The Crime of Competitive Armament

William H. Crawford was secretary of treasury under both Madison and Monroe from 1816 to 1825. In his report for 1820 just a century ago, we find this naive announcement:

"The revenue for the years amounts to $24,-250,000, which may be estimated as the permanent annual revenue."

Fifty years ago (in 1870) the total of the ordinary disbursements of the federal government amounted to $293,675,005. For the fiscal year ended June 30, 1920, the operating expenses of running the government amounted to $6,133,-716,757.52, excluding payments for the Panama Canal, for postal service, for public debt and special purposes—a 2,000 per cent increase.

For the year 1869-70, when the population was 38,558,371, the per capita cost of running the national government was $7.61. Last year, when the continental population was 105,683,-108, the per capita cost was $58.04. In other words, while the population in fifty years has increased 200 per cent the per capita cost of keeping ourselves governed has ncreased 600 per cent.

Of the $293,675,005 expended in 1870 for the ordinary disbursements of the government, $237,011,605, more than four-fifths of the total, was either payment for past wars or cost of preparation for future wars.

Ten years later, in 1860, the military disbursements amounted to $204,188,650, or nearly four-fifths of the total ordinary disbursements, which were $264,847,637.

At the end of the next decade, in 1890, the military disbursements were over two-thirds of the total disbursements—$209,625,183 out of $297,736,487.

In 1900 the proportion again was four-fifths. The cost of running the war and navy departments, plus what went for pensions and interest on the public debt, was $371,765,495; the total for all ordinary disbursements was $487,713,792.

Ten years ago these four war items totalled $461,124,818 out of $659,705,391, or nearly four-fifths.

The staggering burden of taxation today is still the staggering burden of expenditures for past and future wars. The estimates for the navy alone for the coming fiscal year exceed the total cost of government for the first year of the Wilson administration, excluding appropriations for the post office department, which is practically self-sustaining. There can be no reduction in taxation, there can be no measure of economy in government which will appreciably lighten the load of taxation, that does not begin with war expenditures.

Mr. Borah has introduced in the Senate a resolution requesting the President to enter into negotiations with Great Britain and Japan looking to a reduction of 50 per cent annually in naval expenditures for a period of five years. Secretary Daniels suggests that if the United States is to be kept out of the League of Nations by the Harding administration a conference of the nations should be called to consider the matter of disarmament.

Both of these suggestions are in harmony with the purposes of the League of Nations, although Senator Borah is an irreconcilable opponent of the League. All the great nations are proceeding with their preparedness programs, although all of them except the United States are on the very verge of bankruptcy. Our naval estimates for 1920 are $679,515,731. Great Britain's actual appropriations amount to $410,597,796, with the program for capital ships held in abeyance. France has appropriated for naval purposes 174,829,243, which she needs for reconstruction work, and Italy's appropriations are $78,389,226, while Japan, the country whose military program is now the chief concern of the United States, is spending $187,207,243.

The Japanese have said that they cannot agree to reduce armament if the United States is to continue to arm, and the chief argument in support of the American program is the policy of the Japanese. The United States is the richest and most powerful country in the world, and it is the only great power that is outside the League. Naturally, there can be no confidence anywhere in disarmament while the United States holds aloof, and it is, therefore, the duty of this country to take the lead.

Senator Borah's resolution is in the right direction. Secretary Daniel's suggestion is in the right direction. Our war expenditures are stifling our own prosperity and they are helping to bankrupt everybody else. They are as pernicious an example to the nations today as Germany's military program was ten years ago.

If there is any lesson whatever to be learned from a war that has cost more than 10,000,000 lives and nearly $300,000,000,000 in treasure it is the criminal folly of competitive armament, and if the United States is unwilling to take the initiative in destroying this system its burden of guilt is even greater than its burden of wanton extravagance.—New York World.

UNIQUE CONSULTATIONS

The conferences already begun by Senator Harding are almost without precedent in American politics. For they relate not to appointments, but to policies. Old custom is for a man about to become President to consult with party chiefs and political advisers. But the question discussed has usually been who should be named for the cabinet, who placed in charge of this and the other branch of executive work. This time, however, it is something more fundamental. The cardinal plans of the party are to be talked over at Marion. In one vital matter the Republican party went before the country confessing that it had not been able to formulate a policy. It did not know what it would do about the League of Nations. It asked the country to give it a blank check. The task of filling it in is to be undertaken by Mr. Harding in consultation with minds that may be "the best," but are certainly wide apart in opinion. Nothing just like this has ever before been recorded in party annals.

Everybody must hope that wisdom will issue from the multitude of counselors at Marion. If Mr. Harding is able to announce in his inaugural address, or in a message to congress, a clear and sound policy respecting America's attitude toward inescapable world problems, he will receive hearty and non-partisan support. All are ready to pledge him that in advance. But good-will alone cannot make difficulties vanish as by a magic wand. Steady thinking by clear heads is necessary. And it would be foolish to overlook the inherent uncertainties and dangers of such consultations as those upon which Senator Harding is now entering.

His situation, be it remembered, is not that of a man who has made up his mind for himself and is inviting criticism. That kind of iron striking upon iron is most useful to a public man. The complaint that we have had too little of it during President Wilson's last years in office appears to be justified. Any President, or President to be, who has slowly shaped an important policy, ought to be glad to ask friendly and capable men to search it for unsuspected weaknesses. He may have overlooked something. He may have failed to weigh certain results. Criticisms or suggestions may save him from blundering, or from being compelled to modify or withdraw his plans after they have been made public. Free, fearless and confidential discussion is plainly of the greatest help to an executive who has wrestled his way through to the framing of a great policy of state.

This, however, is not at all the case at present with Mr. Harding. He is not asking critics to come to Marion, but original constructors. They are not to point out the joints in his armor; they are to make it for him. He has frankly stated that he has no settled policy. His mind he will offer to his visitors as a sensitized photograhpic plate. It is for them to seek to make the right impressions upon it. The hope seems to be that a pleasing composite picture will result. This is the aspect of the Marion consultations which makes them unique. The next President will, as it were, lay his mind before his counselors as a tabula rasa. They are to try to write on it something definite.

The process cannot, of course, be so simple as that. Senator Harding may appear only to be listening. In reality he will be judging. In the end he himself will have to decide the matter. Amid the floods of advice given to him, he will need to select what he thinks good and reject the bad. Nor can he come to his decision merely by counting the noses of his counselors. It is not numbers but weight that ought to be decisive. In the early days of the presidential campaign of 1896 it was said that Mr. McKinley kept his letters and telegrams in two piles: one urging him to come out for the gold standard, the other appealing for bimetalism. For a candidate to let his views rise and fall with his heaps of letters may possibly be endured. It may be necessary in an election. But it will never do for a President. It will not work in actual and successful administration. There we must have firm convictions backed by resolute will; and they have go to be the convictions and the will of the man charged with the final responsibility.

There ought, then, to be no illusion about Senator Harding's conferences. They may be exceedingly helpful. All of us hope they will be. But sagacity and energy are not born of the mere act of consulting. When all is over, one individual will have to make his choice—even if he decides merely to yield to preponderant opinion, that will be a choice—and the individual is Warren G. Harding.—New York Times.

LEAGUE CONFERENCES

Mr. Bryan, fresh from conferring with Mr. Harding at Marion, confers with Senator Borah in this town about the league of nations. Should we want stronger proof the that league is properly not a party question, and that our politics should end at the waterside?

Mr. Bryan is a Democrat, and for years was the leader of his party. He may resume that leadership. He was opposed to making the league a party question in the recent campaign, and predicted defeat at the polls if it were done. On the President's motion it was done, and the democracy went to the most disastrous defeat in its history.

Mr. Harding is a Republican, and the league question has been put into his hands as the leader of his party. Mr. Borah is a Republican, and as a member of the Senate will have a vote on whatever Mr. Harding as President may submit to that body in his efforts to promote permanent peace for the world.

In the end these men may not agree. Even Mr. Harding and Mr. Borah may differ. But the fact that they are confabulating together with a view of reaching common ground on the league question is a praiseworthy exhibition of the true American spirit.

And it may be said with all respect that had Mr. Wilson proceeded in this way before leaving for Paris—have lifted the league question above party by conferring with leading men of both parties about what should be done—it would have been better for him, for his party, for the country and maybe for the whole world.—Washington Star.

FOR FEDERAL PRIMARY LAW

A Washington dispatch, dated Jan. 9, says: Senator Johnson, Republican, California, in a statement today, forecasted his intention to push his project for a federal presidential primary law, but recognized opposition to be met.

"Progressiveism has not passed; certain progressives have," he said. "The limelight progressives, who were more interested in office than in policies, have wanted their horrible past forgotten, and have endeavored to atone by outregularizing regularity. But progressiveism is yet enshrined in the hearts of millions. Reaction is on. We witness the assault upon the direct primary. If this succeeds, there is little that exploiting privilege has to fear from public officials. The bitter, concerted movement against labor is the accompaniment of the endeavor to take from voters the right of nominating their public servants. To prevent the direct primary's destruction or modification is work ahead for progressives, and this work will be done by the rank and file, and if necessary in spite of progressivism's former leaders."

ASK THE SCHOOL BOY

During the present year the American farmers harvested the largest crop of corn in all history.

During the present year the American coal trust harvested the largest crop of soft coal in any year in the history of coal.

Today the farmer receives for his corn one-third of the price he received for his last year's crop.

Today the coal trust is receiving the highest price ever paid for coal by the American people.

Why is the big crop of corn selling at such a low price, and why is the big yield of coal selling at such a high price?

Ask any average school-boy, and quickly he will tell the reason why the price of coal is now sky-high, and why the price of corn is dog-low. And he will give the answer in just one word, and the letters of that word spell—

ORGANIZATION.

It is the old story over again. The men who own the American coal trust are organized. The men who own or till the American farms are not organized.—Edgar Howard, in Columbus, Neb., Telegram.