

## A Referendum on War

In the senate of the United States, April 29, 1916, Senator La Follette, of Wisconsin, introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the committee on census:

A bill to authorize the director of the bureau of the census under certain conditions to prepare and distribute blank ballots and to receive and count marked ballots and report to congress the result of an advisory vote.

Be it enacted by the senate and house of representatives of the United States of America in congress assembled, That whenever the President shall sever diplomatic relations with any foreign government, and thereafter, one per centum of the qualified electors in each of twenty-five states, as determined by the votes cast at the last preceding general election at which members of congress were voted for in each of said states, shall file with the director of the bureau of the census duly verified petitions as herein provided, it shall be the duty of said director to ascertain and report to congress, as provided in this act, the number of electors voting at an advisory election in each congressional district in the several states of the Union in favor and the number of such electors voting in opposition to a declaration of war against such foreign government. Each of the aforesaid petitions shall have written or printed at the top of each sheet thereof substantially the following:

"I, the undersigned, a qualified elector of the city of \_\_\_\_\_, county of \_\_\_\_\_, and state of \_\_\_\_\_, who resides at number \_\_\_\_\_, on \_\_\_\_\_ street (or in the town of \_\_\_\_\_), do hereby petition that the question of declaring in favor of, or in opposition to, war against the government of \_\_\_\_\_ (with which government diplomatic relations have been severed by the President) be submitted to a vote of the electors of the several states.

"Name of signer \_\_\_\_\_  
 "In cities: Street \_\_\_\_\_, number \_\_\_\_\_.  
 "Date of signing, \_\_\_\_\_, 19\_\_\_\_."

Each signer of such petition shall sign but one such paper; he shall add his residence, with the street and number, if any, and the date of signing. The affidavit of a qualified elector shall be appended to each such petition paper stating that he is personally acquainted with all the persons who have signed the same and that he knows them to be qualified electors of the city or town of \_\_\_\_\_, in the state of \_\_\_\_\_; that he knows that they signed this petition with a full knowledge of the contents thereof and that their respective residences are as stated therein and that each signer signed the same upon the date set opposite his name. Such affidavit may be attested before a notary public or other officer authorized by the laws of such state to administer oaths.

Sec. 2. That immediately upon the severance of diplomatic relations as aforesaid and the filing of the required number of duly executed petitions from the requisite number of states with the director of the bureau of census, as provided in this act, the said director shall cause to be printed, and within ten days thereafter shall furnish at the office of each postmaster in the United States in the inverse order of their respective distances from Washington, District of Columbia, a sufficient number of blank ballots to enable each qualified elector residing within the limits of city delivery, rural delivery, and other postal service from such office (including its stations and branches from which mail deliveries are made), to vote in favor of or against the declaration of war.

The said ballots shall be of such size and shape and bear such local identification marks as the director of the bureau of census may determine to be most suitable to enable the votes to be counted by congressional districts as rapidly as possible, and on each ballot shall be printed the following form, namely:

"Shall the United States declare war against the government of \_\_\_\_\_ (here insert name of country), with which government the President has severed diplomatic relations?

"Yes. | | No. | |

"Mark in one of the square spaces with an X.

"I do hereby certify that I am a legally qualified voter, residing at number \_\_\_\_\_, on \_\_\_\_\_ street, in the city, village, or town of \_\_\_\_\_, county of \_\_\_\_\_, state of \_\_\_\_\_, and that I have not heretofore voted at this advisory election.

"(Signature of voter) \_\_\_\_\_.

"Dated this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 19\_\_\_\_."

And on the opposite side of said card the address of the Bureau of Census, Washington, District of Columbia, with the words "Official business—Free."

Sec. 3. That the postmaster or his deputy shall immediately on receipt of the ballots cause to be posted in conspicuous places in the post office and in each branch post office or station under his jurisdiction notices announcing that the ballots are available for distribution during a period of five days. Such notices shall be prepared by the director of the bureau of the census, and the time for beginning of the distribution of ballots shall be not more than ten days after the date upon which the director of the census receives a sufficient number of petitions to authorize an advisory vote as provided in this act. It shall be the duty of the director of the census immediately to furnish the copy for the ballots and notices to the public printer, to determine the number of each to be printed, and the public printer shall print said ballots and notices with all possible dispatch.

For a period of five days from the date specified in the notice the postmaster or his deputy shall distribute the ballots, either directly or through the regular carrier service, to persons entitled to vote on the question in accordance with the provisions of this act.

Sec. 4. That every qualified elector in each state shall be entitled to obtain one of the ballots at the post office where he receives mail if there is no free delivery, or from a letter carrier if there is city delivery, or from a rural mail carrier if such elector receives mail on a rural route from that office; and each such elector shall be entitled to mark one, and only one, ballot and mail it to the Bureau of the Census, Washington, District of Columbia. No postage shall be necessary upon such card ballots.

Sec. 5. That at least once each day during the time allowed for mailing ballots each postmaster, or the deputy postmaster, shall assemble all ballots deposited in his office for mailing to the director of the bureau of the census, shall arrange the same in convenient packages for handling, securely wrap and seal the same for safe transit through the mails, and shall address each package to the director of the bureau of the census, and shall designate on the outside of each package the name of the post office, the county and state in which it is located, and then to mail such package.

Sec. 6. That upon receipt of said ballots the director of the bureau of the census shall use the staff and equipment of said bureau to ascertain separately the number of affirmative and negative votes cast from each state and from each congressional district: Provided, That no ballots received at the bureau of the census later than the fifteenth day from the beginning of the distribution from post office shall be counted.

The director of the bureau of the census shall report the result of the count to congress not later than ten days after the last day upon which ballots may be received for counting, and, as soon as may be thereafter, shall arrange by congressional districts and shall transmit to the clerk of the house of representatives that portion of the ballots upon which appears the certificate of the voter.

Such certificates shall be filed by congressional districts by such clerk, and shall be open to the inspection of senators and representatives for their information.

Sec. 7. That any person who shall wilfully alter, mutilate, or destroy, or who shall delay or prevent the transmission of delivery by mail, of the ballot of any voter cast in an advisory election under the provisions of this act, and any person not a qualified elector who shall vote at such election, and any qualified elector who shall cast more than one vote at such election, shall be deemed guilty of a misdemeanor, and

upon conviction thereof shall be punished for each offense by a fine of not less than \$300 or by imprisonment for a term of not less than one year, as the court shall determine.

### HEART TO HEART TALKS

For several weeks, The Leader has been presenting its readers with Heart to Heart selections from the public utterances of William Jennings Bryan, through the past quarter of a century. Selecting special utterances of the great Commoner has been like picking the sheen from the sunshine or the sweetness from honey, for every word that this greatest leader of American thought has covered the moral and ethical fields of politics and policy in broadest sense of public good—with a remarkable foresight that amounts to prophetic vision.

It seems strange that a man could be able so to foresee the advances of humanity, and the growth of the ideals and at the same time be able to express these lofty ideals with equal facility of voice and pen. There is but the one Bryan, and the pages of the history of this momentous era of our national development will be studded with his name and influence as the stars mark the sky of a cloudless night, for his ability has been so widely recognized that he has dominated the popular mind, he has been a leader of men by power of worth that could not but be recognized and respected.

We are loath to drop this feature, though realizing that the province of a local paper must cover many fields of endeavor and of news.—Shelbyville (Ill.) Leader.

### A READER'S SUGGESTION

Following is a letter addressed to Mr. Bryan by Will M. Ramsay, Little Rock, Ark.:

"I wish to again congratulate you on the great victory achieved in the recent election, believing as thousands do that you did more than any other person or number of persons in delivering the west to Wilson. And, believing as I do that the women held the balance of power in this election, and that they will do so again in 1920, and believing also that women will always be guided by right (as a whole) if they know what is right, and that The Commoner, more than any other publication, will guide them wisely in determining what is right and what their faith in you regardless of party will cause them to read and rely upon. The Commoner in deciding public questions I want to suggest that you make a special rate on subscriptions to The Commoner for the next four years to women voters in doubtful states especially, and I want to send you \$10.00 the first of the year 1917 to pay for The Commoner, to be sent to as many voting women for the next four years as you can send it to for that amount, and I will leave it to you as to the selection of these women. I believe many other democrats will gladly join me in this move."

### 'DRYS' WIN FIRST FIGHT IN SENATE

A Jefferson City, Mo., dispatch, dated Jan. 25, says: In the path of Bryan's visit to the Missouri legislature yesterday came a "wet" and "dry" fight in the senate today. A lively tilt was caused by a resolution of Senator McKnight, a "dry" leader, to have 7,500 copies of Bryan's speech on prohibition printed at the state's expense.

An attempt of "wet" forces to refer the resolutions to the senate's printing committee was defeated by a vote of 20 to 11. The 11 "wets" were Senators Anderson, Brogan, Casey, Cook, Edler, Ford, Gardner, Kinney, Taylor, Warner and Wiget.

Senator Greene of Kansas City voted with the "dry." One-third of the printed copies will be in German. This is the first victory the "drys" have won in the senate this session and reverses other votes which caused the belief the "wets" had weakened.

### INDIANA GOES DRY

Shelbyville, Ind., Feb. 4, 1917.—The Commoner, Lincoln, Neb.: Hurrah for Bryan! After his speech before our state legislature, Indiana went dry almost before he had time to reach home. I feel that I want to congratulate him on his marvelous success in this great cause of morality. Yours very truly, J. R. Kennerly.