

# NATIONAL DEFENSE PEACE INSURANCE

BY CLAIRE OLIPHANT

National President of The American Legion Auxiliary

THE preservation of peace and its relation to the instruments of national defense: In woman's enlarging public sphere no problem and no responsibility is of greater importance than this, and none is less correctly understood. Not all of the misunderstanding in this detail, of course, can be charged to the women, but as long as they carry the share of it which they do, they are scarcely in a position to point to the shortcomings of others. The proper thing is to set themselves right first.

The question of peace is one which bears with peculiar force upon the world today. We have lately emerged from an intimate experience with the alternative of peace, which is war. We have emerged from a war, but we have not recovered from it; but it surely is the prayer of every American woman that when we shall have recovered, that recovery shall be in the nature of a permanent cure, and that we shall have no more war. So the work for peace, and a general understanding among nations through some form of arrangement whereby international disputes may be adjudicated without recourse to arms before some form of world court, must go forward; this work must not be neglected now, even though we know in advance that the fruits of these labors will not ripen for a long time to come. Thus the question of what we can and cannot do effectively for peace at this time is a question which should be considered with care.

Should we—the United States, that is—disarm now and “set an example” to other Powers? Some say we should. We have earnest women working seriously in the advocacy of this cause. I am not one of their number, because I do not agree with them. Two hundred and fifty thousand women who are members of the organization which I have the honor to head do not agree with them, and I think this opinion reflects the sentiment of the ma-

majority of American women. For America to disarm now would be foolhardy and dangerous. It would be more likely to invite international friction, which is the first step toward war, than otherwise.

Disarmament must be gradual. The naval limitation treaty was a good start. The United States was willing to go farther at that Conference than the other nations were, and the fact that the pact of 1921 accomplished as much as it did is due in large measure to the advanced position taken by the American conferees. The American Legion has advocated, and President Coolidge has declared that he stands ready to call, a second arms limitation conference as soon as conditions in Europe indicate that such a conference would have a chance of succeeding. That indicates how "militaristic" this country is. Limitation should be extended to include air, submarine and land forces and poison gas, and these instruments of war have been specifically considered by the President in his efforts in behalf of another conference.

But until the propitious moment comes, the United States must not neglect its only present safeguards of peace, namely, the Army and the Navy, and the Air Services of those forces, and the industrial preparation upon which any rapid expansion of the instruments of defense to meet a national emergency must depend. A defenseless condition has never averted war. If any nation has, we certainly have given this theory of preserving the peace an adequate test. It has cost us hundreds of thousands of lives and hundreds of millions of dollars. We have never been properly prepared for war, yet wars have come along with fairly un-failing regularity. We deliberately invited war in 1812 by our defenseless condition. We got it, and our school histories are ashamed to tell the truth about it. Our trained merchant seamen, drafted into the Navy, saved us from defeat. National defense cannot be improvised except at a staggering expense, which is an injustice to any people.

After all, conditions are not so greatly different now from what they were seven years after the Revolutionary War. Then we talked about our "splendid isolation". We said the last war, as far as we were concerned, had been fought, except possibly a few brushes with the Indians. George Washington did not say that.

He wanted a good Regular Army and an Officers' Reserve Corps. But Congress said this would be a waste of money, that taxes were high enough, and we must not be going around with a chip on our shoulder. The people supported Congress, and everything was lovely until the British dropped in on us and burned the capitol.

Due to the repeated costly lessons of one hundred years past, we have provided ourselves with the legal means for a sane national defense in peace time. It becomes now only a question of informing public opinion so that the laws in this respect may be carried out.

We have the National Defense Act of 1920, which calls for an adequate but small Regular Army, capable of quick expansion; a competent National Guard; an Officers' Reserve Corps; and a plan of general mobilization which shall be tested from time to time. This is the meaning of Defense Day. It is a demonstration of our plan for a general mobilization under the Defense Act, a plan which affects every community and almost every household. It is something we should know much more about. We have gone back to the old and peculiarly American idea of community protection. In case of an emergency, every village and town and locality raises its quota for the common defense, raises and sees it uniformed and equipped and drilled on the spot, before it marches off to a neighboring town and assembles with other local companies to form a regiment, which in turn joins with other regiments to form a division.

An inkling of the idea got into the public mind last September, when the first Defense Day demonstrations were observed. It will be a little better understood this year, I hope, and these defense tests should continue until every man and every woman knows his place in event of trouble.

We have the 5-5-3 ratio naval agreement, which three years after the event is as much of a mystery to most people as Defense Day is. Women owe it to themselves to know what that treaty means, and to know why our Navy is not kept up to treaty strength. The reason, of course, that it is not kept up to treaty strength is because we are not sufficiently interested in the matter. If we knew what it was all about we would be interested—enough

of us would to form a public opinion which would demand that our Navy be kept up and not neglected as it had been, until Congress this last winter stirred itself and made a partial reparation in the matter.

For three years the American Legion has been at work on a proposed item of legislation which is popularly known as The Universal Draft Act. It is possible, that before Congress adjourns on March 4, this bill will have been reported by the Military Affairs Committee of the House; but in any event it has been before the Congress during two sessions now and has received considerable attention, if little definite action, toward its eventual passage. At the next session of Congress, however, the Legion and the Legion Auxiliary will press vigorously for the passage of this bill. It will be the most significant piece of legislation bearing on the question of national defense this country has enacted in a generation. I am thankful that between now and the convening of the next Congress the women of the country will have an opportunity to inform themselves about this measure and to assist in swelling the voice of public sentiment which will insist on its enactment.

This bill would place all war service on an equal plane as regards obligations to serve and remuneration from the public purse. It is a peace measure, it is a preparedness measure, it is a measure of justice and equity. It would draft soldiers to fight, as heretofore; it would draft labor to work, and capital to provide the facilities which are essential to the great industrial effort which must stand back of armies and navies on the field of action.

The armed forces are the small end of a war effort. In the last war it has been figured out that the work of seventeen men behind the lines was required to keep one soldier on the front provided with the wherewithal required for him to transact his business there. About fifteen of these seventeen men were not in uniform. We sent 2,000,000 soldiers to France and 3,000,000 civilians toiled in the ordnance factories alone at home. The soldiers worked or fought, as fell their lot, for a dollar a day. The civilian workers got twelve dollars a day. Some of the civilian capitalists got \$12,000 a day. There was scandalous profiteering by those who took advantage of the necessities of the Government. The Gov-

ernment's common method of dealing with industry was by means of the cost plus contract by which the contractor was guaranteed free from loss—which meant that he could not possibly lose a dollar on his contract and he might make millions; as most generally he did.

This bill would eliminate profiteering, or at any rate make it exceedingly difficult and hazardous. It would safeguard peace by averting hasty declarations of war and curbing the Jingoës. It would be the greatest preparedness measure known, because it would increase ten-fold the national effectiveness in a war effort. It would be a measure of common justice—"the only square way to fight a war," as Colonel Drain, the National Commander of the Legion, so tersely puts it. This bill is the product of three years of close and continuous study and research. It has the endorsement of the General Staff of the Army and of some of the leading peace advocates of the country in Congress and out. It seems to be the one thing touching the question of national defense which has been put forward so far, on which both the preparedness and the non-preparedness people generally have been able to agree; which indicates that we are all working toward the same goal, which is Peace, though we oftentimes disagree as to the best road to get us there.

These are just a few of the things which surround this question of peace in its relation to the instruments of national defense—which is just one of the questions which the women of America, accepting the full responsibilities of citizenship, are in duty bound to consider. It is merely an item in an extensive campaign of education for better citizenship to which the American Legion Auxiliary, in coöperation with the other women's groups throughout the land, has determined earnestly to address its efforts.

CLAIRE OLIPHANT.

## VOTING AND VOTE-SLACKING

BY CHARLES H. SHERRILL

BACK in 1896, 84 per cent. of those qualified to vote in the United States did their duty at the polls. In 1920 a little over 49 per cent. voted, and in 1924 a little more than 50 per cent.

Is voting an important part of a citizen's duty or is it not? Are we, or are we not, living in a glass house and throwing stones at outsiders? We love to sneer at elections in other lands, and especially at those in Latin-American republics. We claim to be the most successful example of a free and enlightened democracy, and especially point with pride to the safeguards which surround our ballot boxes. Any American political writer will tell you how superior is our republic to France, and how much more advanced in political thought than Argentina. But what are the facts? Even a slight investigation will disclose the glass house in which we are residing.

No one knows better than we that a free and enlightened people should evidence their interest in their own government by voting. Our newspapers have been full of this for the last year. There are several reasons why our vote last November should have been unusually large. In the first place, it was a national election, which means that all political parties were doing their utmost to increase the vote. Secondly, there was a vigorous non-partisan campaign being conducted to the same end. Thirdly, unusual interest was aroused by the emergence of a third party led by Mr. LaFollette. The disheartening result was that our vote proved but slightly more than in 1920. Our population had increased 14.9 per cent., and yet in 1924 we voted only 28,924,070 against 26,711,183 in 1920. The LaFollette movement increased the vote in the industrial States over that in 1920, but the 1924 vote was less than that of 1920 in eighteen other States, viz.: Alabama, Arizona, Arkansas, Delaware, Flor-