

Carlsbad 1819

Like another Chouannerie

Sweet reassurances of old American pacifism

January 8, 2018 by Nulle Terre Sans Seigneur

From the (<https://archive.org/stream/jstor-27904480/27904480#page/n1/mode/2up>). November 1869 issue of the Advocate of Peace, the newspaper of the American Peace Society (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/American_Peace_Society). (said peace was not supported for the Confederacy, though):

In 1820, says Edmond Potonie, "Europe supported 1,200,000 men; in 1865, it reached 3,800,000; now it is more than six millions. While Europe is burdened by her armies, the young and vigorous America, which reckoned 1,050,000 men in the Federal Army on the first of May, 1865, had disbanded 700,000 by the last of the same year, and to-day (1869), there are but 25,000 men under the flag. Is it better to lose the training, or to lose the people ? "

Mark in this the tendency of large armaments in Europe to a steady, indefinite increase. Here is an increase of 600 per cent, in less than fifty years. Where is this enormous evil to stop? If not arrested, must it not end in universal, irredeemable bankruptcy?

Our own policy is a striking contrast. We have at most only the germ, or nucleus of a regular army, but nothing that would in Europe be called a Standing Army. Ours is only a handful of men trained to arms, as a species of national police to aid the government in enforcing its laws. It does not profess to be a preparation for actual war ; and whenever that comes, the men and the materials must be extemporized to meet the emergency.

Thus ours is a system, not so much of war as of peace ; and this policy, if adopted by Europe, would effect there a disarmament far beyond what even the friends of peace, most of them, have hitherto demanded ; for we do not understand them as objecting to the use, if necessary, of an armed police for the support of government in the execution of its laws. Even the London Peace Society, thought to be sufficiently radical, has always recognized the right and duty of rulers to enforce law against its violators, and thus guard the peace and welfare of society at large.

Thus our war-system, if such it may be called, is quite unlike that of Europe. The latter is kept up at as great an expense as the people can be made to bear, not to preserve peace and order at home, but to fight other nations, while ours is used chiefly as a handmaid of our government in supporting its authority among ourselves, and ensuring a due enforcement of our laws. Its duties are for the country at large very like the local police in Boston or New York. Its main purpose is not War but Peace — peace at home ; and if the habits of our people, and the policy of our government were to prevail all over Europe, they would go far to supersede her present war-system, and certainly would insure a more entire disarmament there than has yet been proposed.

Is not our duty then plain and imperative as leaders to the world in peace, as well as in freedom and popular government ? Such, we think, is now our special mission. The habits of our people, and the policy of our government peculiarly qualify us to do this ; and we certainly can, if we will, do it more easily and more effectually than any other nation. We now stand confessedly at the head of other governmental reforms ; and if we will champion this greatest of them all, we shall cap the climax of our achievements for the benefit of our race.

Well...

That didn't last.

"Leaders to the world in peace, freedom and popular government" did, though. Evidently the constitutional changes since Reconstruction by then had totally went under their noses, but that just might have been intentional ignorance.

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