

A CONSTRUCTIVE PROGRAM

The termination of the war makes it necessary for the nation to enter immediately upon a comprehensive constructive program that will protect the people in their social, economic and political rights, and promote the general welfare of the country. The following propositions are submitted to the readers of The Commoner for their consideration:

AN ENDURING PEACE

1. Universal peace built upon a treaty so just that it will forever prevent war.

DEMOBILIZATION OF ARMY—VOCATIONAL TRAINING—LAND GRANTS AND EMPLOYMENT—CONTINUE INSURANCE

2. The American soldiers and sailors have proven themselves to be the best in the world; they are, on return to civil life, entitled to the best treatment that a grateful nation can give. Demobilization should be completed at the earliest possible moment consistent with conditions and our obligations. Provision should be made for vocational training for those permanently injured, for land grants to those desiring to farm and for the employment of others on public works until they are absorbed by the industries of the country. Soldiers' and sailors' insurance by the government at cost should be continued after the war.

CANCELLATION OF UNNECESSARY WAR CONTRACTS AND REDUCTION OF GOVERNMENT EXPENSES TO PEACE BASIS

3. The expenses of the government should be reduced to a peace basis as rapidly as possible and in the making of reductions relief should be given first to those least able to bear the burden of taxation. Special interests should not be permitted to shift the burdens of the war upon the people by the restoration of high protective tariffs. All unnecessary war contracts should be cancelled immediately.

DEVELOPMENT OF PUBLIC HIGHWAYS AND WATER TRANSPORTATION—RECLAMATION OF ARID AND SWAMP LANDS

4. A comprehensive system of highways should be planned and built under the supervision and aid of the federal and state governments. Provision should also be made for the development of water transportation, for the reclamation of arid lands and for the draining of swamps.

GOVERNMENT OWNERSHIP AND OPERATION OF TELEGRAPH LINES—DUAL OWNERSHIP OF RAILROADS AND TELEPHONE SYSTEMS

5. The issue between government ownership and private monopoly demands immediate attention. In dealing with telegraph lines, telephones and railroads the policy of the government should conform to the principle that a private monopoly is indefensible and intolerable. Whenever a monopoly is necessary, the benefits of such monopoly should be enjoyed by the whole people and not by a few individuals. Profits arising from government ownership should be given back to the people in the form of reduced rates and improved service.

Telegraph lines should be a government monopoly operated by the postoffice department. Cables should be owned and operated jointly by this government and the governments of the countries to which they go.

Long-distance telephone lines should be owned and operated by the federal government in connection with the postoffice department.

All local telephone exchanges should be owned and operated by such governmental units (state, county or municipal) as the state deems best, and state legislatures should immediately enact the legislation necessary for such public ownership.

The federal government should own and operate a system of trunk line railroads reaching to every state and giving to each state a government owned and controlled outlet for its products and inlet for its importations.

The local network of railroads, including all lines not belonging to the federal system, should be acquired by the state as rapidly as public sentiment will permit. If any of the local lines are returned to private ownership before the state enters upon government ownership, such line or lines should be subject to strict state control in order that the rights of both owners and shippers may have complete protection.

GOVERNMENT OWNERSHIP AND OPERATION OF MERCHANT MARINE

6. Ownership by the federal government, and operation as far as necessary of a merchant marine for the extension of commerce

and the establishing of new trade routes. No subsidies should be given to private ship owners.

STOP PROFITEERING—STATE TRADE COMMISSIONS

7. To reduce the high cost of living, the power of the federal trade commission should be extended and ample financial provision made to prevent greedy profiteers from charging more than a reasonable profit. State governments should create state trade commissions to supplement the work of the federal trade commission.

Speculation in foodstuffs and the necessaries of life should be strictly prohibited. Public markets should be established and provision made for co-operative buying and distribution. State governments should enact a general law empowering cities, towns and villages to establish municipal markets—to sell coal, provisions and other necessaries of life when the people's interests require it.

The producers and consumers should be protected against the packing house monopoly, the grain elevator trust and insurance combine, and similar combinations in restraint of trade.

NATIONAL INITIATIVE AND REFERENDUM

8. A constitutional amendment should be adopted by the nation and in the several states providing for the initiative and referendum so that the people may be in absolute control of the government and be able to initiate or defeat any legislative action.

GUARANTEE DEPOSITS IN NATIONAL AND STATE BANKS

9. Legislation should be enacted by which the national banks should be required to establish a guarantee fund for the prompt payment of depositors of any insolvent bank, under an equitable system which shall be available to all state banking institutions wishing to use it.

RESTORATION OF FREEDOM OF SPEECH AND PRESS

10. With the cessation of hostilities the nation should again enjoy freedom of speech and of the press—rights sacred to the citizen and essential to popular government.

NO COMPULSORY MILITARY TRAINING—PHYSICAL BETTERMENT PLAN

11. Universal military training is inconsistent with our institutions. The victory which we have won for democracy would be a failure and a defeat for our principles if it compelled us to adopt a military system which was deemed unnecessary before we entered the war. Physical betterment should be secured through compulsory courses in physical culture in our schools, colleges and universities, which should include thorough physical examination, athletic exercises, games, contests, etc.

STRICT ENFORCEMENT OF NATIONAL PROHIBITION LAWS

12. Prohibition will soon become the settled policy of the country by the ratification of the national amendment. All officials should be pledged to strict enforcement of the letter and spirit of the amendment and the laws based upon it.

RATIFICATION OF SUFFRAGE AMENDMENT

13. The woman's national suffrage amendment, soon to be submitted, should be ratified by the states.

RULE OF PEOPLE

14. Every other measure, no matter by whom or by what party proposed, having for its object the safe-guarding of the rule of the people at home or the extension of democracy abroad should be cordially supported.

NATIONAL BULLETIN TO POST VOTERS

15. Our government rests upon the consent of the governed and that consent can be expressed intelligently only when the voters understand the issues which they are to decide. In order to insure the maximum of information the federal government should issue a national bulletin under bi-partisan control—such bulletin to place before the people the important acts of administration and legislation with space set apart for editorial comment, such editorial space to be divided between the several parties and party factions in proportion to voting strength in congress. The bulletin should be published at such intervals as may seem best and should be furnished at not more than cost to such voters as desire to subscribe for it.

Mr. Bryan will from time to time elaborate the above legislative program and present arguments in support thereof. He desires to hear from those who favor the measures outlined, and who are willing to assist in the educational and organization work necessary to secure their adoption.