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The nation's security.

1914



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THE NATION'S SECURITY
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How About Our Army and Navy?

SPEECH
OF
HON. AUGUSTUS P. GARDNER
OF MASSACHUSETTS

IN THE
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

OCTOBER 16, 1914



WASHINGTON
GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE

1914

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SPEECH
OF
HON. AUGUSTUS P. GARDNER.

Mr. GARDNER. Mr. Speaker, yesterday I introduced House joint resolution 372, "Providing for a national security commission."

This resolution calls for an investigation whose purpose is to ascertain whether the United States is prepared for war. To-day I am addressing this body because I need help in pressing that resolution to a hearing.

A DELIBERATE DELUSION.

For a dozen years I have sat here like a coward, and I have listened to men say that in time of war we could depend for our defense upon our National Guard and our Naval Militia, and I have known all of the time that it was not so. I am a former militiaman myself. I am a veteran of the Spanish War, and I tell you that any such doctrine is the supremest folly. Under that delusion in 10 short years we have allowed our Navy to slough away from a strong second to England, until now it is a very bad third and is fast sinking to fourth or fifth place. The theory in this country that we can create an army and a navy right off the reel is totally and entirely wrong. After war breaks out you can not improvise a dreadnought, you can not improvise a torpedo, you can not improvise a 42-centimeter howitzer, you can not improvise a traveling concrete plant, you can not improvise plants for inflating Zeppelin balloons, you can not improvise sailors.

All those things must be provided in time of peace, and yet we are neglecting them. And, my friends, you can not make a fighting regiment out of a militia organization until you have either eliminated 20 per cent of the personnel of that militia organization or stiffened their resistance against the instinct of self-preservation. I have been a militiaman. I have seen militiamen go into the Spanish War. Many a lad enters the National Guard in times of peace and then is ashamed not to volunteer when war breaks out. He goes to war half-heartedly, hoping against hope that when the time comes he will be brave. Perhaps he may be brave, but often and often the spirit is willing and yet the flesh is weak. That 20 per cent I spoke of is quite enough to disorganize the best material which ever went to war.

The militia has seldom been dependable in a tight place in the past. You have got to go through the long, weary process of cutting out the timid and hardening the rest before your National Guard regiment will become an effective Volunteer regiment.

THE STORY OF THE SPANISH WAR.

"Oh, yes," somebody says to me, "that is the same old story that we have been hearing so long, that the United States is

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not prepared for war." My friends, it is the same old story, and it is a true old story. We were not prepared for war when the Spanish War broke out in 1898 and we were not prepared for war when the Spanish War ended.

At the end of April, 1898, war was declared against Spain, and there came a call for volunteers, for 125,000 only. Afterwards, in May, came a call for 75,000 more volunteers. Did those volunteers mobilize, all equipped, rushing to the front like the coming of the wind? By no means. A great many of those volunteers have not mobilized yet. Did you know, Mr. Speaker, that in the Spanish War a great many States of this Union were unable to supply their entire quota until after the war was ended? If the gentleman from Pennsylvania, Gen. HULINGS, were here to-day, he would tell you that on the 9th day of August, 1898, at Coamo, P. R., three months and a half after war was declared, he led his men into action, armed with rifles which had only been in their hands for three days. In Cuba during the Spanish War, in the month of July, two regiments went into battle armed with short-range Springfield rifles, shooting black-powder cartridges. There in the press gallery sits Sergt. Goodwin, of Company K, Third Texas. Were he on the floor he could tell you how his company for five months had to put up with antique black-powder Springfield. To be sure, many of those valuable relics were at least safe, for they had no triggers and no plungers.

Mr. KAHN. Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. GARDNER. Certainly.

Mr. KAHN. I can assure the gentleman that the situation is not as bad as that to-day. We have 800,000 rifles of the Springfield 1904 pattern, and that is the greatest reserve that this country has ever had at any one time.

Mr. GARDNER. I was coming to our rifle reserve. On my right another Spanish War veteran, Mr. GREENE of Vermont, reminds me that those two regiments in Cuba, of which I spoke, were armed with ramrod bayonets instead of intrenching tools.

DEAF TO EVIDENCE.

Let us see if the situation is much better to-day. The naval board is continually dinning into our ears a story of the unpreparedness of the United States for war. Every time he issues a report, Gen. Wood tells us the same thing about the Army. He appeals to us to arise from our lethargy and take an interest in these questions which are vital to the Nation. Yet we go on slumbering and gibbering and scattering money for all sorts of projects wherever the votes grow thickest, and I am just as bad as anyone else in that respect. What is the matter with us? Are we blind? Are we crazy? Do we not see? Of course we see, but we know that every boy in the United States is brought up to believe that we can "lick" all creation, and we are ashamed, we are afraid, to go to our constituents and tell them the truth. I have been afraid all these dozen years to turn around and say to the National Guard in my district, "We can not depend on the greater part of the National Guard to do effective service in time of war." In all the dozen years that I have known that fact until this minute I have never said so.

We Congressmen have been salving our consciences by trying to believe that no one would dare attack the United States. Are

you so confident of that assumption now, gentlemen? Do you believe that if, after this war, Germany found the Monroe doctrine standing in her way—Germany or any other powerful nation—do you feel so sure that she would pay any attention to that doctrine of ours if the redundancy of her population forced her to look about for colonial outlets?

THE MONROE DOCTRINE AND ASIATIC EXCLUSION.

The United States by the Monroe doctrine has said to the world, "You must not colonize in Mexico and you must not colonize in South America—rich, fertile South America. We do not intend to colonize there ourselves, but you shall not colonize there, either. You shall not be allowed to overflow America with colonies recruited from your teeming population." Do you believe that we can maintain any such doctrine unless we are prepared to fight for it? Then again, we have looked square in the eye of the most military nation which Asia has ever known, and we have said, "We will have none of you within our borders." Do you suppose a proud people like the Japanese will continue to listen with equanimity to a doctrine like that, unless behind that doctrine lies a force which can put it into effect? Perhaps men may say that the Monroe doctrine and the Asiatic exclusion doctrine are prompted by national selfishness. So be it. I concur in both doctrines. I am ready to battle for them and I am ready to pay the bill for enforcing them.

Possibly the world may think that this country is a dog in the manger in its attitude toward South America and Mexico. At all events let us not be toothless dogs in the manger, who bark noisily, but when it comes to biting are found wanting.

THE NAVY.

I believe that our naval school at Annapolis leads the world. My race prejudice leads me to believe that perhaps English-speaking men make a little the best sailors in the world. There our advantages end. Let us try not to fool ourselves. Competent officers and brave men will not offset the difference between a 6-inch gun and a 12-inch gun.

How many men do you think we need in order to man the modest Navy which we have? We need from 75,000 to 100,000 men. And how many do you think that we have? We have just about 50,000 men and some 9,000 Naval Militia. Before we can mobilize our entire fleet, if it is all worth mobilizing, which it is not, we must enlist approximately 41,000 raw recruits, many of whom never saw the sea in their whole lives.

We have been reading about the exploits of the submarine which the Germans call U-9. We are told that she sank three British cruisers by three successive torpedoes. Perhaps you think we might do the same thing. We might if we had the torpedoes, but do you realize that we have on the average only one long-range torpedo, built or building, for each torpedo tube with which our vessels are supplied?

Mr. BORLAND. Does the gentleman care to yield?

Mr. GARDNER. Certainly.

Mr. BORLAND. My understanding is, and I ask if it be correct, that the United States has spent more on its Navy in recent years per year than any nation except Great Britain; that we have exceeded annually the naval expenditure of Germany by twelve or fifteen million dollars. Is not that the fact?

Mr. GARDNER. I do not know. What effect does that have on the argument?

Mr. BOIRLAND. Under those conditions ought we not to have a better Navy?

Mr. GARDNER. I can not tell the gentleman. I am talking about the results, not about the causes. I do not wish to go into controversial matters of that sort. I know the answer and so does the gentleman who interrupted me. Construction is expensive in this country and our crews are highly paid. The German crews are unpaid, I think.

Mr. Speaker, as I was saying, we have only one long-range torpedo for each torpedo tube. You might almost as well have one projectile for each gun, except that torpedoes cost \$8,000 each, and they are said to take nearly one year to build.

The plans of modern warfare on the sea require fast scouts to keep in touch with the enemy and find out where he is. These scouts must have a minimum speed of 30 knots an hour. How many such scouts do you suppose we have? Mr. Speaker, we have only three of these scouts with which to obtain our information. Germany has 14 fast scouts, and Great Britain has 31. How about the great fighting weapon, the ship which must lie across the ocean paths and intercept the enemy? How about the dreadnought and the dreadnought cruiser, the great, strong fighting men-of-war? Let us see how we stand in that respect. Great Britain has 42 dreadnoughts and dreadnought cruisers built and building. Germany has 26. We have only 12, and three just authorized. "Oh," you say, "the day of dreadnoughts has gone by; it is submarines which we want." I do not agree with you that the dreadnought's day has passed, but most certainly I believe that we need a powerful fleet of submarines. Let us see how we stand in that respect. Great Britain has 64 submarines, and we are fourth on the list. So it goes—we are short of nearly every kind of vessel and nearly every kind of armament. The longer it takes to build things, by some strange chance it seems as if the shorter we were of them.

Now, if we have not got a fleet, ship for ship, which matches the fleet which comes against us we probably can not stop that opposing fleet. If we can not stop his fleet, the enemy can land his troops anywhere on the coast of the United States that he sees fit. We have no Army wherewith to oppose them.

THE ARMY.

Do you know what we have got in the way of an Army? Do you know what we have got with which to oppose 4,000,000 trained men, which happens to be the war strength of the German Army? Do you realize that we have only about 85,000 regulars and about 120,000 militia? Are those militia trained? Why, Mr. Speaker, 60 per cent of the men in the militia who are armed with a rifle do not know how to use it properly. Sixty per cent last year were unable to qualify even as third-class marksmen.

Half of that 60 per cent—30 per cent—did not even try to qualify with the rifle. That is all which we have got to defend us. What is the use of talking this arrant lumbbug any more to the country? I am telling you the truth. That is what we have got to face. But I do not blame you gentlemen.

I blame the inflated optimism which has led us to believe that we can whip all creation.

Mr. Speaker, as the gentleman from California [Mr. KAHN] said, it is a fact that at last we have nearly one million modern rifles on which we can depend. How about our artillery? Let us see what Gen. Wood, the Chief of Staff, said in his report last year. He tells us of the "alarming condition of shortage" in our field artillery guns and ammunition.

Present-day events are showing that it is mighty dangerous to be weak in artillery.

Of course, it is evident that our main defense must be the Navy. This country will not tolerate these huge European land armaments. But at all events we can vastly increase the Regular Army without putting an undue burden on the taxpayers. Furthermore, we can equip it with plenty of the latest artillery; we can equip it with plenty of the latest machines for fighting in the air; we can double the number of our officers; we can treble the number of our noncommissioned officers; and, by the way, all England to-day is posted with advertisements offering inducements for old noncommissioned officers to rejoin the colors.

Mr. HUMPHREYS of Mississippi. Will the gentleman yield for a question?

Mr. GARDNER. Yes.

Mr. HUMPHREYS of Mississippi. How long does it require to manufacture the ordinary field artillery?

Mr. GARDNER. The 3s?

Mr. HUMPHREYS of Mississippi. I do not know how many "3s" there are.

Mr. GARDNER. No one knows how long it takes to manufacture the 42-centimeter guns, because they are quite new in war. I understand that it takes a year to manufacture certain kinds of cannon, but I believe that it can be done more expeditiously in the Krupp factory than in the United States.

Mr. HUMPHREYS of Mississippi. I am speaking of the character of field artillery that we have now.

Mr. GARDNER. A member of the Committee on Military Affairs on my right tells me that it takes nine months to make the ordinary field artillery; that is, the horse artillery.

Mr. HUMPHREYS of Mississippi. The gentleman will pardon me. The answer usually made is that it takes a long time to build a navy, but that we could very readily put an army in the field, because we could get the men.

Mr. GARDNER. If the gentleman has followed my argument he knows that I believe that we can not get the men in a short space of time.

Mr. HUMPHREYS of Mississippi. I believe so, too. I believe as the gentleman does. It would be utterly impossible for us to equip the Army with artillery under 12 months; it matters not how much money we were willing to spend.

Mr. GARDNER. If you want to build this enormous German artillery, which is drawn by two motors and pushed by a third, no one knows how long it will take to do so.

Mr. MONTAGUE. I did not understand the gentleman's statement just now. Was it that we could not get the men, or what was it?

Mr. GARDNER. In my opinion it would take a long time to get the men. I have stated my own belief that militia must not be depended upon for our defense.

Mr. MONTAGUE. May I ask the gentleman what is the need, then, of exposing our weakness to the world at this particular time?

Mr. GARDNER. That is what gentlemen have been saying right along. Meanwhile we have gone ahead telling our boys that we can whip the world without half trying. The gentleman says that we must not tell the world of our weakness. The fact is that foreigners already perceive our weakness a great deal more clearly than the American people do.

Mr. KAHN. Will the gentleman yield?

Mr. GARDNER. Yes.

Mr. HUMPHREYS of Mississippi. The fact is that the American people are the only people who do not know it. Is not that a fact?

Mr. KAHN. The gentleman has referred to the report of Gen. Leonard Wood of last year in reference to our inefficiency in the artillery branch of our establishment. Does not the gentleman know we appropriated some millions of dollars for the increase of the artillery in the last military appropriation bill?

CONCLUSION.

Mr. GARDNER. I know there has been an improvement in artillery, but what I am contending for is a radical change, not a palliative. The whole matter lies deeper than Congress. The trouble is that we have never dared to tell the people that they are living in a fool's paradise, for fear that we should antagonize somebody and perhaps incur the charge that we are revealing our weakness to foreign nations, as if there were any secret about our weakness which we could conceal if we tried. The truth is that each one of us is afraid that some National-Guard man in his district will say, "Why, that man GARDNER says I am no good. I will teach him." That is why the people of the United States have not yet awakened to the understanding that 42-centimeter guns and superdreadnoughts present stronger arguments than past victories and present treaties.

APPENDIX.

Statement given to the press October 15, 1914, by Congressman GARDNER, of Massachusetts, upon the introduction of House joint resolution 372, "Providing for a national security commission: "

TOTALLY UNPREPARED FOR WAR.

I have introduced this resolution to investigate the military status of the United States, because I know that a public searchlight will open the eyes of Americans to a situation which is being concealed from them.

The United States is totally unprepared for a war, defensive or offensive, against a real power. In my opinion, the effect of the vast sums of money spent by Mr. Carnegie in his peace propaganda has been to blind Americans to the fact that our national security from a military point of view is undermined.

Nearly every Army and Navy officer to whom I have spoken tells me the same story of inadequate security. I have yet to speak to a single member of either the Committee on Naval Affairs or the Committee on Military Affairs of the House of Representatives, in whose

judgment I have confidence, who does not, in private, make exactly the same admission. Yet all these gentlemen seem to consider it their duty to refrain from making any public statement.

THE MONROE DOCTRINE.

We are the most prosperous nation on earth, and to the south of us lies the wonderful South American continent, which we have closed to European colonization by the Monroe Doctrine. I simply can not understand how any intelligent student of history can fail to see that we are impotent to defend ourselves and to enforce the Monroe Doctrine by moral suasion and financial might alone.

THE GERMAN MENACE TO DEMOCRACY.

The time has not yet come when the United States can afford to allow the martial spirit of her sons to be destroyed, and all the Carnegie millions in the world will not silence those of us who believe that bullets can not be stopped with bombast nor powder vanquished by platitudes.

It is true that with respect to the present European war my views are not those of a neutral. I am entirely convinced that the German cause is unholy and, moreover, a menace to the principles of democracy. Furthermore, I believe that the god of battles will visit defeat upon the Germans.

OUR SECURITY DEMANDS IMMEDIATE ACTION.

But no matter which side wins we must remember that since the beginning of time victorious nations have proved headstrong and high-handed. We must begin at once to reorganize our military strength if we expect to be able to resist high-handedness when the day of necessity comes.

Of course, all this is unpopular doctrine. It would be far easier for me to declare that all is well and that our present military establishment, coupled with our national guard and our naval militia, is to be depended upon for our defense. Unfortunately I can not bring myself to believe any such thing.

Mr. GARDNER introduced the following joint resolution, which was referred to the Committee on Rules and ordered to be printed:

Joint resolution (H. J. Res. 372) providing for a national security commission.

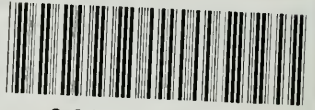
Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That a commission is hereby created, to be called the national security commission, consisting of three Senators, to be appointed by the President of the Senate, and three Members of the House of Representatives, to be appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives, and three persons to be appointed by the President of the United States. Said commission shall make full investigation, by subcommittee or otherwise, into the question of the preparedness of the United States for war, defensive or offensive. Said commission shall report to the Congress its findings and shall make such recommendations as in its judgment may seem proper.

For the purpose of said investigation said commission is authorized to send for persons and papers, to make all necessary travel, either in the United States or any foreign country, and to administer oaths. Such sums of money as may be necessary to carry out the purposes of this resolution are hereby appropriated out of any money in the Treasury not otherwise appropriated: *Provided,* That not more than one Senator and one Member of the House of Representatives appointed on said commission shall be a member either of the Committee on Military Affairs or of the Committee on Naval Affairs of their respective bodies.

Syracuse, N. Y.

PAT. JAN. 21, 1908

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