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National Referendum Military Preparedness

The Proposal that Congress at the Present Session Shall Authorize a Test Vote on This Issue at the Polls Next November

(From Equity)

President Wilson evidently believes that the majority opinion of the American people will now support the proposal of a half-billion-dollar program of increase for army and navy establishment. Elsewhere would never have presented this recommendation to Congress which he did in his address of December 7.

It is over a year since the members of this Congress were elected and more than a year and a half since they were nominated by their respective party groups. Still further back in the past was the President elected to his official post by the national electorate.

PARTIES NOT ON RECORD

The only formal and official method of expressing the will of the voters of the United States have for expressed their will on national questions to their chosen representatives in Congress, and to their chief executive, is through the professions formulated in the platforms of the national political parties and implemented by the declarations of the opposing candidates.

President Wilson, after his election, responded to the third Congress a downward revision of the platform he was voicing the declaration of the Democratic party platform, adopted at Baltimore. When the 64th Congress enacted the Underwood tariff measure it proceeded on the same party authority and on the declarations of congressional district conventions.

But no such party platform authority can be cited for the proposed colossal program of "preparedness." President Wilson can have no means of knowing what a majority even of his own party thinks about it, and no member of the present 64th Congress can possibly know what a majority of the voters in his district think about it. All that the President can know in this regard is that all that members of this Congress can know is that since the outbreak of the world war in 1914 a large and powerful group of American citizens has carried on an extensive campaign in favor of military preparedness, working through newspapers, magazines, pamphlets, and public meetings; and that at the same time another large group of our people have opposed an extensive increase in our armament, and have laid their emphasis on various plans for international action to prevent future wars.

PUBLIC OPINION IS STILL CRYSTALLIZING. UNDER THE PRESSURE FROM THESE TWO OPPOSING GROUPS OF PEOPLE

That is all that President Wilson or any member of Congress or any other person can possibly know at this time concerning what the majority will of the American people is or will be on this important national issue.

DO NOT KNOW HOW THE PEOPLE STAND

Knowing neither the majority opinion of his own party, nor that of the people as a whole, how can Executive in his official capacity justify a large increase in military preparedness or a great departure from the present policy of the nation? It may be argued that he does so as the official leader of the Democratic party, hoping that thus he will cause the party to favor military preparedness. Had he confined his expressions on the subject to communications with his party associates he would be entirely within his proper sphere. Subsequently he did so address himself to the National Committee of his party, which was entirely proper.

It is, however, the special function of Congress to first officially formulate this policy in concrete legislation. But by what right could Congress at this session take action on

a question about which there is admitted to be a wide division of the people when there has been not even a party resolution on the subject? Would not that be a palpable prejudging of the issue? Would it not be a deplorable and an immoral abuse of the principal of representative government?

Every fair minded American citizen, whether he is for preparedness or against it, will agree that any such action by this Congress would be an utterly unfair proceeding and that it would throw discredit on our political institutions; as at present put into operation, proving them to be unable to meet the existing situation fairly and squarely.

WHAT SHOULD CONGRESS DO

What, then, can Congress do properly at this session? It can do one thing that will be entirely fair to both the friends and the foes of preparedness and which will at the same time save our representative system of government from a disastrous failure. That one thing is to pass a joint resolution authorizing and arranging for the submission of the main question at issue to the voters at the general election of November next. Let the question be fairly stated so that voters can answer it, yes or no, in the usual way—in the way that all the states, but one, have always adopted constitutional amendments and in which 18 states have now provided for enabling the voters to control legislation, when they so desire.

A national referendum on preparedness! Yes, that is the step which the present Congress should take to meet fairly the present extraordinary situation. Let the advocates and opponents of preparedness go ahead with their arguments in every way they see fit, between now and next election day—through newspapers and magazines, pamphlets and posters, public meetings and the individual canvass. Let all the light possible be given to the people. Let an official statement of the proposition and a summary of the arguments on both sides be printed and distributed to every voter in the land at least three months before the election.

LET THE MAJORITY RULE

Then, when the votes for and against this proposition have been counted, let the majority opinion stand and proper expression through legislation. The will of the people having been registered, let their will be done. If a majority is found to favor the preparedness program of the President, then let that program be carried out; but if a majority votes against it, we suggest that the next Congress give its attention to a constructive foreign policy looking toward the maintenance of world peace through international co-operation.

To arm or not to arm—that is now the question confronting the American people. They must pay the enormous cost and take the consequences if the arming plan is adopted. Why should they have the opportunity to say whether they want that done or not? They present Congress has no right to make such a decision for them before the public mind can possibly be made up or at least without having any means of knowing what that mind is.

NO DANGER OF ATTACK

Even the most blatant shouter for militaristic increase does not assert that the United States is in any danger of attack now or in the near future. Should the world war end tomorrow (and all the experts now say it will last many months), what one of the belligerent nations would have any motive for an attack on this great and resourceful nation? But if there were a motive, what nation would be physically or financially able at the end of this war to undertake so great and costly a task as to transport an army of conquest over the sea with the slightest promise of success? Hence, there need be no undue haste in the matter of national defence. In his address to Congress,

SURVIVORS OF THEIR RACE'S TRAGEDY



Group of Armenian girls and women who escaped death at the hands of the Turks, the fate of tens of thousands of their sisters.

President Wilson himself says:

I have had in mind on thought any immediate or particular danger arising out of our relations with other nations of the world, and there is reason to hope that no question in controversy between this and other governments will lead to any serious breach of amical relations grave as some difference of attitude and policy have been and may turn out to be.

PRACTICABILITY OF THE PLAN

Granted, then, that such a referendum on preparedness is desirable, it may still be doubted by some timid souls if it be practicable or may not require a machinery which as yet the nation does not possess. While it is true enough that the federal government has no method by which the voters may compel the submission of any question to the electorate, there is inherent in the very nature of every representative law-making body the right voluntarily to call upon the voters to express their assent or dissent to a given legislative proposal. This is undoubtedly the privilege and the highest duty of the 64th Congress now in session at Washington. The decision of the responsible majority in that Congress to do this thing—to take the voters into their counsels and so to definitely determine the intelligent will of the people at this fateful parting of the ways would undoubtedly redound to the credit of the party in power more than anything else it could do. Such action would go far to establish the claim of its leaders to the belief in the principals of government by the consent of the governed to their faith in fundamental democracy.

FORM OF PROPOSED REFERENDUM

It only remains, therefore, to consider the best form in which to state the issue of preparedness now before the country and to suggest the simplest method of holding a referendum vote thereon. The fairest basis for such statement as all will agree, is the formal recommendation of the Wilson administration to Congress. It has been attacked by the leading pacifists of all parties as committing the country to radical departure in the matter of national armament. And yet it is far short of the advocated by the extreme type of militarists (like Roosevelt and others) who would have this country adopt universal compulsory military service. Taking, then, the Wilson program as the affirmative basis of the proposed referendum, let us reduce the issue to the following definite proposition: REFERRED TO THE VOTERS BY CONGRESS

Do you favor the general plan of increasing the nation's military and naval establishment, as proposed in the Dec. 7, 1915, address of the President to Congress, namely: An increase in the regular standing army from 108,008 (all services) to 141,843 and the creation of a volunteer enlisted citizen army of 400,000 men required to undergo discipline and drill not over two months a year for a 3-year period; also, for the navy a 5-year program of construction to provide ten battleships, six battle cruisers, ten scout cruisers, fifteen fleet submarines, eighty-five coast submarines, four gunboats, one hospital ship, two ammunition ships, two fuel oil ships, and one repair ship; and to enlist enough more men and educate more officers to man these ships. The total increase of said national armament estimated to cost, in five years, \$500,000,000.

YES—
NO—

This proposition, which by a joint resolution of Congress would be printed on every ballot for the election of representatives and senators,

would enable every voter to register his will thereon by the usual method of placing a cross opposite the word "yes" or the word "no," as the case might be.

By the same resolution, authority should be given for distributing to all voters, three months before the election, a printed sheet or folder containing the text of the above proposition, or one to that effect, together with signed arguments for and against it by leaders of each of the opposing national groups. Along with this should go definite information as to the moneys spent in recent years for the army and navy, how they had been handled and with what result. For instance, the following table of military expenditures should be included somewhere:

	Army	Navy
1905	\$77,070,300.88	\$87,505,140.94
1906	70,396,631.64	100,336,679.64
1907	71,817,165.98	102,071,670.27
1908	78,634,582.75	98,957,507.50
1909	95,382,247.61	122,662,485.47
1910	101,195,883.34	126,935,199.05
1911	95,440,567.55	131,410,568.30
1912	93,374,755.97	126,495,509.24
1913	90,958,732.98	129,151,588.70
1914	94,266,145.51	140,718,434.53
1915	101,019,212.50	144,868,716.61
	\$959,556,205.11	\$1,325,024,450.61
1916	101,959,195.87	149,661,864.88

\$1,071,515,401.68 \$1,474,686,315.49
Thus the 64th Congress' at its second session, would have direct knowledge as to how the people stand on this vital issue and the officially ascertained majority opinion thereon as the basis and authority for legislative action. Legislation enacted on that basis would have the consistent support of the country, at least for reasonable period to determine its practical value. The responsibility would be placed on the majority of the people where it properly belongs. In this plan the party now in control of the government has a splendid opportunity to demonstrate its faith in the principals of genuine democracy in the government for

MRS. A. J. DREXEL, JR.



Mrs. Anthony J. Drexel, Jr., of Philadelphia, formerly Miss Marjory Gould of New York, as she appeared aboard the steamer on which she recently arrived at New York from Europe. Mr. Drexel accompanied her and they went to their home in Philadelphia. Mrs. Drexel is seen carrying her favorite dog Bella.

PRESIDENT WILSON TO GO ON STUMP

"Preparedness" Losing Supporters in Congress Stirs Executive to Quick Action

Washington, Jan. 18.—President Wilson is planning to assume personal leadership in the fight for stronger army and navy. So many reports have reached him of confusion over the issue before Congress, and of the uncertainty of the outcome, that he has determined not only to go before the country in public addresses, but to confer further on the subject with leaders of the Senate and House.

Representative Hay and Representative Padgett, chairman of the House Military and Senate Naval Committees, respectively, have informed Mr. Wilson that it will be from 6 weeks to two months before the committees will be ready to report the army and navy appropriation bills. While this work is going on he proposes to solidify sentiment among the people and members of Congress in favor of the plans drawn up by the war and navy departments.

Plans for the speaking trips will be prepared as quickly as possible. If necessary, the President may change the White House social program mapped out before Christmas.

GIRLS NEED PHYSICAL DRILL

Reading Over Desks Often Has a Tendency to Cause Curvature of the Spine.

One who observes girls in graduating classes in different high schools can hardly fail to be impressed with their lack of good physical development. It is safe to say that at least one-third of the girls graduated from high school have curvatures of the spine, or uneven shoulders, or stand in a bad position, or have too much flesh or too little. Investigations made recently in California showed that about three-fourths of the girls who go to college and university are out of repair physically.

What is the cause of all this? The prevailing theory is that high-heeled shoes, constriction in dress and lack of any systematic exercise are responsible; but the chief reason why girls are so poorly formed is because practically no attention has been given to their physical development until very recently. In some schools girls still do not have any regular physical exercise. They are not advised by capable teachers regarding their defects and how to overcome them. The California report indicated that many defects were due to habitual bending over desks, which develops curvature of the spine, which in turn develops other deformities. But conditions are probably better today than they were a few years ago. A girl's dress seems better adapted to help physical development than it was ten years ago. Perhaps this will in time be demonstrated in the better physical development of girls who pass through the schools.

DOES ADVERTISING PAY?

It is a very evident fact that newspaper advertising pays or else old man John Wansmaker wouldn't go to the trouble to employ an ad writer at such astoundingly salary as ten thousand dollars. Skeptical merchants should read the following and give the proposition a trial if they have to write their own ads. There is no business in this town that is too solid to advertise. In this day of progressive business and "go-after-it" methods, the merchants who fail to advertise will sooner or later wake up to find his cash customers going to the other fellow. Read:

Philadelphia—One of the highest-salaried women in the mercantile world is Miss Nancy Vincent McClelland, who receives ten thousand dollars for writing the advertising for the Wansmaker stores. She is one of the first women to come to the front in the advertising world, and she owes her success to her fertile brain. When ideas are needed, she can supply them. She originated the children's art contests and the Personal Service Bureau in the Wansmaker stores. Miss McClelland was forty years old when she took up this new work, and now at fifty-five she is at the height of her career.

Shaves are back to a dime. Fellows who bought safety razors will please take note.

There is a vast difference between progress and stability. Scotland Neck citizens should push the former up and use the latter for a scotch.

From this distance the Kaiser looks to be affected with a severe growth of affections of the throat and tongue.

"Confound this Dublin," muttered the perspiring Scotch recruit, after an evolution executed at the double. "And confound dirty Glasgow," hissed an Irish voice in his ear, "and I'll knock the head off of you when we dismiss."—London Globe.

ANGERED THE IRISHMAN

Anger—What are you eating the janitor down for?
Squirrel—I was mistaken. I thought the steam pipes were making that terrible racket we heard, but it seems it was that woodpecker family that has moved in above us.

OLD SOLDIERS BANQUETED

The local chapter of the U. D. C., gave a dinner to the old soldiers on Wednesday the 19th—Lee's birthday. All the veterans were invited, but only a few could be present. These asked the Commonwealth to again thank the daughters.

X-RAY MACHINE

Dr. O. F. Smith has installed in his office here an improved physician's electrical cabinet, which is a most interesting and valuable asset. The editor was shown the uses to which the cabinet can be put, and is absolutely sure the usual run of physical ailments which come under Dr. Smith's attention can now be cared for more quickly and satisfactorily. The little cabinet stands about four feet high, is full of little machines which are propelled by electricity, and has an attachment for making X-Ray photographs.

NOISY

Owl—What are you eating the janitor down for?
Squirrel—I was mistaken. I thought the steam pipes were making that terrible racket we heard, but it seems it was that woodpecker family that has moved in above us.