

How to queer the Preparedness Parade next Saturday  
or  
*Stealing their Thunder*

The writer submits that it would be a bad policy for the Anti-Militarist forces to let the Preparedness Party have things all their own way next Saturday. The occasion ought not to be allowed to pass without some effective protest from our side. It would be a good thing to remind New Yorkers that Manhattan is not America, and that though 10,000 Wall Street brokers may favour Preparedness, two million American farmers in the Middle West do not; that whatever the retail and wholesale traders of New York may feel about increasing the army and navy, organized labour throughout the country is dead against doing any such thing; and that though businessmen down town may vote for Theodore Roosevelt, the men of Michigan prefer Henry Ford. How can an effective demonstration of such facts as these be made?

The following plan suggests itself as being simple, and inexpensive, and not very difficult of execution:—

Let us hire two, or three, or four of those green ten-cent motor buses that run up and down Fifth Avenue. These should be hired for special service for the day or for part of the day. The first bus should be crowded on top with men dressed to look like Middle Western farmers. The front end and sides of the bus should be covered with clearly written posters bearing some such statements as these:

American farmers refuse to be scared  
Two million have voted against "Preparedness".

For every man in today's parade  
there are forty American farmers  
who will march to the Ballot to vote against Preparedness.

Our Navy is good enough  
Our coast defenses are the best  
Our army is big enough  
The American farmer will take care of the invader  
if he gets past these.

We ain't seen the "Battle Cry of Peace"  
So we ain't scared.

Car 2. This might be the car of *the Ford voters* (with some men sitting on top – ostensibly Ford voters) bearing posters with such legends as

Remember that Henry Ford was top of the poll  
for President in Michigan, and Nebraska (Iowa?)

When you see today's parade  
think of the Ford vote in Michigan.

Car 3. This might carry on the top a number of men dressed up to look like miners, printers, steel workers, etc. – The posters covering the bus would say:–

Organized labour is against Preparedness.  
Labour says "Let Wall Street pay for the Dreadnoughts  
it wants – out of its war profits."

Car 4. This might contain a few men dressed to look like wounded European soldiers – and might carry posters such as:–

A bus like this will carry all that will be left of the European armies  
when they quit fighting. We should worry about invasion.

The suggestion is that the buses should run up and down Fifth Avenue from about ten o'clock in the morning till the traffic is stopped for the parade. The cost of hiring these buses is comparatively little. One bus would do. It might be used over and over again to carry out the different suggestions. It should not be difficult to get a few men – mostly from the Colleges – to wear the simple costumes that would be required. The suggestions here made for the various posters to be used on the buses have been very hastily made – far better statements could be worked out in an hour or so with little trouble. These buses would of course be seen by many thousands of people during the morning and by those who would be standing in their places to see the parade.

In the view of the writer a good deal of the value and effect of the Parade would be lost if we could bring home to the mind and imagination of the man in the street as he watches the Parade that 2 million American farmers – 40 farmers for every man in the parade – are dead against Preparedness and Militarism.

[Atlantic City, 7 May 1916]