

UNITED STATES NAVY

ADMIRAL DEWEY'S DEFENCE.  
SHIPS AND MEN GOOD.

The death of Admiral Dewey recalls a recent spirited defence he made of the Navy with which his name has been so long identified. For two years and more the United States Navy has been the subject of discussion as bitter as it is confused, wrote a New York World representative who obtained the Admiral's views. The disputes between pacifists and militarists, between Democrats and Republicans, and out of it all have come prejudices that do not care to bother with facts.

The people of the United States are entitled to the truth. Is the navy, as it stands to-day, an asset or a liability?

One man only has the authority and possesses the exact knowledge to answer dispassionately these questions. That man is Admiral George Dewey. He has, been in the U.S. navy since 1854, serving through two wars. Since 1903 he has been head of the General Board, passing upon naval defects, naval needs and naval plans. No Administration has power to hurt him. By law he is exempted from the usual retirement provisions, and if he does decide to retire, it will be of his own volition and at full pay. No partisan quarrel has ever had power to drag him from his height.

INDIGNANT OVER CRITICISMS.

Aside from these qualifications, he is loved of the American people as few men have ever been loved. In a day when there is much talk of Americanism, he stands as one who has risked his life for it, and who has devoted that life to giving richer, finer meaning to the word. I found him in Atlantic City, in a great, wind-swept room that looked out over the sea. His hair has whitened, but otherwise he is but little changed by the years that have passed since the wonderful day he returned from Manila to hear the shouts of a Nation. The same clear, steadfast eyes, the same tremendous simplicity, the same faith in America!

Speaking slowly, but never hesitating, for three long hours, he considered the United States navy, past present and future; world war, world peace, national ideals and national destiny. Only in his first answers, when an evident indignation gripped him, did he depart from the tone of one trying to pick his words in the interest of understanding.

"The attacks that have been made upon the navy," he said, "are as false as many of them are shameful. It is not a junk heap. There is no demoralisation. Both in material and personnel we are more efficient to-day than ever before. Our ships are as good as any, our officers are as good as any, and our enlisted men are the finest in the world."

"It is true that we have not enough ships or enough men. But navies are not built in a day. It was between 1906 and 1909 that Germany passed us, and that we commenced to lose rank as a naval power. This is in no sense a criticism of Administrations. Congress, after all, expresses public sentiment in large degree, and the reason we dropped was because the people wanted the drop. The recommendations of the General Board went unheeded because they were not backed up by public opinion. Until 1914, people were thinking in terms of world peace. It is different to-day, and it is to-day that should concern us."

He walked over to his desk and taking up a copy of the Senate Navy Bill spread it out before him. For a moment, as if to measure his words, he tapped it with a big, brown, forefinger, and then he said: "This is the best bill ever passed by either House of any Congress. It takes the five-year programme of the General Board and changes it into a three-year programme. If passed, it will restore us to second place and enable the United States to meet on equal terms any Power in the world save one."

"A feature of the Skagerack engagement," he continued, "was the convincing demonstration of the usefulness of the destroyer. These tiny ships, primarily designed to serve the purpose of a screen, to be outriders for the big ships, have been regarded as incapable of attacking first-class ships in the daytime. The German destroyers descended upon the British fleet in broad daylight, and the destroyers of both fleets played an important part in the fighting. We feel that the bill's provision for fifty destroyers is amply justified. So!" He turned in the chair and clasped his hands together. "It is a bill that gives us strength, and, best of all, a bill that gives us balance."

WHY U.S. NEEDS A GREAT NAVY "Granting all that," I said, "but what about the need of it?" As carefully and fairly as possible, I presented the feeling of many people in many Western and Middle West States—a feeling that this expenditure of millions on the navy was a departure from American traditions, a hysterical surrender to the madness that has had hold on kings. His fine head nodded appreciation of every point, but at the end he spread wide his hands in a sweeping gesture of dissent. "I know that I am not a militarist," he said, "those who have never seen war, or who have only played at war, may talk in terms of jingoism, but men who know what war is, and what war does, are the last in the world to approach it in

any swashbuckling fashion. I hope the day will come when peace and justice rule the world, but that day is not yet here. Not all our idealism can brush away facts. If we are to dwell in peace, we must be able to protect that peace." He walked to the open window and pointed to the shimmering stretches of the sea. "Look at our coast line! From Maine to the Canal; from the Canal to Alaska! Russia has had to maintain two distinct fleets, one in the Baltic, one in the Black Sea. Our problem is much the same. We cannot be said to have met our defensive needs until we are able to maintain a fleet in the Pacific Ocean as well as in the Atlantic. Our geography, the immensity of our coast line, join to make the Senate Navy Bill a minimum requirement. No! No!" he exclaimed. "We must accept conditions as we find them, although we are not to give up hope of changing the conditions."

"Given this increase," he declared, "given the ships and men that this bill provides, and the United States, as never before, will be a peace power, able at all times to protect and to advance its standards. Every cent appropriated by this bill is payment on an insurance policy."

"How about men?" "We now have 55,000, and the bill authorises 74,500." "Can you get them?" "I don't think there is a doubt of it. The navy to-day offers as fine a chance for the American youth to fit himself for life as any other department of endeavour."

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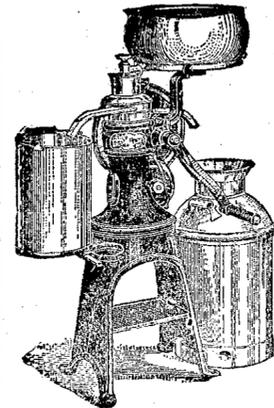
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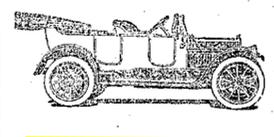
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