

New York Tribune

First to Last—the Truth: News—Editorials

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THURSDAY, MAY 2, 1918

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Discovery

Today the Secretary of War will lay before Congress the Administration's plan to go headlong into war...

According to The Associated Press dispatch, "he is expected to disclose that the War Department has reason to believe it can handle during the present year at least double the existing force under arms of approximately 1,600,000 men."

That would mean a total of 3,200,000 soldiers, for whom clothing and equipment and transportation are now in sight."

The first feeling will be one of intense satisfaction. This is bound to be followed by bitter reflections.

When did all this clothing and equipment and transportation come into sight?

Did it fall out of the sky?

And why is it that all the man power provided for under the existing draft law is not yet mobilized?

There is one answer to all of these questions. The War Department has wasted precious time. It has not believed until now that it was necessary to win the war with American troops at Armageddon.

When in the last quarter of an hour of which Clemenceau speaks the fate of democracy in the world shall be decided, the miracle will be wrought not by faith alone, but by the presence at a particular place of enough men to overcome the enemy at the apex of his strength.

The preponderance for God and mankind may be very slight—a division more or less.

The time and place are unknown.

What one knows for certain is that faith without heroic haste in works is futile.

Yet in a country overrunning with potential man power, where to raise and equip and dispatch an unlimited army is an undertaking that presents technical difficulties only, it has been necessary continually to importune the War Department to enlarge its plans.

This has been so from the beginning.

Its answer until recently was that troops could not be sent faster because there were not the ships to send them in, more than were being sent, wherefore there was no need of calling up a greater army. The War Department could not make the ships.

But when the great offensive started last March, and the Allies called for men, ships were found. In forty days the rate at which troops can be sent abroad has been trebled. It does not matter how this was made possible. The point is that it became possible, thereby invalidating the War Department's calculation that the potential man power was being mobilized as fast as it could be exported.

Last January in his testimony before the Senate Committee on Military Affairs Secretary Baker said: "General Leonard Wood came to my office—I have forgotten when, but it was early—and suggested to me the advisability of instantly calling out a larger army. I said: 'But, general, we have not the clothes and we have not the weapons for them.'"

This was to show that General Wood's complaint that munitions and equipment had not been provided fast enough was unreasonable because he had himself suggested calling up men faster. The implication was that if this had been done, the shortage in munitions and equipment would have been even greater than it was. On the next page of his testimony he defended the Ordnance Department for having taken months to perfect a rifle, on the ground that perfect weapons were ready as fast as troops were ready to receive them.

It was of no use to call up soldiers faster, because the weapons were not ready and then it was of no use to worry about the time lost in refusing to adopt the British Enfield rifle, because soldiers were not being called up faster than they could be armed!

For a long time after America entered the war Mr. Baker was unable to imagine an army abroad.

Testifying before the Senate Committee on Military Affairs on January 23, he said that as late as July, 1917 (four months after the declaration of war), "it was the confident expectation of everybody in this country that the sending of troops in large numbers to France was a thing in the somewhat remote future."

That was only seven pages after the colloquy with General Wood, who was importing him instantly to call out a larger army. Twenty pages on from there he spoke naively of the perplexity in which the War Department was, for "we might have perfected an army over here and carried it across the ocean and found it wholly unadapted to its task, and it might well have been that the army we sent across was just the one thing that they did not need."

And on the next page he said that at the outset "the idea was that we should be a financial and industrial assistance to our allies during the year 1918."

It is not in unkindness or in a spirit of criticism that we cite these facts. It is to remind the War Department that plans require heroic fulfillment.

Let us not conceal from ourselves the fact that we have been heroic in our intentions and tardy in our performances from the beginning. The more keenly we realize this truth, the less likely we are to forget the oncoming of that one-quarter of an hour.

Labor's War

"We are too busy to parade" is the May Day sentiment of labor in America. This is true patriotism, and it proves better than a dozen orations the growing solidarity of labor in the war.

What we are beginning to realize over here is that this is in literal truth labor's war. It would be absurd and suicidal for labor behind the lines or any part of that labor to work half-heartedly for a war when it is labor, and no one else, who is fighting that war at the front. When the break in the Allied forces threatened Amiens it was laborers, dropping their picks and shovels and seizing guns, who stepped into the breach and held the line. So ran the dispatches. But the rest of our soldiers were equally laborers; they had dropped their tools at home and seized guns. Only their corps and their assignment to their particular task by reason of special aptitude distinguished the Engineers from any other fighting men.

Wars of a special class have passed on. This, the great war, is a war of, and for the people. May Day is a good day of the year to take these words to heart.

A Call for Our Navy

Is there an opportunity for a larger employment of our fleet in European waters?

Mr. Caspar Whitney, The Tribune's war correspondent, who has just visited the Italian front, thinks that there is. In yesterday's issue he pointed out the need of increased naval force in the Mediterranean, to meet the situation created by a German seizure of the Russian Black Sea squadron.

If Germany can take over and refit the Russian ships and combine them with what is left of the Turkish navy, an active German naval base may be created at Constantinople. From the Dardanelles the communications of the Allied army at Salonica might be raided and control of the eastern end of the Mediterranean disputed with the Allied forces now patrolling it.

We are disabled from contributing to the defense of the Salonica route because we are nominally not at war with Bulgaria and Turkey. Here is another exasperating result of our policy of ignoring the fact that Bulgaria and Turkey are making war on us. In so far as they fight for Germany they fight against the United States. Certainly anything that endangers Allied sea control concerns our safety.

We should give whatever aid we can in policing the Mediterranean, and as a preliminary we should declare war on the Bulgars and the Turks.

The Guaranty Trust Company's Position

It is a pleasure to publish this morning the disclaimer from the Guaranty Trust Company that it favors wide credit expansion or printing press methods as a means of financing the war. On January 29 The Tribune reprinted an article from Mr. Charles H. Sabin, president of the company, in which he pictured "thrift, increased production and credit expansion" as the three available means at hand to meet the great financial strains of the war.

On the subject of credit expansion Mr. Sabin's paper dealt at length with the tremendous possibility for expansion that lay in the present gold holdings of the Federal Reserve banks, setting forth that "on the basis of this reserve it would be possible for the member banks to in turn extend credit of approximately \$20,000,000,000."

Twenty billions of new credit would more than double the present commercial banking credits of the United States, and in the judgment of most economists such an expansion would double or triple the present average of prices. Mr. Sabin continued:

"We shall unquestionably have to draw upon our enormous reserves, but there is no reason for alarm on that account.

"This country is financially strong enough and has sufficient wealth-producing power to withstand the strain and to effect the necessary consequences."

We took this to mean that Mr. Sabin did not believe or did not fear that such a colossal credit expansion would have any disastrous effect upon the price levels and the business economy of the country, and this seemed to The Tribune a very dangerous doctrine. All this was duly set forth in an editorial of January 31.

To all this Mr. Sabin made no disclaimer.

A month later the Guaranty Trust Company published an elaborate paper upon the subject of inflation, setting forth the view that as bank reserves were ample no inflation exists, and therefore none is to be feared. In this

paper there was explicit denial of the doctrine that the general level of prices is determined by the relative volume of currency or credit outstanding.

Replying to The Tribune's comments upon this—to us, indefensible—position, Mr. Sisson made reply in which the denial of that doctrine was reiterated.

In the fine paper from Mr. Paul M. Warburg which The Tribune published on Tuesday the vice-governor of the Federal Reserve Board laid down the dogma that there were only two ways to finance the war—that is, by saving or by inflation through the expansion of bank credits and currency. This is the position of Professor Irving Fisher's committee of the American Economic Association, from which Mr. Sisson quotes.

It is the position of sound economists and sound finance everywhere and always. Few will deny that some degree of inflation in war time is inevitable. What sound finance pleads for is that this expansion or inflation be kept down to the smallest possible amount.

Twenty billions of new credits, such as Mr. Sabin pictured, would not attain this end.

Moreover, whosoever sets up the old Laughline denial that the general level of prices is determined by the volume of existing currency or credit can have no fear of inflation, and therefore is quite ready to support a four-billion dollar note issue as proposed in the original war finance corporation bill, and almost any other scheme of inflationary finance. "The country is strong and can easily stand it." That is always the cry of the fiatist.

The beauty of the orthodox of the modern theory of money and prices, clearly stated by Smith and Mills, and more definitely formulated by Newcomb, Irving Fisher and others, and so admirably set forth by Mr. Warburg in his statement, is that it is explicit and simple and free from any confusion or fog. It was excellently restated in the circular of the American Exchange National Bank from which we quoted yesterday, when it said:

"Whenever the currency and credit of a country are inflated, prices of commodities rise, and labor demands and usually receives higher wages. The dollar or other monetary unit will buy less wheat or cotton or labor. The more money in circulation the less its buying power is an economic rule that has governed finance in all ages."

This could not be better said. It seemed to us highly regrettable that an institution of the power and influence of the Guaranty Trust should seem to give its countenance to a contrary doctrine, full of most evil consequences, that we made the reference to which it takes exception. As Mr. Warburg said so clearly:

"Those of this latter school overlook the fact that inflation under all and any circumstances is a pernicious evil."

A Word for the Mayor

Despite his opposition to the proposal when the legislation was pending, Mayor Hylan has signed the Lockwood bill permitting the Public Service Commission and the Board of Estimate and Apportionment to readjust contracts for subway construction. For this the Mayor is to be commended.

Without such law—and it is to be assumed that Governor Whitman will make the bill a law—this city would come to a deplorable state. The subway contractors since the beginning of the war have had to increase wages to hold their workmen. The cost of materials has risen enormously. It has become an impossibility for them to complete their contracts at the contract prices.

Under this bill the city assumes part of this war-imposed burden. The contractors will complete their contracts, receiving only the cost of the work, without profit. This is rather hard on them, but it is better than bankruptcy. It means that the city will have to pay more for its new subways than was counted on, but it will escape without the greater cost that bankruptcy of the contractors would have imposed on it. It seems the best way out of a bad situation chargeable only to the war.

Jail the Jobless

It is evident that the authorities of New Jersey have no intention of considering the so-called anti-loafer act as a joke. In Trenton a young man with a flair for existence without labor was arrested. A week was allowed to him in which to find a job. At the end of that period he was still jobless. The police justice offered to extend the time another week, but the prisoner said he had no desire to burden his life with labor. Thereupon he was sentenced to three months in the county workhouse.

There is good, sound doctrine beneath all this; and what is good across the river and down in Maryland should be equally good in New York. The recent Legislature passed a bill about the same as the existing statute in New Jersey, aimed at the drones in the economic hive. The idler is a detriment to the community at any time. But when the nation is at war the man who gets his keep without production is a menace. There is no unemployment problem now. Any able-bodied man can get work. It is to be hoped New York State will join the procession and make every man pull at least his own weight in the boat.

Governor Whitman's signature of Senator Sage's bill establishing a central purchasing agency creates machinery which will undoubtedly save New York State a great deal of money. Heretofore each department has gone into the market and bought supplies on its own account, regardless of what other departments were doing. This was an inefficient and wasteful method, the bad features of which have been pointed out many times. It is due largely to the efforts of Controller Travis that the present bill was adopted.

Wasted Potatoes

To the Editor of The Tribune. Sir: The country produced a prodigious potato crop last year. The prices to consumers have been all the time \$2 or more a bushel. Now fifty to one hundred and fifty million bushels are rotting when every possible economy of food is imperative.

Who is responsible for this calamitous waste? In an article on April 24 The Tribune quotes two potato dealers who place the fault upon the farmers, charging them with profiteering, that they would not sell last fall at reasonable prices and that now it is too late to save the crop even with energetic government measures.

I raise the question whether it is the farmers or the potato dealers who were primarily responsible. Two months ago I spent a week in the potato region on the North Platte, in Nebraska, and came in close contact with potato growers. Every farmer I met or heard of had lost from 500 to 10,000 bushels. In this particular section, about 15 miles wide and 75 miles long, it was estimated that 2,000 cars of potatoes were going to waste. This was reported to be the general situation in Colorado and in other potato sections.

Now, the farmers' charge is that the potato dealers last fall bought only so much of the crop as could be sold at war or monopoly prices and left the rest on the farmers' hands. The dealers considered that they would make more money at very high prices, selling only part of the crop, than at lower prices and disposing of the entire crop.

The potato situation should receive a thorough airing. There ought to be an official investigation, and the fact ought to be made public whether the loss is primarily due to the farmers' or the dealers' greed, to the mistakes of the food administration, to the car shortage during the fall months or to a combination of these factors.

The fixed purpose in the investigation, however, should not be merely to place responsibility, but rather to provide a constructive programme for this year—and quickly. Little will be gained by loading the profiteering on the farmers or dealers. Profiteering is inevitable under our laissez-faire (or lack of national plan) agricultural system; farmers and dealers will be alike—and it is not a question of patriotism either. The chief immediate purpose should be to construct a national plan and organization by which our resources will be used for the benefit of the war.

According to present appearances, the potato planting this year will be 25 to 40 per cent less than last year. This will be unfortunate, because land suitable for potatoes produces relatively much more food than wheat or corn land. What should be done—and quickly—is to guarantee the farmers 75 cents or \$1 a bushel for all the potatoes grown and for the government to take and dispose of the entire crop at prices which will sell or conserve the entire output. There would then be no difficulty in production. There would be certainty, which is the prerequisite of industry. Also suspicion would be removed on the part of the farmers as to price manipulation—which has inevitably been a disorganizing influence in the potato market.

The country needs all the food that can be raised. The production and distribution have become primary governmental functions. It is absurd to depend on ordinary economic forces under the present situation. Unless quick governmental action is taken in a thoroughgoing way, next winter we shall be paying high prices, not because of an artificial, but because of a real shortage in potatoes.

JOHN BAUER. New York, April 27, 1918.

Limited Inflation

To the Editor of The Tribune. Sir: In the editorial "The Danger of Unlimited Expansion," which appears in today's issue of The Tribune, is the following statement:

"We invite the attention of certain members of the Federal Reserve Board, of the gentleman who regards himself as its mentor and guide, of a certain Controller of the Currency, of our friends of 'The Journal of Commerce,' of the United States Press, of the Lamont and of all believers that the printing press and limited credit are a proper means of financing the war, to a recent publication from Washington."

We take emphatic exception to the assertion that the Guaranty Trust Company believes "that the printing press and unlimited credit are a proper means of financing the war." No such statement has ever been issued in behalf of the Guaranty Trust Company, and placing this institution in such a false position is entirely unjustified and unfair.

As a matter of fact, our attitude on the subject of bank credit as it has been expressed is fundamentally in accord with that of the American Economic Association, to which you refer as a model, as defined in the following paragraphs, quoted from excerpts of the association's report printed on the editorial page of to-day's Tribune: "Under any economic conditions, and particularly in the present time of war, adjustment, expanding bank credit is often needed to tide over temporary difficulties and to make transition easy. At the present time we are going through a period of readjustment, in which many industries are being checked and shut down, and this cannot be carried through efficiently if and is thrown into the air."

"Some expansion of bank credit, therefore, and even some rise in commodity prices, must be tolerated."

"Hoping that you will find opportunity to correct the inaccurate inference made in regard to the position of this institution, I am, yours very truly,

F. H. SISSON, Vice-President. New York, April 27, 1918.

Thy Kingdom Come

To the Editor of The Tribune. Sir: May I not supplement the letter of Faith Clifford in The Tribune of the 25th inst. by saying that the surest way of knowing that God is for us is for us to be for God? God is a spirit, the Spirit from whom comes all the love, justice, truth, purity, honor, etc., that dwell in the hearts of men.

There is always a danger that human beings may wander away from these things and still imagine that they are on God's side, as in the case of the Kaiser, who, having turned his back completely on all that God stands for, still imagines that God is with him.

Let us fall into that grave error, should not our daily prayer be "Thy kingdom come," which just now includes "victory" for our nation and the Allies, and will insure our not forgetting the aims for which we are now fighting—namely, ridding the world of an enemy of God and establishing liberty and justice—not merely victory for ourselves and our allies?

ELLEN M. LEWIS. Brooklyn, April 25, 1918.

Proud Mr. Creel

To the Editor of The Tribune. Sir: About Mr. Creel's pride in being unprepared, I read in my Bible of a similar case. Five virgins were found unprepared for a wedding and were left to wait and cry. They have ever been called "foolish." But in justice to the poor girls I must say that there was not one of them foolish enough to be proud of their performance. L. P. JUVET. Glens Falls, N. Y., April 30, 1918.

COILED IN THE FLAG—HEARS-S-S-S-ST

Monday, July 2, 1917

THE AMERICAN BEAUTY

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(From The New York American, July 2, 1917, shortly after the close of the First Liberty Loan)

The Gospel of Spilt Milk

By Theodore Roosevelt

THE Gospel as preached nineteen hundred years ago "called sinners to repentance."

The sinners who profited by it were those who repented. They did not jauntily speak of their sins as spilt milk. They recognized themselves as sinners; they recognized the need of repentance; and by their acts they showed the genuineness of their repentance. Unless they met these three conditions they were regarded as hypocrites (and hypocrites were not laughed at or excused, but scathingly denounced). If the sinners announced that they were proud of their sins or took delight in them, or if they excused themselves and denied their shortcomings, they were not regarded as having repented at all and were denied all fellowship with those who had seen the light.

And those who summoned the sinners to repent did not tell them not to cry over spilt milk. On the contrary, they told them with emphasis that they had sinned, that there was sore need of repentance, and that such sincere repentance for the past was the surest way to strengthen their souls against future repetition of their past misconduct.

The present day chatter against speaking the necessary truth about our past governmental misconduct is apt to find expression in a protest against "crying over spilt milk." The beneficiaries of the chatter noisily announce that they feel "pride" and "delight" in having spilled the milk in the past, instead of bending their energies in repentant silence to mopping it up in the present.

For two years and a half the world war raged and we refused to prepare. Germany trampled Belgium into bloody mire, but we refused to prepare. She sank the Lusitania and murdered our people wholesale on the high seas, but we refused to prepare. She dynamited our factories at home, but we refused to prepare. Our government knew all about her plots; our governmental authorities had full knowledge of all she was doing, but they kept us ignorant and neutral and refused to prepare. Inert, timid, absorbed in money getting, we dulled our souls with sentimental rhetoric which under such conditions was nauseous. Our leaders refused to take one thought for the terrible to-morrow or to harden a single fibre of our giant but flabby strength. We drifted into the war on a sea of fatuous phrases and fatuous refusals to act. And then for a year we waged the war with irresolute feebleness. Meanwhile the Administration, through Mr. Baker, through Mr. Creel, through the President himself, have excused or denied the shortcomings, have announced that they regarded them with pride and delight and have persevered in them until draagooned out of them by hostile criticism. Yet with these facts staring us in the face there are still persons who regard the gospel of "not crying over spilt milk"

as an improvement on the gospel of calling sinners to repentance! Three years and nine months have passed since the great war began, and a year and a quarter since Germany forced us into it. We have every reason for pride in the gallantry of our little army abroad and every reason for shame that it is so small and that it has not a cannon or an airplane except those obtained from hard-pressed France. The enormous, the terrible battle which is now raging may decide the fate of the war and may therefore be of untold consequence to our own future. Yet if—as I believe it will be—it is won it will be won by France and England, with but little help from us; and if it is lost it will be lost because during the last year and a quarter and the preceding two years and a half we signally and lamentably failed to perform our duty. The government is now really endeavoring to send men across the water as rapidly as possible. It is now endeavoring to speed up the ship programme. It is now endeavoring to hurry the airplane programme. It is employing big men like Messrs. Stettinius, Schwab and Ryan, and apparently is giving them power. None of these things were done until Senator Chamberlain's committee, in the teeth of the violent opposition of the Administration, forced some efficiency and some speed into the work of war. If these obvious things and the other obvious things like them had been energetically begun a year and a quarter ago, the American army in France would now be the dominant factor in the war and the present battle would have been won long ago. If we had begun to prepare in August, 1914, the war would have been over long ago, and indeed we probably would never have had actually to fight in it, and an infinity of bloodshed would certainly have been saved. Verily, our own country and the world at large have paid, are paying and will pay, a heavy price for the milk spilt by the Administration; and the heaviest blame rests on those false leaders of public thought who told the people not to cry over the spilt milk, instead of telling them to call the sinners to repentance and to see that the repentance was sincere and effective. Let the sinners cease exulting over their sins, and in good faith bring forth fruits meet for repentance. We are now doing what we ought to have done a year and a quarter ago. We are now preparing to make our overseas army next October what it could have been made over long ago, and indeed we probably would never have had actually to fight in it, and an infinity of bloodshed would certainly have been saved. 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