

President Wilson on "Preparedness"

In speaking to the Naval Advisory board at the White house on October 6, the President said, "I think the whole nation is convinced that we ought to be prepared, not for war, but for defense, and very adequately prepared." This is the keynote of the President's position. He is trying to carry out the wishes of the people as he understands those wishes, and he has been convinced by the information which he has received that the people desire to be very "adequately prepared." The real question, however, is not what the President THINKS the people want, but WHAT THE PEOPLE ACTUALLY WANT. This is a government which derives its just powers from the consent of the governed, and the democratic idea of representative government is not that the representatives shall think for the people, but that the people shall think for themselves, and then speak their minds through their representatives. No official who understands the genius of our institutions would for a moment think of putting his judgment against the KNOWN judgment of the people—and no one would be less likely to be guilty of such an abuse of power than President Wilson.

The President has given expression to his understanding of the people's wishes and it remains to be seen whether he has correctly interpreted the wishes of the people, or is mistaken in this respect. If he finds that he is mistaken, he will still be anxious to carry out their wishes, no matter what diminution in the programme of preparedness is required to conform to the wishes of the people.

Our government is not a one man government; the constitution carefully divides official responsibility. In the matter of appropriations the presumption lies with the house of representatives; it is most immediately responsible to the people because its representatives are most recently from the people. We elect our members of congress for two years while we elect the President for four years and senators for six years. The presumption in favor of the house is well founded; its members come from all parts of their respective states and because each representative speaks for a small number, and is more recently chosen, it is reasonable to suppose that he knows the wishes of his constituents and is responsive to them.

The President can recommend a policy and he can sign a bill when it reaches him, but that is all that he has the constitutional authority to do. He can not coerce congress into accepting his views, and no democratic president would desire to do so, no matter how thoroughly convinced he was that he knew the amount the people desired to spend for preparedness. The President must necessarily bow to the will of congress, and the president who now occupies the White house will do so not merely from necessity, but with entire willingness.

The thing to do, therefore, is to secure as correct an expression of the public will as is possible, remembering that the PUBLIC includes ALL OF THE VOTERS, not merely a FEW. The preparers of preparedness and the manufacturers of munitions are tied up with the big financiers and this group controls a large number of metropolitan papers. These papers will, of course, shout for preparedness as they have shouted for everything else that the plunderbund desired, and those who have no other means of reading the public mind except as they read the editorials of these metropolitan papers, may easily be deceived as to public opinion. It must be remembered that the editor of a paper speaks for no one except the owner, and he may speak for no one except the financial magnate who carries his loans; and the financial magnate may be nothing but the spokesman of an interested group of men who are as expert in the manufacturing of explosive patriotism as they are in the manufacturing of other explosives.

It is the duty of the rank and file of the people to make their will known to their members of congress, their senators and their President,

in order that the decision, when made, may represent the real sentiment of the country and thus become a permanent policy.

REMEMBER THAT WE ARE NOW SPENDING TWO HUNDRED AND FIFTY MILLIONS A YEAR GETTING READY FOR WAR—TEN TIMES AS MUCH AS WE SPEND ON THE AGRICULTURAL DEPARTMENT

W. J. BRYAN.

CHOOSE YE THIS DAY

The issue between the jingoes and the opponents of frenzied preparedness is one upon which the peace of the country may hang and, therefore, an issue upon which the permanent success of the party may depend. If the country decides to reverse its policy, confess its error and imitate the European nations in a course which necessarily includes the setting up of false standards of honor, the inspiring of a military spirit and the cultivation of international hatreds—if this is the decision of the country, the democratic party might as well retire from business and turn the government over to the republicans, because that is the only party which can be relied upon to favor the expenditures necessary for such a policy, and to acquiesce in the overthrow of the ideals to which our government has been wedded by tradition and history. It has so long been the servile tool of predatory wealth that it has not the moral strength that the democratic party has to resist the new propaganda which the representatives of special privilege are conducting.

The democratic party is the representative of the common people and it can not desert them without forfeiting its reasons for existence. The common people, so the Bible assures us, heard Christ gladly when he was preaching his gospel of "peace on earth, good will toward men." Only the common people today can be relied upon to hear gladly those who preach this doctrine. The common people will protest against the adoption of a swaggering, bullying policy that speaks through threats and relies for security upon the fear which it can incite.

"Choose ye this day whom ye will serve"—the God of War or the Prince of Peace.

W. J. BRYAN.

NOT "EVERYWHERE"

"Force everywhere speaks out with a loud and imperious voice in a titanic struggle of governments," the President says, in his Manhattan club speech; but the conclusion which he draws is not the conclusion which our people have reached or will reach. Instead of being infected by force they are the more determined that this nation shall be saved from the horrors of a system which rejects love and brotherhood as weakness, and puts its faith in violence. Not "everywhere"—at least, not here.

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UNDERMINED CIVILIZATION

One of the traveling organizers of the National Security league, speaking in Memphis, recently said "Bryan, Carnegie and Ford are doing more to undermine American civilization than all other agencies." If you want to know what kind of country we will have if the friends of preparedness take charge of our government, just imagine the criminal laws that will be necessary to keep advocates of peace from "undermining American civilization" by preaching Christianity.

It is the manufacturers of munitions who get the pay out of patriotism and the swag out of swagger.

THE MEASURE OF DUTY

To Students:

The student should ever keep in mind the Bible measure of duty—much is required of those to whom much is given. The purpose of a college course is to enlarge one's capacity for labor, and when that purpose is accomplished and the graduate goes forth, equipped for large tasks, he can offer no excuse if he fails to come up to the requirements of his generation. Just now the civic demands upon a man are greater than ever before, and the college-bred man, instead of attempting to ride upon the backs of others, should, out of gratitude for what he has received, take his place in the ranks and, inspired by a sense of kinship with the masses, put his broader shoulders under heavier loads. By giving largely he will acquire the right to enjoy largely and learn that happiness, like greatness, is measured by service.

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The New Cherubim

Two new cherubim have appeared to guard the democratic Ark of the Covenant. They are John R. McLean, owner of the Washington Post, and William Randolph Hearst, proprietor of the Hearst papers. They are not new to politics, but they have taken upon themselves a new role which justifies a word of comment.

If the readers of The Commoner will consult that portion of the Bible which gives a minute description of the golden cherubim—made of beaten work—spreading their golden wings over the golden mercy seat, just above the Ark of the Covenant, they will be able to picture the democratic ark as it now is with these self-appointed guardians protecting its holy treasures. They are for preparedness with a big "P"; they want to get ready in italics. They are horrified that anyone, especially Mr. Bryan, should venture to express an opinion adverse to the plan outlined by the President at the Manhattan club. They are so conscious of their own disinterestedness that they can not help suspecting the motives of those who differ from them on this question—so vital to the welfare of the nation, and therefore so vital to the future of the democratic party.

Mr. McLean's paper, the Washington Post, in its issue of November 6th, says:

"The division in the republican party having been mended, Mr. Bryan promptly does his best to divide the democratic party.

"Evidently Mr. Bryan does not want to see a democrat in the White house.

"Why does Mr. Bryan make haste to create a split in the democratic party if he is not trying to smash it? Why did he have to attack President Wilson on the national defense question? Does not friendship count for anything? Doesn't gratitude count? Does party loyalty mean nothing to him?"

Mr. Hearst's paper, the New York American, on the same date says:

"Mr. Wilson has finally announced that he favors proper preparation for national defense.

"Mr. Wilson's words were hardly out of his mouth when Mr. Bryan was in print with opposing declamation. We say declamation advisedly, because Mr. Bryan does not argue. He declaims.

"Upon all questions Mr. Bryan is a fanatic. He always goes to extremes. In his peace propaganda he goes to even more unreasonable extremes than he usually goes.

"The American believes Mr. Bryan to be a real danger to the country. He is a wholly impracticable man, an unbalanced man, but a plausible man. Because he is a plausible man, he is apt to influence an element of the people that is swayed by plausible words, and that does not do much independent thinking of its own. In this matter of opposition to President Wilson over the question of preparedness for war, Mr. Bryan's sincerity is open to suspicion."

What tender solicitude they manifest for the party—and what an affectionate interest in the President!

Mr. Bryan is willing to have his record as a democrat compared with the records of Mr. McLean and Mr. Hearst, and he is also willing to have his record as a friend of the President compared with the records made by both Mr. McLean and Mr. Hearst.

The responsibility of a citizen is measured by his opportunity. If Mr. McLean feels that it is his duty to speak for the readers of the Post, and if Mr. Hearst feels it his duty to speak for the readers of his paper, will they deny Mr. Bryan's responsibility to his readers and to the considerable number of democrats who have three times supported him for the presidency? Have they not given every possible proof of their confidence? If these distinguished journalists do not recognize Mr. Bryan's obligation to his readers, his friends, and to the country that has honored him, Mr. Bryan does recognize the obligation and will live up to it. He will in the future as in the past prove his loyalty to his country, his devotion to his party and his support of those who represent the party's ideals and its interests.

The President has asked that the issue be considered as non-partisan, and the President is too good a democrat to make a non-partisan issue a party test.

W. J. BRYAN.