

The Commoner

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Democrats Share the Glory

In another editorial reference is made to the fact that the progress now being made toward disarmament was impossible two years ago. Democrats can make this explanation when Republicans claim entire credit for what is being done at the Arms Conference. So far as record shows the Democrats have favored every peace movement more than the Republicans. It was the Republican leaders who two years ago attempted to fasten universal compulsory training upon the country. They were defeated by the Democrats in Senate and House, who, as in the case of the Revenue bill, secured enough Republicans to save the country from an annual expense estimated at seven hundred million dollars. It was less than two years ago that Senator Wadsworth of New York reported such a bill and the friends of the measure did not confess final defeat; they simply postponed the question until after the election.

It was the practically solid Democratic opposition that secured enough Republicans in Senate and House to reduce the army and navy appropriations last year—both were reduced below what the war and navy departments asked.

A practically solid Democratic support of the Borah resolution in both Senate and House made it possible to secure its passage—enough Republicans joined the Democrats to defeat the army and navy influence that tried to block its passage. The vote for the resolution stood 74-0 in the Senate and 303-4 in the House but that was only after the opposition recognized its helplessness.

The Democrats ought not to attempt to deny the administration the credit for what it has done but the Democrats have a right to insist upon an equal share in whatever glory the conference may bring to the nation. The Paris conference did all that could be done at that time; it was impossible to do then as much as can be done now in the direction of disarmament. The Democrats have been in advance of Republicans in the effort to reduce the burdens of war. It will be popular now to applaud every step toward progressive disarmament but if the Republicans attempt to claim an unfair share of the honor it will be easy to confuse them by recalling their clamorous demands for bigger ships and bigger armies. Let's call it even and forgetting the past, join together in urging the largest possible progress toward disarmament on land and sea. When armies are reduced to police force size and the burdens of navalism and militarism disappear there will be joy enough to satisfy all and credit enough to go all the way around.

W. J. BRYAN.

IMPRISONMENT AT LAST

The opponents of the trust have reason to rejoice. The Anti-Trust Law has been upon the statute books for more than thirty years and the first violator of the law to be sent to prison



is just beginning to serve his sentence. Some tile men in N. Y. were found guilty of conspiracy under the anti-trust law and received a prison sentence instead of a fine. It has been customary to FINE violators of the anti-trust law—a penalty entirely inadequate because a fine never approaches the amount that the corporation had made by violating the law. It marks a long step in advance when the penalty is fastened on the individual in the form of a prison sentence instead of being spread over the earnings of a corporation.

The world moves. It used to be regarded as quite demagogic for anyone to advocate the sending of such respectable criminals to the penitentiary or to jail. It will add to the respect for law to abandon the discrimination that has so long been made between small crimes and great crimes. Petty larceny is always punished, grand larceny often punished; but glorious larceny has usually escaped. The country is to be congratulated if these prison sentences indicate a new era in the administration of justice.

W. J. BRYAN.

IRISH REPUBLIC IN SIGHT

If, as now seems probable, the British government has reached an agreement with the people of Ireland by which there is to be an Irish republic it will be a cause of rejoicing all over the world. Ulster is left out—necessarily so. Ulster is not willing to go in, and Ulster included against her will would give to the Irish republic a problem even more difficult than that which has disturbed Great Britain while it included an unwilling Ireland. The doctrine of self-determination is the basis of Ireland's triumph and it will be the basis of other triumphs because it is right. Self determination is also the basis of Ulster's exclusion and the lesson taught by the seeming settlement of that centuries long dispute will be an encouragement to people everywhere who are held as subjects against their will.

The world may yet become safe for democracy.

W. J. BRYAN.

The Democrats in Control

A very remarkable thing took place in the House on November 17th—it is doubtful whether a precedent can be found in recent years in the Republican party. The Democrats secured the votes of 93 progressive Republicans in the House and actually defeated the Republican leaders on the Revenue bill, in spite of the fact that the leaders were reinforced by a letter from President Harding. That the readers may understand the situation, it may be well to trace the progress of the Revenue bill.

First, as reported to the House by the Ways and Means Committee it contained a provision (among other bad provisions that need not be mentioned here) which reduced the maximum income tax from 65 per cent to 32 per cent, and making the provision RETROACTIVE, so that it would apply to this year in spite of the fact that the year is nearly gone. The number of persons benefited was something less than FIVE THOUSAND—they were the men with incomes ranging from about \$70,000 up. This small group would have been relieved of a tax estimated at NINETY MILLIONS. This was so objectionable that a Republican caucus struck out the retroactive clause and thus saved the treasury the ninety millions for this year.

When the bill went over to the Senate the Democrats, although numbering but a little more than one-third, secured enough progressive Republicans to force the rates up to a maximum of 50 per cent. The Republican leaders in the Senate had to agree to this because the agricultural bloc could furnish the Democrats enough votes to defeat the bill unless the change was made. It is needless to say that the progressive Republicans of the Senate were considerably outnumbered in their own party and could have done nothing without the Democratic vote.

When the bill came back from the Senate the conference committee agreed upon a maximum of 40 per cent—nearly midway between the 50 per cent of the Senate and the 32 per cent of the House. The President wrote a letter urging the acceptance of the compromise of 40 per cent, saying at the same time that he personally favored the 32 per cent fixed by the House, and giving his reasons therefore. In spite of the President's letter and the influence of the leaders, 93 Republicans, more than one-third of the party, joined with 106 Democrats and defeated the proposition. They fixed the rate at 50 per cent as asked by the Senate. It is a very extraordinary situation when a party revenue measure is so bad that a Republican caucus refuses to accept it and when enough Republicans join with the Democrats in both Houses to restore rates on big incomes in spite of the efforts of the Republicans to reduce these rates.

There must be a reason for this revolt, what is it? The reason is that there was no excuse for the position taken by the Republican lead-