

Majority Should Govern Senate Action

[Following is a special article sent by Mr. Bryan from Miami, Fla., March 8, to the United Press Associations, New York.]

Answering your inquiry, I beg to call attention to the fact that there are two questions instead of one. The first involves the filibuster and the second the merits of the proposed legislation.

I am against filibustering and have for several years been advocating a cloture rule in the senate. I believe in the right of the majority to rule and am sorry to learn from this morning's dispatches that the senate is inclined to require a two-thirds vote for the closing of debate. A MAJORITY vote ought to be sufficient, after each senator has been given reasonable opportunity to express his views. To require a two-thirds vote is to give to the predatory interests the same power that they now have to prevent legislation hostile to their privileges.

As long as the rules permit a minority to obstruct legislation, we may expect them to be employed to prevent progressive legislation, just as they were employed two years ago to enable the shipping trust to defeat the President's shipping bill.

Whether the senators should use the rules to defeat a proposed measure is a matter entirely in the discretion of the senators, who are responsible to their constituents alone, just as the President is responsible to the general public only when he uses his veto to defeat a measure favored by a majority of the senate and house. So far as I have seen expressions from the senators, nearly all of those who voted against authorizing the arming of ships, did so for the purpose of compelling an extra session of congress, or because they objected to the phraseology of the bill. Since the President has power to call a special session of congress AT ANY TIME, and ask for anything he desires, the jingo press will find it difficult to convince the public that there is anything treasonable in the desire to have congress in session. Even the most warlike of the newspapers will hardly insist upon the abolition of congress NOW, whatever they might have the boldness to advocate in time of war.

The second question relates to the merits of the bill. So far as I am able to judge, the objections urged were not to giving authority to the President, but related to the language to be employed. And, surely, if congressional authority is needed the members of congress can not fairly be denied discretion as to the language to be employed. Everyone recognizes that the giving of authority involves serious risks. The public has such complete confidence in the President that congress would not hesitate to confer upon him any power that HE COULD HIMSELF USE, but the President can not ride on the ships, himself, or handle the guns. He can not even direct the man who pulls the trigger. The expert gunner will be some three thousand miles from Washington when he carries out the authority conferred. He will not only have the expert's desire to test his skill, but he will be under the immediate direction of a ship owner who may have a large pecuniary interest in landing a contraband cargo.

The President has not asked congress to surrender to him authority to declare war; is it strange that congress should hesitate to put an expert gunner in a position where, by his mistake, or, by a mistake of an interested ship owner, he may commit an act of war?

The senate and house did not agree as to the phraseology of the proposed bill. The senate wanted to include "other instrumentalities" which the house thought too vague a description of the power to be conferred. The house excepted from INSURANCE merchantmen carrying arms and ammunition, and a minority of the house committee favored inserting this exception in the paragraph authorizing the ARMING of ships.

I am heartily in sympathy with the house in withholding insurance from ships carrying arms and ammunition, and am also in sympathy

with the minority of the committee in the belief that the exception should be extended to the arming of ships as well. The bill in both senate and house provided for protection of Americans only when they were LAWFULLY on ships, and it is for congress to say what is LAWFUL. In my opinion, a law should be enacted withholding clearance from any belligerent ships carrying American passengers to Europe. The American papers of the twenty-fourth of last month contained the following dispatch from Halifax, Nova Scotia:

"OCEAN BARRED TO WOMEN"

"Halifax, N. S. Feb. 23rd. — A number of women and children, who arrived here last night on a steamship from the United States for Europe, were taken off today by government authorities under a regulation which provides that women and children may not sail from a British port for England at present.

"Three American women aboard the liner, which arrived in port last night, were permitted to continue on the voyage. Clearance papers were refused until twenty-five Canadian women and children had been removed. They were taken ashore in tugs."

If Great Britain will not allow British women and children to sail on a British ship bound for England, why should the United States allow American women and children, or even American men, to sail on any belligerent ships going into the danger zone?

It will be noticed that the Halifax dispatch says that "THREE AMERICAN WOMEN were allowed to proceed." Of course, the British officials had no authority to remove American women, but why should the United States allow the owner of a belligerent ship to safeguard a contraband cargo with American women and children, or even with American men? And why should our government permit the United States to be drawn into this war by the folly of any American citizen who so disregards his country's welfare as to desire to travel upon a belligerent ship, whether for pleasure or for profit?

W. J. BRYAN.

THE SENTIMENT AGAINST WAR

Miss Jane Addams,
Hull House, Chicago, Ill.

I am in hearty sympathy with you in your effort to give to the almost universal sentiment against war an opportunity to express itself. We shall support the government in the event of war, but as friends of peace, we are in duty bound to do all in our power to save our country from war's horrors.

The President, senators and representatives desire to carry out the wishes of the people, but they can not know what the masses want, unless citizens everywhere express themselves in telegrams and letters. This is the only way in which to overcome the misrepresentations of the jingo portion of the metropolitan press, which, while denouncing all pacifists as unpatriotic, daily distort the news and demand war.

There are several alternatives which are preferable to war and these should be considered by congress before declaring war. The submission of the question of war to popular vote by means of the referendum, except in case of actual invasion, is the best way to defeat the war traffickers and the "worshippers of the scimitar." The people who must share the sufferings and sacrifices, if war comes, should be consulted as to whether war is necessary. The militarists are for universal training and service, and yet they vigorously oppose a referendum which would allow these very people a voice in deciding when the nation should resort to the sword. Urge all to communicate with officials directly and at once.

W. J. BRYAN.

There is not a particle of difference between the "honor" that led men to face one another on the duelling field and the "honor" that the militarists assert is sullied when this nation refuses to resent an unintentional blow. Even the duello demanded that no hostilities followed an offer to apologize.

It may be stated, in all fairness, that Colonel Roosevelt has abandoned all claim upon the Nobel peace prize for the current year.

"Standing by the President"

The Washington Times of Wednesday, February 28th, gives its readers a splendid illustration of the hypocrisy of the jingo papers. These papers, the Times being one of the ultra-ones, question the patriotism of any one who raises his voice in behalf of peace, or who even expresses a hope that war may be avoided. In its issue of February 28th, the Times gives more than a half column to a rabid denunciation of Mr. Bryan, for "rushing north from Florida to Washington to save the country yet again." No epithet is too severe in its denunciation of Mr. Bryan for alleged "Opposition of Mr. Bryan to the President at this juncture," and yet at the very head of the first column is the following double-headed editorial:

"MENTAL STRABISMUS"

"The President has said that he was waiting for an 'overt act' before taking the final step that should make us at war with Germany. Yesterday he was quoted as saying that while he could not define an overt act yet he and everyone else would know it when they saw it.

"If the sinking of the Laconia was not an overt act, if we have not been sufficiently offended to take that last, long delayed step which all have postponed in the hope of returning German sanity, then we are all suffering from mental strabismus and none so severely afflicted as the President himself."

It will be seen that the Times not only criticises the President for being unable to define an overt act, but accuses him of being afflicted with "mental strabismus," because he does not see in the sinking of the Laconia a cause for war.

Has Mr. Munsey, the owner of the Times, any FINANCIAL interests that would be enhanced by war? He is a man of large means, has he any investments in the corporations that profit by war—in any steel companies, for instance? Or is it simply blood-thirstiness due to a depraved nature?

Standing at the door of the White house, this journalistic follower of the war-like Roosevelt, waves his barbarian club over the President, day after day, and threatens him with an editorial beating, if he does not plunge the country into war, make widows of American wives and orphans of American children.

A man who denounces as COWARDLY all who argue in favor of peace ought to have the courage to state to his readers whether, in advocating war, he is influenced by the sordid hope of financial profit, or is simply giving expression to his brute instincts.

W. J. BRYAN.

THE REAL MOTIVE

On another page will be found an extract from a speech delivered by Colonel Harvey at a dinner in Washington. It will be seen that he is in favor of getting into this war. The REAL motive back of most of the jingo crusade for big armies and navies is not to prevent war, but to bring on war. The Colonel says, "And glory openly and proudly in the present prospect of conflict which so many hold calamitous."

Colonel Harvey renders the general public a service in uncovering the motive which so many friends of war have been careful to conceal.

A DAY OF PRAYER

Mr. John A. Sleicher, Leslies,
225 5th Ave., New York.

My Dear Mr. Sleicher:

Your favor of January 6th at hand. I am heartily in sympathy with your plan to have the end of the war celebrated by a day of prayer in the churches. The conclusion of peace would certainly be a cause for thanksgiving.

I would go even farther—why not have a day of prayer with all Christians uniting in a petition for peace? If Christianity is what we believe it to be, Christians ought to have an influence in bringing peace, and not wait until peace has been brought by other means before acting.

Very truly yours,

W. J. BRYAN.