

THE MUNITIONS-MILITARIST CONSPIRACY

BY HON. W.J. BRYAN

THE real fight before the country at this time is to defeat the munitions-militarist conspiracy – a conspiracy which has for its object a revolutionary change in the nation's character and policy. It is a conspiracy organized with deliberation and supported by unlimited means. The conspirators are men of prominence and influence. The manufacturers of munitions are selling war supplies to Europe at the rate of more than three hundred millions worth a year, and they are selling at an enormous profit. The Du Pont Company recently declared a dividend of 23 per cent. on powder, and the stock in the Bethlehem Steel Company has risen beyond the dreams of the speculators. Among the stockholders in the munition companies are many of our big financiers, and these men largely control the metropolitan press. These manufacturers and their influential stockholders know that their dividends will dwindle when this war is over unless they can fasten themselves upon the taxpayers of the country, and grow fat as the people grow poor. Hence the newspaper crusade for frenzied preparedness, such a crusade as we have not seen in a generation.

The second group in the conspiracy is made up of professional soldiers – militarists who stand with the militarists of other countries. And the militarists of all countries stand today where the militarists stood two thousand years ago; they know no way of correcting a mistake of the mind except to cut off the head – no way of curing an error of the heart except to stop its beating – no way to settle a dispute between nations except to take human life.

To judge the militarists of the world by their program, they have never learned that nineteen hundred years ago a Prince of Peace was

born, and brought into the world a Gospel of Love which is destined to supplant the bloody doctrine of force and violence.

These two groups, one working for money and the other magnifying the profession of arms, have joined their forces in an effort to commit this government to the European plan of trying to preserve peace by terrorism. Although the plan has written history in characters of blood and has led the warring nations into the present conflict, we are asked to adopt this policy and join the "pistol-toting" nations in the worship of brute force.

The big corporate employers of labor are aiding and abetting the conspiracy because they want a large army – not made up of state militia, but of regulars – to keep their workmen under subjection.

And how much are we asked to invest in this false philosophy? Two billions to "get ready," with one thousand and seventy-nine millions a year to keep ready! We are now spending two hundred and fifty millions a year on the army and navy – the most we have ever spent in time of peace. During the past fifteen years we have spent more on our navy than any other country in the world except Great Britain. We are now spending on the army and navy more than ten times as much as we are spending on the department of agriculture, and yet the army and navy experts, taking advantage of the excitement of a foreign war, demand that we multiply our war appropriations by four! The navy experts want A BILLION AND A HALF for new ships and SEVEN HUNDRED AND SIXTY MILLIONS a year thereafter to keep the navy in fighting trim. The army experts want FIVE HUNDRED MILLIONS to put the army in a respectable condition and THREE HUNDRED AND NINETEEN MILLIONS annually to keep it up to the requirements of their program.

Eight hundred and twenty-nine million dollars per year, the sum which the army and navy experts ask us to add to the annual appropriations for the army and navy, is so large that the mind cannot

comprehend it. As the body becomes insensible to pain after a certain degree is reached, so the mind to ciphers after it has taken in a certain number. We can only understand large sums by comparison. Here are four comparisons:

(1) The farmers of the nation collected a little more [R5936 : page 237] than FIVE AND A HALF BILLIONS from all their crops last year – *the banner year in our history*. If we compute the farmer's NET income at 8 per cent. of his gross income, we find that the net income of all the farmers from all their crops was about \$440,000,000. THE ARMY AND NAVY EXPERTS WANT TO ADD TO WHAT WE ARE NOW SPENDING ON THE ARMY AND NAVY NEARLY TWICE THE ANNUAL NET CROP INCOME OF ALL OUR FARMERS. And they question the patriotism of those who protest against the demand.

(2) The cost of a macadam road, 16 feet wide and six inches thick is, according to agricultural department statistics, a little more than six thousand dollars per mile. If we estimate the average length of the United States at three thousand miles, and its average width at twelve hundred miles, it can be gridironed with macadam roads twelve miles apart, east and west, north and south, for less than \$4,145,000,000 – the amount which the army and navy experts would, IN FIVE YEARS, add to the army and navy appropriations.

(3) This sum, eight hundred and twenty-nine millions per year, would in five years duplicate every bank in the country, capital and surplus, and thus double the amount of bank capital and surplus available for borrowing.

(4) It costs the nation about \$800,000,000 a year to educate the 25,000,000 school children of the land. Think of making an ANNUAL increase in our army and navy appropriations equal to the ENTIRE ANNUAL COST OF EDUCATION, FROM KINDERGARTEN TO UNIVERSITY! And yet the army and navy experts, backed by the munition manufacturers, demand this and

resent any opposition as if they had a vested right to decide for the people the amount to be expended. They are attempting to perpetrate an outrage upon the taxpayers of the country, and their conspiracy, if successful, would menace the peace of the world. No party can afford to stand for such a policy – least of all the Democratic party, the champion of the masses and the friend of peace.

– *The Commoner.*

