge the country into needless war. If to endanger the nation's peace that profits may follow is not treason against the welfare of the people of the United States then I do not understand that term. Laying aside questions of national honor, any or all of the nations of Europe now at war could have made any sacrifice necessary to have met the demands of any other nation and still have been millions ahead in money, property and human lives. No nation has ever been called upon, or ever has made in times of peace the sacrifices that these nations have made since the war began. By reasonable sacrifice the indescribable horrors of war would have been avoided. Why was not the policy of mutual sacrifice adopted? Simply because civilized nations still hold to the barbarous doctrine that as between nations "might makes right," and that brute force is the only method in the last analysis by which nations can settle disputes. We will not permit the half-civilized un-Christian

tribes, subject to our control here and in the Philippines, to settle their disputes with the tomahawk, scalping knife and bolo. No! We consider that method barbarous, un-Christian and uncivilized. But we, as a great Christian nation, will resort to those methods ourselves, and to others infinitely more destructive, to determine as between ourselves and some other nation whether our contention is right and theirs wrong.

I am opposed to the President's plan to increase the army and navy, not because I object to the nation being fully prepared to defend itself against attack. I oppose it on the ground that the nation is prepared to defend itself against any attack or invasion that is likely to be attempted, now or in the future, unless by adopting a military program we help to create conditions which make war inevitable.

NOT OPPORTUNE TIME TO CHANGE POLICY

I submit that this is not an opportune time to change our military policy by making unusual preparations for war. If we carry out either of the programs now being advocated, the one by the President, or that of his secretary of war and the extreme militarists, the nations of the world will not be deceived or lulled into the belief that we are merely preparing for defense. They will understand that if we build a navy equal to or more powerful than that of any other nation, and increase our army in proportion, we will use them as an aggressive force to carry on war whenever in our judgment our interests demand or justify it.

We ought to wait until after the European war ends and see whether or not the conditions which result from that war, and the action taken by the nations engaged therein, will not enable us to decrease instead of increasing our military establishment.

Another reason why the time has not arrived is, that until the present war ends we can not tell just what kind of fighting craft on land and sea will best suit our purposes of defense, if such be our purpose. The equipment for the army, navy and coast defenses may all need revision at the close of the European war.

Furthermore, we ought not to consider increasing the army and navy, or our stores of guns and munitions, until the nation is prepared to take private profit out of war and preparation for war. Until the nation has adopted the policy of manufacturing its own munitions of war, and constructing its own battleships, there should be no increase in the army or navy. Neither should there be any further increase in the expenditure for either, and congress ought to refuse to make further appropriations until this policy has been adopted, and the necessary funds to construct government plants and factories, appropriated. Of course, it will take some time to erect government plants sufficient to supply the army and navy and until they can be constructed and equipped, it will be necessary to purchase supplies from private concerns. This talk about it being necessary to encourage private factories for the manufacture of guns and munitions of war, to the end that the government may have a sufficient supply in time of war, is nonsense.

The government has the right and the power and it is its duty to take over any private plant in case of necessity, in time of war, and utilize it for government purposes, just as the nations of Europe are doing. It did not take the great steel manufacturing plants of the country long to transform their factories into munition factories when offered large profits by foreign countries. But, I presume, these gentlemen are so patriotic that it would not do to ask them to do for the government of the United States what they have been willing and anxious to do, and have been doing, for foreign countries.

PEOPLE HAVE NOT BEEN CONSULTED

Another reason why the time is not opportune is that the people of this country have not been consulted on the question, and have had no opportunity to pass upon it, to have their say in determining to what extent, if any, the army or navy ought to be increased. No political organization in this country in 1912 endorsed the program now recommended. I have heard the statement made that the democratic national convention at Baltimore declared for the policy now advocated by the President. It did nothing of the kind. That statement is made in ignorance, or with the intent to deceive. The party at Baltimore declared that it would always maintain an efficient navy, and that it would formulate a naval policy that would guarantee efficiency.

Furthermore, President Wilson, in his mes-