
More Soldiers

by Eugene V. Debs

Published in *Locomotive Firemen's Magazine*, vol. 10, no. 8 (Aug. 1886), pp. 453-454.

Hon. Charles F. Manderson, representing the state of Nebraska in the United States Senate, is seriously alarmed, because the regular or standing army of the United States, in numbers, is so small and its organization so imperfect.¹ Mr. Manderson, of Nebraska, as his vision sweeps around the horizon, sees war clouds in various quarters; in fact, at almost every point of the compass, he is able to discern portents of war. He wants to be prepared. The distinguished Senator, almost the first time he addressed the Senate, fired off a war speech. He quotes the constitution, that Congress has power "to raise and support armies, provide and maintain a navy, provide for organizing, arming and disciplining the militia, and for calling them forth to execute the laws of the Union, suppress insurrection and repel invasion." And having all these powers, the Nebraska statesman wants Congress to exercise them fully and forthwith. And he maintains that if Congress, in the past, had exercised its powers to raise and support armies, provide and maintain a navy, etc., "many of the darkest pages of our history would never have been written."

The Manderson idea appears to be, that where large standing armies are kept in readiness to fight, no fighting occurs. He would have the country believe that if the Colonies had had a large standing army, England would never have provoked the revolutionary war; that if the United States, in 1812, had had a large standing army, England would not have insulted our flag on the high seas; that if we had had a large standing army, the war with Mexico would never have oc-

¹ **Charles F. Manderson** (1837-1911) was a Nebraska Republican who was elected to two terms in the US Senate. He was an officer during the American civil war, mustering out as a brevetted brigadier general of Union volunteers. After his second term in the Senate ended in 1895, Manderson was named general solicitor for the Burlington railroad system for its roads west of the Mississippi River.

curred, and that a large standing army would have prevented the war of the rebellion.

It will occur to a good many people that the Nebraska statesman has forgotten much that he should have remembered. European countries maintain large standing armies, but they do not prevent war, and this fact makes Manarson's rhetoric appear rickety. He owed it to the Senate to have stated that European nations maintain standing armies in times of peace amounting to about 4 million men, and he should have told the Senate that notwithstanding these standing armies, wars in Europe are of almost yearly occurrence. But the Nebraska Senator proceeds to point out why the land of the free and the home of the brave needs a larger standing army at an increased expenditure of \$1 million a year. In the first place it will create a demand for the product of the West Point officer manufacturing establishment, and since these gold buttoned lilies who toil not, but draw their pay all the same, from money earned by workingmen, it will be proper to give them soldiers to command.

But, as we have remarked, the Nebraska war horse smells war in various directions. In that section where a few strolling bands of murderous Apaches dwell, more soldiers are required. The Navajos are to be squelched in New Mexico, and in the great Northwest, Indians remain who paint their faces and engage in the war dance. Then, again, the Mormons require more soldiers, to put a stop to polygamy. The Nebraska man sees in New York, Pittsburg, Cincinnati, socialists and nihilists whose pranks suggest the importance of a standing army of increased shooting abilities. Then, again, the Isthmian canal calls for more soldiers, and a larger standing army is also required to keep Cuba in the possession of Spain, and American railroad investments in Mexico require a standing army to see that our sister republic does not confiscate the property of American speculators in that country. But the Nebraska Senator, who is so terribly alarmed about Apaches, Navajos, Sioux, Mormons, the Isthmian canal, Cuba, and railroad investments in Mexico, is still more alarmed, lest by the neglect of Congress to increase the standing army of the country, laboring men may rise some day and overthrow constitutions, institutions, law and order, and introduce anarchy, rapine, and savagery generally.

Hear him:

There are other elements threatening disturbance, but we can only glance at them. The riots in New York, Pittsburgh, Cincinnati, and other places within the last few years are the simple

mutterings of a discontented condition liable to break out in widespread destruction and anarchy.

In this statement the Nebraska man gives himself clean away. In a nutshell, Mr. Manderson's anxiety for a larger standing army is to quiet laborers with cold lead instead of cold victuals. It is the European idea — the policy of every despotic government on the face of the earth, Tsar, Sultan, Shah, Mikado, *et al.* Mr. Manderson is an implacable foe of the workingmen of the United States. Labor is conservative. Labor builds, it does not tear down. Laboring men represent all that is solid and substantial in the empire of right. They demand only a respectable living in the United States. They produce everything, and their opposers and oppressors produce nothing. There never was a strike in America, when the demands of laboring men were in excess of absolute necessities, and there ought never to have been a strike, because there ought never to have been a refusal of the just demands of laboring men. And discontent among laboring men has always been the result of injustice and oppression.

Standing armies always and everywhere are the foes of liberty. They are terrible machines operated by despots to crush out the aspirations of the masses for liberty, and when Mr. Manderson pleads for a larger and a better equipped standing army in the United States to shoot down laboring men when they show signs of discontent, he becomes a foe of hideous proportions. Laboring men have the ballot, and they are federating for the purpose of using it intelligently, and when once in a condition to make themselves felt, men of the Manderson stripe will not be permitted in legislatures or senates, to advocate standing armies for the purpose of keeping laboring men in subjection to taskmasters who require them to live lives of want and degradation.

Edited with a footnote by Tim Davenport

1000 Flowers Publishing, Corvallis, OR · March 2017 · Non-commercial reproduction permitted.
First Edition.