

AT COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY a poll on war yielded interesting results. It was voluntary, and 920 students registered their opinions. Of this number 293 stated that they would under no circumstances go to war and 485 only in case of invasion; 38 were willing to fight to protect United States citizens or investments abroad, and 81 were willing to fight for their country, right or wrong; 464 stated that they would willingly suffer imprisonment for their convictions. On the other side of the country, at Stanford University, the intercollegiate conference representing seven universities and colleges in the San Francisco Bay region passed the following resolution: "This group, believing it is unnecessary and absurd to settle political or economic disputes between nations by violence, will refuse to be conscripted into any war service whatsoever." In the last war conscientious objectors refused to fight on religious and moral grounds. In the chaotic and instructive years since 1918 the emphasis has shifted to the futility and stupidity of war—concrete arguments which carry more force than moral abstractions to a generation raised on disillusion. When young men refuse to fight, war must cease. May our universities turn into jails when next the old men decide that "war must come"!

TO SAVE EXPENSE for North Carolina counties, and to "solve the problem of overcrowded jails," a bill to revive the whipping post has been introduced in the State legislature by J. N. Vann of Hertford. Back of this measure is the incisive argument that a leather whip costs little and lasts a long time, while the feeding of prisoners runs into money and increases taxes at a time when any tax is a hardship. Prisoners convicted of misdemeanors, by the provisions of the bill, would receive from ten to twenty lashes applied upon the naked back by a sheriff or deputy in the presence of at least two witnesses. Mr. Vann could improve this legislation and make everybody concerned happy—except perhaps the persons whipped—by admitting an unlimited number of witnesses and charging an admission fee, which would reduce county taxes still further.

ON THE SUBJECT OF BEER the wets and the dries seem now to have reached a highly unsatisfactory compromise. Henceforth, we understand, beer is to be legal without ceasing to be just a little bit immoral, and the result will be one which all who understand the psychology of the American people should find it easy to anticipate. Thousands of barrels will be stoically consumed by persons who really don't like the taste of the stuff, and if it is physically possible to get drunk upon the feeble brew, drunk they will get. Inherently, beer is not much more dangerous than soda water. Very few people actually want enough of it to do themselves any kind of harm and, quart for quart, it is probably far less deleterious to the human insides than lemon pop. But while no one has any reason for drinking more lemon pop than he really craves, cautious moralists of all sorts have been very busy attempting to surround beer with the charm of a kind of 3.2 per cent devilishness. No sophomore will dare to confess that he prefers malted milk, and even girls, we suspect, will accept with fortitude one more painful edict of fashion. Of course, it will not be as bad as the cocktail mania. We doubt if any serious harm will be done. But we pity a younger generation compelled to drink so much more than it wants of something it probably does not want at all.

The Farm Subsidy

THE more the farm-relief bill is studied, the more indefensible its chief provisions are seen to be. Stripped to its essentials, it is a bill to take away a billion or so dollars a year from three-fourths of the population and pay it over to the other fourth. Even this could be defended if it could be shown that practically all of the three-fourths from whom the funds were taken were better off than practically all of the one-fourth to whom they were given, and if the three-fourths were taxed in some relation to their individual ability to pay and the one-fourth were subsidized in some relation to their individual need. The measure makes no pretense, however, of fulfilling any of these conditions. The subsidized fourth are to receive bonuses in proportion to their "domestic" crops—in other words, the larger the farm, that is, the wealthier the farmer, the larger the bonus. The other three-fourths are to be taxed by the most indefensible tax ever levied by any government in modern times—a sales tax of 100 to 200 per cent on the necessities of life and, with the exception of tobacco, *only* on the necessities of life. This measure is being forced through in the name of liberalism by a liberal President who rejected a general sales tax of 2¼ per cent exempting foodstuffs. If a subsidy is to be paid to one-fourth of our population, the one demand that must be made in common decency is that it be raised by an increase in the income, inheritance, and corporation taxes, and not by a tax that must fall on underpaid workers and the unemployed.

As we go to press, not a single objectionable feature of the farm bill has been removed, unless we count the exclusion of sheep and cattle from its benefits. The bonus is now to be paid to the growers of seven crops, and must be paid by, among others, the growers of scores of other crops. It still aims to restore and perpetuate the price relationship of a five-year period when that relationship was peculiarly favorable to agriculture. It pretends that you can get a reduction of crops by endowing the people who raise the crops. It gives the Secretary of Agriculture discretionary powers never before held in peace time by any individual in our government, and ignores the tremendous and unrelenting pressure that will be brought upon him by the interests to be benefited. The President promises that he will advise the repeal of this bill if it does not work. To this Professor Kemmerer of Princeton has raised the question of how effective this advice would be likely to be in obtaining repeal after the special vested interests which the bill created had become well established. "What President since the Civil War," asks Professor Kemmerer, "could have swept away the excessive rates of our highly protective tariffs? How many times has there existed in the history of our national pension legislation a period extending over even one month when a President of the United States could accomplish the remarkable feat which Mr. Roosevelt recently accomplished in his economy act?"

The farm-relief bill returns to the principles of subsidy that have failed with the Farm Board and the Reconstruction Finance Corporation. It only remains to add that in the long run, when the plan has collapsed, the greatest sufferers from it will probably be the very farmers whom the bill sought to subsidize.