Talking It Over:

'Defending Our Shores'

By Bertram D. Wolfe

(With this issue, we begin a new weekly column, "Talking It Over," conducted by Bertram D. Wolfe.— Editor.)

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THE problem of the cost of armaments is getting to be serious. Army and navy experts have been ordered to keep their mouths shut for the next two months. This dramatic and normally welcome silence is to act as a build-up for a message which President Roosevelt is planning to address to Congress on January 15, 1939. That message will call for the biggest preparedness program in our history—and that will have to be mighty big, since each year, for the past decade, has surpassed the previous one. A big-navy man since the days when he served as Under-Secretary of the Navy in the "New Freedom" war cabinet of Woodrow Wilson, the President thinks he will have little difficulty in putting it over. The jittery mood of the American people, as evidenced by the panic that took possession of thousands during a broadcast of "War of the Worlds" last week (when Mars attacked New Jersey and credulous people even in the Carolinas and Georgia fled for their lives), shows that it may not be hard to put over a jingoist militarist program at this moment.

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MR. Bernard M. Baruch, head of the War Industries Board during the World War, expert on industrial conscription and industrial slavery in wartime, has been visiting the White House. His plan, announced as having the approval of the Administration, includes a reduction of housing and public works in favor of a huge armament program "to make work," and a special general sales-tax thruout the nation to shift the burden of the staggering arms expenditure onto the backs of worker, farmer, middle class and lower-income groups generally. "This will be a popular tax," Mr. Baruch is reported to have said as he left the White House," for no American is opposed to a tax which will be used to defend our country."

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WHAT Mr. Baruch and President Roosevelt mean by "national defense" was made clear the next day in an inspired story by Arthur Krock, Washington political writer for the New York Times.

"To the average American," wrote Mr. Krock, "'national defense' means an effort to repell the invasion by a foreign power of any part of North America or a threat to the Panama Canal and those Atlantic and Pacific Islands which are the outposts of the United States." That's stretching "defense" quite a bit, but, continues Mr. Krock, "this is an incomplete picture as Mr. Baruch, presumably the President and well-informed officials in the War, Navy and State Departments see it. The problem should be set forth in the outlines of their diagram, and this diagram definitely includes **all the Americas.**" In other words, an arms program big enough to defend the entire American "empire" and to fight the whole world if necessary for the exclusive control of Latin America.

The Navy men have explained the matter even more clearly. (That's why they've been told to keep their mouths shut till January 15!) In an officially approved Navy statement, the purpose of the navy is said to be "to **control** the sea in defense of the nation and its **interests**, . . . to provide **expeditionary forces** in immediate readiness, . . . to protect American lives and **property**, . . . to support **American interests**, especially the development of American **foreign commerce**" and, as the head of the Navy testified to the Senate Commission a few years back, to be "big enough to defeat Japan in Japan's home waters." That, dear reader, is what is meant by "defense" of America!

These same experts have testified, however, that America already has a navy more than ample to "defend our shores" in the narrower sense of that term. Said Admiral Yarnell, in charge of the Pacific Fleet; "The inhabitants of the coast can sleep quietly in their beds until Japan builds a navy twice the strength of that in the United States." And as Paul Y. Anderson put it: "The pillars of the Colosseum will be dust before an Italian (or a German) soldier crosses the Atlantic." The super-armament program is not for warding off attack but for war overseas.

The policy of the government is: Never mention armaments without talking of willingness to disarm

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"Defending Our Nation's Shores"

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—but arm! And, no matter how big you stretch it, call it "defense" —but keep stretching it!

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WE have been saying for some time that the antidote to militarist expenditure is to spend more on housing, jobs, social insurance, the fight against poverty at home. Now Baruch says we were right: "The point can be made," he argues, "that W.P.A. and P.W.A. will be automatically reduced." We will live in battleships in place of decent homes, make explosives to blow each other off the face of the earth in place of food and clothing to keep ourselves among the living, steer towards war in place of away from it!

And armament spells reaction in other ways. The President is planning to trot out the industrial-conscription bill again, put spies in the industrial plants, establish "regulated" unionism, put over a sales-tax which weighs heaviest on the poor, build up a spy scare, a preparedness fever, and a totalitarian "stand-behind-the-President" psychology. These measures, not the crack-pot and colored-shirt groups in this country, constitute the real menace of fascist and totalitarian reaction.

But the race towards suicide can be stopped. We must tear the mask off the "defense" and "make-work" measures and show up the Administration program for what it is. In the Gallup poll just taken, over 68%, more than two-thirds of the American voters, declared themselves in favor of taking the power to declare war out of the hands of the President, in favor of a war-referendum amendment. The problem is to organize, enlighten, and keep this two-thirds of the American people active and growing in numbers. We have made the President retreat twice before from plans steering towards war thru precisely this pressure. That he himself realizes it, is proved by the same article by Krock from which we have been quoting. "The mood of the new Congress," Mr. Kroch concludes, "cannot be foretold. More will be known after the next House vote on the Ludlow resolution . . . " Eleven senators are planning to reintroduce that resolution in January, at about the time the President makes his "defense" proposals. How the two proposals will be received is up to us. Reader—WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO ABOUT IT?

General Executive Board was that of the recent memorandum sent out by all railroads to their Red Cap employees calling for the daily reporting of tips. These sums are to be recorded and used to meet the minimum-wage requirements of the Fair Labor Standards Act.

Seeking clarification on this question, a conference was held with Elmer F. Andrews, administrator of the wage-and-hour division, together with his deputy administrator, Paul Sifton, and his general counsel, Calvert Magruder. The International officers and members of the Executive Board were present for the Brotherhood, together with Fred H. Mandel and Leon M. Despres, counsel for the Brotherhood. Administrator Andrews was impressed by the seriousness of the situation and stated that the matter would receive immediate action but that the railroads would have to be given an opportunity to present their side of the situation before anything could be done.

Also included on the General Executive Board's agenda was the question of certification before the National Mediation Board to officially determine the collective-bargaining agency for Red Caps. Conforming with the machinery of the National Mediation Board, elections are to be conducted on a system basis, which, union officials felt, called for a strengthening of system organization. System or-