

The Commoner

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Time for Enforcement in Earnest

The right of the United States to fix the terms and conditions upon which foreign ships can enter our harbors can hardly be disputed, unless a nation loses its sovereignty when it goes dry. After a struggle of nearly fifty years the nation, in obedience to an aroused conscience, prohibited the manufacture and sale of intoxicating liquors as a beverage. This law extended not only to the land of the United States but to American ships. The United States has a right to protect its homes from the invasion of alcohol as much as it had the right to exclude the slave trade and to outlaw piracy. No nation would have attempted to force slave trade upon the United States after it was abolished, and our nation would not have permitted it if the attempt had been made. It is hardly likely that a slave ship sailing under another flag would have been permitted to come in and out of our ports with slaves aboard, even though the ship masters were to agree that the slaves would not be compelled to work while within the three mile limit. Neither would pirates have been permitted to come within or enter our harbors, however solemnly they might have promised to refrain from piracy while under jurisdiction. There is no more reason why we should be timid about the enforcement of our Constitution and our laws on the liquor traffic against nations that openly use their flags for the protection of the liquor traffic and for the forcing of liquor upon the country.

No nation that will permit its flag to protect a rum runner lying just outside the three mile limit and plying its trade in an outlaw business can be trusted to compel ships entering our harbors to obey our laws while within our jurisdiction.

Prohibition is of no value unless it is enforced. If we are going to enforce prohibition we might just as well take up the work courageously and we will do it whenever those in authority shall resolve that the law is to be enforced, both as against those who hover about the three mile limit and those who bring their store of liquor into our harbors. What reliance can be placed upon any nation that puts her interest in the liquor traffic above her respect for the laws of a friendly nation? Would a foreign ship owner be allowed to throw up an island at some shallow spot just outside the three mile limit and open a bar there? If not, why allow him to anchor his ship there and run his bar on a floating island? The three mile limit was intended for the protection of legitimate trade, not for the protection of criminals. It is worse than mockery for the authorities to remain inactive while this open defiance goes on every day just outside the three mile limit.

Suppose our nation prohibited the sale and carrying of fire arms under the American flag.

Would the makers of Europe be permitted to open up gun shops along our coast and sell to smugglers? Alcohol is more of a menace than a pistol or gun in the hands of a sober man. The latter is not so much of a menace to peace and order as alcohol that converts a sober man into a madman.

It is time to quit looking for objections and begin the enforcement of the law in earnest.

W. J. BRYAN.

Can France Do It?

The issue between France and Germany is not a question of law but a much larger question. The treaty did not attempt to estimate the money value of the damage done by Germany. What sum of money would equal the value of the damage done by Germany? What sum of money would have measured the value of the ten millions of lives lost, of the three hundred billions worth of property destroyed, and of the burden of the new debts added—more than five times the amount of the debts existing when the first gun was fired? The treaty only attempted to estimate the amount Germany could pay. Some think the sum demanded excessive, but that is not the most important question. France says Germany has defaulted in her payments and Germany denies it. Great Britain refuses to express an opinion. This raises a question as to the validity of France's claim, and the question is accentuated by the fact that France, according to Lloyd George, desires to control if not to annex the territory which she has invaded.

But the validity of France's act is not the most important question. The real question is whether France is able to carry out her program. She does not seem disposed to consult either the opinion or the interests of the United States and Great Britain, allies without whose aid she would have been annihilated. Having been saved from subjugation, if not from destruction, is she not strong enough to conquer Germany and control her people; not today, but permanently? If so, it may be useless for other nations to advise. She may be strong enough to succeed to Germany's place as the exponent of the doctrine that might makes right. But suppose she fails, who will save her from the wrath she is arousing?

France is gambling, with her life as the stake. The peace of the world may be too trifling a matter for her to consider, but she is jeopardizing her very existence. Unless she is able to exterminate the Germans, or to hold them in permanent subjection, she will have to live by them and have them for neighbors or for masters. Friendship is the only alternative to force; it would seem better to employ it. Universal and perpetual peace will come some day, peace resting upon co-operation. France might hasten it by trying it or she may hasten it by proving the folly of force.

W. J. BRYAN.

The Campaign of 1924

The Republican reverses of last November leave the Republican nomination to the President—no one else cares to offer himself for sacrifice. If the Republicans had held their own, a number of aspirants would be in the field by this time, but the situation is too dismal to appeal to the ambitious.

Among the Democrats the bees are buzzing—so many of them that it is difficult to distinguish one above the chorus. It is a good sign when candidates are numerous. As time goes on relative availability will be weighed and sentiment will be crystallized. The new governors are making their records—these will soon be ready for examination. The governorship has been a favorite route to the Presidency—who knows but some governor may be even now on the way to a place in the sun? While it is impossible yet to tell what the candidates will be expected to stand for, it is easy enough to name certain things that he must stand AGAINST.

First: NO WALL STREET CANDIDATE NEED APPLY FOR THE DEMOCRATIC NOMINATION; it would be impossible for the Democrats to drive a wedge between the Republican party and Wall street. The only votes for which a Democratic candidate can hope will be anti-Wall street votes.

Second: He must also stand against the liquor traffic. No friend of the bootlegger will be considered. The Democratic party will stand for law enforcement and law enforcement will be defined as enforcement of ALL laws, including the prohibition law. The failure of the Republican administration to deal effectively with the smugglers who ply their trade under the protection of foreign flags just outside the three mile limit will present one of the issues of the next campaign.

The anti-Wall street plank will bring together the producing masses of farm and of factory and the law enforcement plank will invite the friends of law and order and those devoted to the public welfare.

Conditions in Europe will determine to what extent international questions will be an issue, but no international questions can divert attention from the economic injustice from which the masses suffer or lessen the interest of the public in the upholding of our Constitution and our laws.

W. J. BRYAN.

REPUBLICAN "PROSPERITY"

The Republican papers talk of revived business. The high prices charged by the middlemen may make seeming prosperity among them but nothing can bring prosperity to the farmers except the raising of his selling level to his buying level or the lowering of his buying level to his selling level.