

Paying the Costs of "Preparedness"

[Address by Arthur L. Weatherly, Lincoln, Nebr., at the Des Moines mass meeting of the Anti-Preparedness committee, April 12, 1916.]

Two very important questions in the matter of preparedness are, who are to pay the bills, and what are their means of paying.

If we are to spend 500 millions of dollars in addition to what we are now spending, "as a beginning," as some of the advocates of the increase of our army and navy propose, it is well to consider who is going to produce this wealth which in a few short years will be cast into the scrap heap.

The only revenue of the government is the proceeds of taxation. Who pays the taxes? The consumer. The plain, average man. Who pays the taxes on your stores, your business enterprises, your factories, your railroads? The people who use these tools of civilization. The people who toil in shop and factory.

It has been estimated that seventy per cent of the taxes are paid by people who receive less than \$500 per year. Congress placed a tax of one cent on long distance telephone messages costing twenty-five cents or more. Does the telephone company pay this tax? No! You put your penny in the box before you get your connection. Congress places a tax on commercial paper. Go to the bank and borrow some money, and you will find that you pay that tax. The taxes assessed against every business house in your city are a charge upon the business just as clerk hire and insurance. You, the consumer pay the bills.

The tax on sugar, which is the common man's luxury, is paid by the user; a hundred millions a year from sugar is a hundred millions largely from the pockets of the poor.

PEOPLE WOULD BEAR THE BURDEN

Five hundred millions "as a beginning" is \$25 additional tax on every family in the land. Now what have we, the people, to pay with? No man is going to rush into an enormous expenditure of money, unless he is convinced of the need, and has the means to pay. President Wilson assures us that we have no enemies; that there is no immediate danger confronting our beloved country. That, at least, ought to make us pause in a mad rush for armaments. It is easy to spend the other fellow's money. But this is our money that it is proposed to spend. Let us see what we have to pay with. Some years ago Dr. Charles Spahr showed that one-half of our people have no wealth. Thousands on thousands of our children go to school hungry and poorly clothed. Great masses live in brutalizing poverty in our great cities.

Three-fourths of all the adult men workers and nineteen-twentieths of the woman workers in the industrial sections of the United States earn less than \$600 per year.

One-half of our men workers get less than five hundred dollars a year. Forty per cent earn from \$600 to \$1000 per year.

In the great cotton industry fifty-nine per cent of the men employed get less than \$459. At South Bethlehem 45.9 per cent earn about \$579 per year.

It has been estimated by a government commission that for food, clothing, fuel, rent, light, and a few extras for a family of five, it costs a man in a New England city \$731.90.

Professor Nearing says that a fair standard, and this is hardly more than keeping body and soul together, requires in the southern states \$650, and in the northern states \$750 a year.

Every penny that goes into battleships must come out of the earnings of the toilers in shop and factory, on farm and in store.

It means not only an increased taxation paid by our indirect process but also an increased cost of living caused by the withdrawal of labor from productive industry. It means placing a two-fold burden on the bent backs of the poor. Now a large portion of American men are not paid enough to support their families. They require the aid of children taken from the schools, of mothers robbed of the right to give their lives and strength to their children. Place this additional burden on the backs of the American people and you continue in larger measure this home-destroying, soul-wrecking process. And these are the ones whom certain gentlemen, in great glee, propose to ask to pay

for the enormous preparation for the enemy that is not in sight. These underfed and overworked men and women who live in disease-ridden tenements, who toil in life-destroying mines, who all day long weave our garments in factories; these, who do not earn enough to maintain even a minimum standard of living, these are the ones who are asked to pay the bills.

We are now spending for preparation for war and past wars seventy per cent of our national income. This is approximately seven dollars per capita, or thirty-five dollars for every family of five each year. We have spent in ten years about two and one-half billion dollars, which is \$125 for each family. And then we are told we have not anything to show for it. The increase demanded would make an amount more than our present total national income. A little development of efficiency would be a good plan before turning over to the same agencies anything more to spend.

Those who are struggling to maintain their families, who barely live from day to day, who risk life and limb as a matter of course every day (we have 500,000 industrial accidents each year) are near the limit of endurance now. To add unnecessarily to their burden is a crime against individuals and the nation. Rather than rush into new expenditure would it not be more wise and more just to insist that before an additional penny is appropriated for military purposes that the waste due to political log rolling and mismanagement be eliminated? Political navy yards and pork barrel army posts might go first as a pledge for future economy. We can, if we wish, increase our army and navy without increasing appropriations. But this would not satisfy the armament makers.

But why this haste? No enemy in sight; the nations of Europe bleeding themselves white; the people of the world sicker of war than they ever were in their lives; the lessons of the war not yet learned! All ships built now will be in the scrap heap before any European nation can recover its breath. Why, I say, this haste. Why this desperate effort to stampede the country? What danger confronts us that did not exist two years ago? If a group of men came to you today, urged, argued, and pled with you to invest twenty-thousand dollars and do it before night, you would, if not carried off your feet, want to go slow, very slow. Especially if you had been pouring your savings into the enterprise for thirty years and were assured by its officers that it was a failure. But if you got the notion after some hours of conference with your advisors, that some of them would get a good fat commission out of your investment, would you not want to go slow more than ever. You would say "Gentlemen, I guess I'll sleep on this matter."

We are being stampeded, or rather, men are feverishly at work spending untold sums in trying to stampede us. What possible harm can come from delay. Put the whole matter over to the next congress and we will not be in any greater danger. Surely no European country will be ready for another war for a generation at least. On the basis even of a reasonable and adequate preparedness all the facts urge us not to be stampeded, but to go slow—to wait.

I know it has been said in congress that we need a great army and navy to enforce demands for indemnities at the close of this war. That is to say, that we will go to war for money. It is a horrible proposition, indeed, it is almost unthinkable, that a member of the congress of the United States would propose that we should go to war for mere money. That boys in the strength of their young manhood should be torn from their mothers, fathers from wives and children, lovers from sweethearts in order to collect a money claim. It is monstrous that in a civilized country that such a barbarous proposition should be made. The nations have arbitrated scores on scores of such claims, and no nations have ever refused to recognize the findings of a board of arbitration. No! We are not going to war in this day for money. We have not yet gone back to savagery.

AMERICA'S OPPORTUNITY

This question I do not want to put on this ground alone. There is a much higher ground than this, adequate as it is.

The nations of the world await the moral

leadership of America. Never in history has so magnificent, so splendid an opportunity been afforded any nation. Not with the mailed fist, but with power of America's ideals we will lead the world. Let us heed the appeal that comes to us from battle scarred Europe.

From over the sea comes the dirge of war. In it we hear the cries of children, the moaning of mothers, the shrieks of wounded, the voices of those pleading for help, for comfort, for assurances for the future. It is the cry of suffering, bleeding, heart-broken humanity caught in the grip of the jaws of that terrible monster, Militarism. Humanity cries to us for leadership in the reorganization of the world. It pleads with us to be true to the great principles of democracy—of brotherhood; to grasp the opportunity that is laid before us. We, the greatest of the neutrals, we, the inheritors of the principles of democracy and brotherhood, for which countless men have died in the past on the scaffold, at the stake and on the field of battle; we are implored not to lead the world into another cataclysm, not to prepare for another slaughtering of the innocents. We are besought by the souls of men lying in heaps in unknown graves, by the agony of mothers, by the little children with soulless eyes, dying of hunger, — to lead the world in organization for peace.

To this is added the appeal of the little nations, that have made such splendid contributions to civilization. They have no rest from fear, indeed, no assuring hope for their future if the great nations are to continue their mad race for military supremacy. What a bitter comment on our boasted democracy if we fail to respond to their need; if we start the world anew in a course which inevitably leads to catastrophe. They ask for bread; shall we give them a stone?

This opportunity is the opportunity of the ages. The old world is sick unto death of war. The mothers of the world want no more war. The fathers want no more war. Young men want a chance to live the lives God gave them. Young women do not want to rear, as their mothers have done, sons to be cannon fodder. Only those away from the "far flung battle line" prate about the glories of war. Those who see men in the strength of their youth torn to fragments, want peace.

But preparation for war means a denial of our opportunity. It is putting our energy, our thought, our wills, to a method that always has and always will lead to war. It is a denial of God, of brotherhood, and of humanity.

NO ENEMY TO BE FEARED

We have no foe to fear. There is no enemy at our shores. We never will secure the consent of the people to a program of preparedness unless we first convince them that there is an enemy to be feared. This was the method that secured the consent of the peoples of the nations of Europe to the large appropriations for defense that led directly to this war. We must have an enemy. We must teach two generations of children to hate that enemy. Yes, rear our children in an atmosphere of hate before the plans of the militarists and jingoes can be fulfilled. Hate, hate, hate, is necessary to all this miserable business,—hate fed on fear. And if there is no one to be hated some one must be conjured up to fill this role. Once it was Japan. Now it is Germany; Germany torn and bleeding, Germany weakened by this awful conflict, is to be our enemy.

And yet there are men of German ancestry in this audience who are willing to solemnly stand here and offer themselves as hostages, with the condition that their lives be forfeited if Germany ever makes an aggressive war against us. I do not say that such a war is impossible, but I say it is so remote that men are willing to seriously make such an offer.

Those who would use our army and navy to exploit weaker nations, who want to carry hate at the point of the bayonet, who have not learned that we live in an international age, are willing to conjure up any enemy, to develop any hate that they may secure their ends. What patriotism is this? It is a traitorous and false patriotism. It is a denial of every principle of civilization and democracy.

It is time for the plain, common people, "Whom," Lincoln said, "God loved because he made so many of them," to rise in their might and power and say in no uncertain tones that