

The Public

the mouth, with no treachery, only plain duty well performed.—Springfield (Mass.) Republican.

THE WAR SPIRIT.

To secure permanent peace the cause of war must be removed, and the cause of war is a psychological one. It is a temper, or what is called in New England "a frame of mind." It is readiness to fight, and the readiness awaits only the occasion. The occasion may be fanciful or real. The war spirit needs but the spark to set off the mine.

This readiness to fight rests upon a traditional belief, as old as savage tribes, that the interests of tribes and nations are antagonistic. What is well for Spain must be bad for Germany. What is bad for Russia must be well for England. China's and Japan's interests cannot be mutual, cannot harmonize, must be antagonistic. And this the world over. Among nations there must be supremacy on the part of one nation, not equality among all. The natives of India must be kept under, and England must be on top, as if it might never occur to any sane statesman that both might be on top. And because the interests of nations are antagonistic, each nation must be ready to defend its rights; not only this, but be alert to grasp more.

No one seems to dream that the logic of all this is isolation first, and lastly total annihilation.

Because to cripple another nation reduces the commercial value of that nation; to destroy that nation makes one less customer. And to cripple and destroy many nations looks to a logical result of leaving the destroying nation in a state of isolation, till one day it remains alone in the awful stillness wrought by subjugating extermination. Of course, this extremity is never reached. This is only the logic of it, but courses rarely run to their logical ends. And I point this out only to show that the principle involved is at fault somewhere. The truth is this—the interests of nations are not antagonistic, but are mutual.

To set up this principle of mutual interests is to remove the cause of war. I admit that temporary advantage often arises from the misfortunes of others, and this temporary advantage has blinded statesmen to the truth that mutual interest is the condition upon which rests the permanent prosperity of any nation.

A famine in India makes the London stock market active, and wheat is bullish. But when thousands and tens of thousands perish of hunger there is something involved besides

sentiment. A generation of consumers is swept from the earth, little or much as may be their consumption. The future markets react, and the bull market in wheat becomes a boomerang. It all illustrates the principle that nations, like individuals, and they in turn, like the members of the body—arms, legs and hands—are members one of another; and where one suffers, in the long run, each and all must suffer.—Rev. Samuel Richard Fuller, in *The Coming Age*.

LAWSON PURDY'S PLAN FOR TAX REFORM.

J. E. Scripps, in Detroit News of April 22. Hon. Lawson Purdy's suggestions for tax reform, launched at the dinner given by the merchants and manufacturers of Detroit last week, were really a notable presentation of an entirely novel theory in governmental economics.

We have heard in the past a good deal about local option in taxation, but we have all understood by it something exceptional, rather than a general system. Without interference with the machinery of the general state tax law, the advocates of local option have urged the granting of the power to cities to raise revenues for municipal purposes in any way they choose. This has been the extent of the idea in the past.

But now comes Mr. Purdy with a proposal that local option be made the general rule, and not an exceptional thing. In effect, he would make the counties, or perhaps the townships, the independent units in the exercise of the taxing powers, the first prerogative of government. It is a step in the direction of bringing the power of government still nearer to the people.

When optional taxation has been talked of for the municipal revenues it has always been conceded that the state and county taxes would have to be raised in the old way, because the constitution requires uniformity of taxation. A double system has thus been supposed to be necessary where a city adopts any rule differing from that adopted by the state. No one hitherto seems to have thought any other condition possible.

Mr. Purdy's proposal, therefore, of a system under which local option could be enjoyed without the duplication of the taxing machinery came like a ray of light into what was all darkness before. His plan, briefly outlined, is for every county and city to raise its revenues in any way it pleases, then for the amount of the

state budget to be assessed upon the counties in direct proportion to the amount they tax themselves for local purposes. The beauty of this system lies in its giving to the counties some say as to how much they will contribute for state purposes. If any county wished to get off lightly it would only be necessary to keep down its local expenses, while if lavish in its appropriations for county purposes it has the full liberty to be so, but with full knowledge that thereby it assumes also a larger share of the state expenses.

Practically, under this system, the general law might be repealed, and all the expensive and cumbersome machinery of the tax department of the auditor-general's office done away with. The legislature would still control the amount of the annual budget, which amount would be assessed by the proper state officers upon the several counties and municipalities in direct proportion to the amounts which they taxed themselves for local purposes.

In effect, it would be an application of the principle of the income tax. Every locality would be taxed for state purposes upon the basis of its local income or revenues. Theoretically nothing could be more perfect or equitable.

There is one very strong argument for it. It would bring the control of the purse strings so close to the people that economy in the public service would be greatly promoted. As it is, the people are enslaved to a system. They have no voice whatever in the apportionment of the state tax, and this makes them careless as to the county and municipal burdens laid upon them. Their only present mode of relief is the swearing down of their individual assessments, or removal to some township, or state where local taxes are lighter or assessments more loosely made.

There can be no doubt that under our present system this is becoming one of the worst tax-ridden countries in the world. One Detroit citizen remarked the other evening that it took fully one-tenth of his entire income to pay his taxes. This would be the equivalent of a laboring man who earns \$600 having to pay a tax of \$60. It is altogether too burdensome. And yet the burden is growing year by year.

No better remedy has been suggested than that proposed by Mr. Purdy, which is to bring the taxing power down very close to the people.