

Three Recruits

by Ambrose Bierce

A Farmer, an Artisan, and a Labourer went to the King of their country and complained that they were compelled to support a large standing army of mere consumers, who did nothing for their keep.

"Very well," said the King, "my subjects' wishes are the highest law."

So he disbanded his army and the consumers became producers also. The sale of their products so brought down prices that farming was ruined, and their skilled and unskilled labour drove the artisans and labourers into the almshouses and highways. In a few years the national distress was so great that the Farmer, the Artisan, and the Labourer petitioned the King to reorganize the standing army.

"What!" said the King; "you wish to support those idle consumers again?"

"No, your Majesty," they replied--"we wish to enlist."