

# "Preparedness"—a National Peril

[From the Missionary Voice, Nashville, Tenn.]

The proposal now pending in congress to increase vastly the army and navy of the United States appears to many to be fraught with the gravest peril. For many reasons it seems unnecessary, untimely, deceptive, reactionary, highly dangerous to ourselves, and a crime against war-cursed humanity, which looks to us for leadership toward better things.

These are strong terms, but fully justified, we believe, by every consideration of prudence, expediency, altruism, and Christianity. Some of the outstanding reasons for this opinion may be briefly set forth.

### No Danger of Attack

1. The proposed program of preparation is needless. The United States was never in less danger of being attacked and never before so well prepared for defense. The nations of Europe are fighting to exhaustion. It will take years for them to recover sufficiently to be ready for another war, should they desire it, particularly for a war against so formidable a nation as our own. The suggestion that they may combine at the end of the present war and make a joint assault on the United States in order to recoup their losses is imagination gone mad. No such thing is even remotely conceivable. The suggestion belongs to the ravings of the jingo press, dominated by the men who make munitions and profit by war. It is simply a "bugaboo" set up to frighten the unthinking and stampede the nation deeper into the folly and sin of armament.

But were there reason to fear such a combined attack, of what avail would be the utmost preparation we might make? Shall we attempt to create a navy that can whip the combined navies of England, Germany and France? Shall we go in to develop an army superior to the trained millions of these three, with Russia added? Shall we attempt to exceed or even emulate the naval and military expenditures of the six great warring powers, aggregating in times of peace \$1,748,000,000 a year, two and a half times as much as our total national income? Not even the jingo press would dare suggest such an absurdity. Yet anything less would be utterly useless against the specter of joint aggression that they have conjured up.

### Well Prepared for Defense

Besides, we are better prepared for defense than ever before. Our navy ranks second or third among the navies of the world. We are spending on it already one hundred and forty million dollars a year—more than Germany spent on hers, or France, or Russia. A great ocean on either side and friendly neighbors north and south are worth to us a standing army of millions of men. We have consequently not concerned ourselves greatly with the maintenance of armies. Yet our army is by no means to be held in contempt, comprising, as it does, one hundred and eight thousand regulars and one hundred and twenty-two thousand militia. The budget of the war department for 1913 was \$160,000,000, which, added to the \$140,000,000 spent on the navy, makes a war budget of \$300,000,000 a year in times of peace—more than that of militaristic Germany itself. They tell us that we are woefully unprepared. If so, we are wasting a vast amount of money which might be far better spent.

Add to our army and navy budget the pension pay roll of \$175,000,000 annually and war-debt interest of nearly \$23,000,000 more, and we get

a grand total of about \$500,000,000 a year that we are already spending on wars past or possible, just seventy per cent of our total national income. It seems that this would be a sufficient war budget for any nation that boasts itself as Christian; but we are asked now to add approximately \$200,000,000 a year to this already vast expenditure, making a sum that would wipe out our entire national income, leaving us nothing for the promotion of the arts of peace and public welfare, but entailing instead an annual deficit of many millions to be added to our debt—or provided for by emergency taxation.

### A Fallacy Exposed

2. The movement for preparedness is utterly deceptive. Preparedness for war is no guarantee of peace, as claimed by its advocates. Had Europe been unprepared, there would have been no war. One may go further and say that had Germany been unprepared there would probably have been no war. Had France been unprepared, there is little reason to believe that she would have been invaded. And poor Belgium, much as we admire her heroism, has suffered a thousand times as much from armed resistance as she would have suffered from the peaceful passage of an army. The very preparedness of the nations of Europe made war inevitable. For years they had been laying a mine of mutual distrust and fear. Only a spark was necessary to touch it off. Even just as a little time for debate and mediation might have afforded a peaceful solution. But everybody was ready to fight, and it was only a question of who should strike first.

Now, this discredited fallacy that the way to avoid war is to be prepared for it—this lie of Satan that is being shot to pieces on the battlefields of Europe—is brought forth by munitions manufacturers and army and navy specialists and subsidized newspapers as the only plan by which the United States can save itself from destruction! Shame on us, that we for an instant lend ear to it!

No; the way to avoid war is to prepare for peace. Preparation for war, as some one has said, is not insurance; it is kerosene. Every sensible man knows that to be prepared for trouble and looking for it is the surest way to find it. Witness the bully who carries a concealed weapon. A gun in the pocket and a chip on the shoulder usually go together.

### Retgression, Not Progress

3. A program of preparation on our part would be reactionary. It looks backward to the days of barbarism, to the passing era of individualism, to the theory that "might makes right," "that he shall get who has the power, and he shall keep who can." It has no place in the bright morning hour of world community and world brotherhood. It assumes that the nations of the earth, many of them as cultured and as Christian as ourselves, are international highwaymen, freebooters, and pirates, ready to rob and kill for the sake of gain, or savages ready to slay for the joy of it. We believe no such thing. Not one of the warring nations of Europe will confess itself responsible for the conflict. Not one will admit any desire for aggression or conquest. Each thinks itself fighting in self-defense, a perfectly natural result of the war of preparation that they have so long been waging against each other.

### Dangerous to Ourselves

4. For the United States to plunge now into an extended program of armament would be dangerous to ourselves from every standpoint. It would be a serious departure from

the historic standards of our country, a step away from democracy in the direction of militarism, an invitation to distrust and fear and ill will on the part of our neighbors, a deterrent to deliberate and calm judgment, an incentive to sensitiveness and quick temper, a tremendous financial burden that will add nothing to our wealth or progress, and a sowing of dragons' teeth that may certainly be expected to produce a harvest after its kind.

### A Crime Against Humanity

5. Most serious of all, we believe that the proposed program of armament would be nothing short of a crime against the race. If it affected us alone, there would be far less reason to deplore it. But our example will profoundly influence the world. For every battleship we build there will be a dozen built by other nations to preserve the balance of power. Every army increase will be met by like increases in other lands. When we arm ourselves against others because of suspicion and fear, they will be led naturally to arm against us for exactly the same reason. Thus the dread cycle will go on. The Latin-American states, to whom we aspire to be a big brother, are suspicious of us already, distrustful of our friendship and fearful of our power. Our chance to win and lead them will be lessened just in proportion as our mailed fist becomes more formidable.

### Whither Shall We Lead?

6. Any movement in the direction of militarism is peculiarly untimely at this crisis in human affairs. The world is sick of war as never before. It is nauseated with blood and is groping for a path that will lead out of the shambles forever. The United States has now the opportunity of the centuries to be the world's leader toward disarmament and permanent peace, toward that universal brotherhood to which the eyes of poets and sages have in every age been turned.

But we shall lead, if we lead at all, by example far more than by precept. If we go into the parliament of nations with a voice for peace, while our shipyards resound with the building of dreadnaughts and our training grounds echo to the tramp of a half million fighting men, we might as well keep out.

But we are destined to lead the world, whether we desire to or not. We are its natural and inevitable leader in this supreme crisis of its history. Whither shall we lead, forward toward the new day of peace and disarmament, or backward toward the night of militaristic barbarism, the reign of might?

### THE PRESIDENT AND MR. BRYAN

There is disappointment in New York over the President's inability to impose his views at once in congress in the matter of preparedness, and as a result he has suffered a loss of prestige. In an interesting letter from the metropolis to The Star, printed Saturday, the subject was discussed, and this mention made of the New York public's effort to solve the problem:

"Last summer it was led to believe that Mr. Bryan, by retiring from the cabinet in the manner he did, had lost all his influence, and thereafter would be of no consequence politically. Now it is told that Bryan's 'machinations' have caused the blocking of the preparedness campaign, and an influence is attributed to him greater than he most likely has exerted. But the New York public doesn't understand this, and wonders how Bryan has come back, when the metropolitan press had disposed of him for good. It also wonders whether, after all, some of the President's success in controlling congress may not have been due to Bryan's presence in the cabinet."—Washington Star.

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