

Concerning "Preparedness"

By HENRY FORD

[Below The Commoner reproduces, as a contribution to the "Preparedness" discussion, a statement which Mr. Henry Ford is running in the advertising columns of prominent newspapers and magazines of the country.—Ed.]

The United States, I believe, is confronted by the greatest danger in its history. It is not an external danger. As the President said in New York on January 27: "Nobody seriously supposes that the United States needs fear an invasion of its own territory."

Our danger is internal. We are confronted by the danger of militarism.

The very burden that caused thousands of men of all races to come to the United States in search of a haven of peace, to escape the tolls of militaristic government, now is being preached throughout the land by men, by newspapers, by magazines, moving pictures and in fact every medium of intelligence.

Conscription, the base of militarism, is advocated openly.

And it is all done under the guise of patriotism. The flag is flaunted before the eyes of the people and we are told that our "national honor" is at stake.

The flaunting was started by an organization of men known as the Navy league. It has been taken up by really patriotic men, fearful of the danger which this league first discovered. Other of these organizations started up and made their cry the danger of invasion and the need of preparing for it. The secretary of the navy and other officials were made the objects of attack because they, knowing the true conditions, refused to become hysterical.

Congressman Clyde H. Tavenner, delivered in the house two remarkable speeches—"The World Wide War Trust," and "The Navy League Unmasked"—giving startling revelations of an organized body of war traffickers who promote war and preparation for war—"preparedness."

He charged that the Navy league, which inspired and financed largely the present agitation for "preparation," was founded by a group made up largely of war traffickers. He also charged that among the most active members and officers of the league today are men who not only will profit from "preparedness," but who actually hold a monopoly on the materials for war which the government must purchase—that these war-trafficking men are in agreement with war munitioners of Europe, barring the possibility of the United States government purchasing supplies of war at any price but that fixed by the war-traffickers of the United States. Mr. Tavenner's charges never have been refuted.

The very men who pile up the armament of all nations,—and it is true that the same firm will often arm both sides in conflict—will find an enemy for any country they arm. And they will arm that enemy too, for the profits on arms are great, and the industry is a monopoly.

This state of affairs has been brought right home to Americans in the past few years in Mexico, where we have seen the same arms manufacturers arming every side. And the President, by raising the embargo on arms certainly did nothing for the peace of the world.

We ought to realize that it is the people who not only pay the bills of these munitions makers, but pay the penalty also in the death and misery the use of these arms must bring.

Do we need preparedness?

The President himself, in his speeches made recently in the middle west, could find no fear of invasion, and his inconsistencies were pointed out even by the most ardent editorial advocates of the "preparedness" plan. In December, 1914, the President, in his message to congress, said: "Let there be no misconception. The country has been misinformed. We have not been negligent of national defense."

Since that time the President said he had changed his mind. No personal vacillation, however, can change the facts, and in spite of rumors and suggestions of fear there have been no material facts placed before the people of the country to show that the President had any military reason for his change of mind.

The people should think for themselves and demand to know the facts.

Whatever the standing of the country's

safety, this much is due the people; they should be allowed to share the secret terrorizing dispatches the President declared in his recent tour he received almost hourly. The nation is great enough and the people strong enough to bear the worst, to know what threatens them.

Not only that, but it is the right of the people to demand of their President the causes for his alarm. And if that alarm is not genuine, they have a right to know why it was uttered by the head of the nation.

The people of the United States are patriotic. But it is time for all to realize that patriotism does not consist merely of dying for one's country. I believe that patriotism consists more in living for the benefit of the whole world, of giving others a chance to live for themselves, their country and the world. A man is naturally patriotic, and to cry patriotism at him as is now being done throughout the country is more of an insult than a compliment.

I believe, too, that many more men have died because of ambition, avarice and insincerity than ever died in a just cause. I have dedicated my life's work to the education of men on this subject with the hope that if war comes again men will know before they march against the machine guns whether they are marching for a just cause or for ambition, avarice and insincerity.

It is a regrettable fact that many of the mediums of education in the United States have been swayed to the cry for big armament. Not only is this true, but it is equally true that these same organs have bred racial hatred by the printing of incendiary news stories and articles, preaching fear of one of the European belligerents, giving prominence to rumors of unneutral acts of violence, and paying slight regard to official denials of the same.

These organs tell us that one of the warring factions in Europe is bleeding to crush militarism, yet in the same pages the assumption of this beginning of militarism is declared to be the solemn duty of the United States.

For a hundred years, with Europe fully armed and strong, we have been safe. Now, with Europe locked in a deadly embrace and bleeding to death, we are called upon to fear its invasion of our shores.

The following from the New York Times of February 9, printed prominently by the Times, but not conspicuously treated by the great majority of city newspapers, gives some idea of the facts:

"Washington, February 8.—Testimony that pleased the pacifist element in the house was furnished to the committees of military and naval affairs today by General Nelson A. Miles, U. S. A., retired, and Rear Admiral Victor Blue, chief of the bureau of navigation. General Miles said he did not fear an invasion of the United States and that an invading army could quickly be driven from the country. Admiral Blue declared the navy now was ready to meet any enemy it might be called upon to encounter in the Pacific."

And, remember, aside from the fact that we are able to do this, there remains still the greater fact that nothing more than generalities regarding the possibility of any attack have been advanced in justification of the attempt to work up on artificial hysteria as a preliminary to inoculation with the rabies of war.

Those who have opposed this militaristic scheme have been characterized as cowards, poltroons and unpatriotic. They are less cowardly than the most ardent militarists, because it is fear that is inspiring those who are not looking for the profits. And this fear is a fear without foundation in reason. Is it unpatriotic to wish for world peace instead of a universal war over commercial rights of a few men or to uphold an unpopular government?

The sooner the government of the world gets down to a business basis the better off the world will be. I can not conceive how any business man in the United States, after viewing the result of military preparation in Europe, realizing the geographical situation of the United States, and considering the result of the Dardanelles operations, could so allow his fears to be played upon by military bargainers as to approve the plan to make this nation an armed camp. There have been fine words about "preparedness" and

"militarism" being totally different, but Europe knows today that the only difference is in the spelling.

Congressman Kitchin, who has risked his leadership of the democrats in the house to oppose the "preparedness" measure calls attention to the fact that the United States has been spending in late years a greater part of its revenue for military equipment that has any other nation in the world. With the billions that would be spent under the proposed extravagant program, the tax-payers would be giving nearly 70 per cent of what they contribute to government revenue for the support of an army and navy.

Would any man, preparing to fight a fire in his shops, store those same shops with tons of inflammables? Yet that is what "preparedness" does. And then, of course, must come the inevitable.

What is the share of the man who pays for all this?

It is the burden of supporting the vast machine until some few men lose their heads and touch the spark to the ready-built kindling-pile. Then he must give his life, or come home a cripple. For those who remain at the end of the sad folly there is high taxes and crepe on the door.

Men sitting around a table, not men dying in a trench, finally settle the differences, anyhow.

If one hundredth of one per cent of all that has been spent on this kind of "preparedness" had been used to do away with national and international differences built up by a diplomacy originating in the Dark Ages, war would have ceased long ago.

Every man must admit that the method is foolish. And even the old time "glory" of war is dead, the victim of science. Then why continue?

Why not begin now to build a machinery of reason to do the work that the machinery of force has not accomplished? That is the great duty facing those who govern.

In all the maze of argument for "preparedness" the facts are few. But even its most ardent advocates call attention to the coincidence that this is a presidential election year.

If the cause lies in this fact, and I can hardly believe it, because I am not very well versed in political tricks, it is time for the voters to remind their congressmen and any other candidates who may seek their favor that the people will not spend their money to arm for invading ghosts conjured up by the President or any other man, be he a real patriot or a munitions-patriot.

Let the President and others who are preaching this doctrine of fear point out the enemy, let them prove the enemy comes upon us, and every American is willing to lay down his fortune and his life at the feet of the President, as Americans have done before.

But the same Americans, a hard-headed business people, will not lay down a nickel if they become convinced that they are paying merely for an election or a re-election to the White house under the guise of defense of home and fireside. And these Americans have a very disconcerting way of showing their practical impatience with fairy tales.

I strongly urge every American who is interested in this subject that should interest all, to write to Hon Clyde H. Tavenner, House of Representatives office Building, Washington, D. C., for the speeches revealing the motives at the bottom of the "preparedness" agitation.

I strongly urge every man and woman who desires that this country shall remain at peace to write a protest against the extravagant program now in congress, to write to his congressman, to the two United States senators from his state, and to the President of the United States. A sentence or two will do. But make your meaning plain.

Remember, too, that the men now in congress who have come out strongly against the project need encouragement from home. They face generally a solid wall of ridicule or silence in the press of the cities, and human nature finds it hard to bear up before such a constant hammering even though the object of the attacks feel that the pressure rings not of sincerity. If you feel that the country's safety is being jeopardized by political manipulation, then make your protest a political one so that it will strike the deeper.

I am having this statement printed in the advertising columns of newspapers and magazines throughout the United States. Others will follow. I have no other purpose than to save America from bloodshed and its young men from conscription. I feel that if this militaristic bur-