

THE PEOPLE'S WAR AND THE INTERNATIONAL

When at the beginning of the war the most powerful socialist organization, the German Social Democratic Party, made a formal alliance with the imperial government, and the labor leaders of the other nations entered the war cabinets and exhorted their followers to enlist and fight, the hope vanished, that the refusal of the socialist masses to fight each other would stop war.

During the year which passed since, events have taken place, which have a serious significance, especially for our country where at present we consider the problem of national defense.

England's attempt to raise a volunteer army has failed, and Kitchener's army has remained a creation of the newspapers, but a negligible factor in the field, as it holds less than 40 miles of trenches, against over 500 miles held by the French army. Continuous strikes and labor troubles have paralyzed the prosecution of war by the British government, and all attempts, from appeals to patriotism to the calling of drunkards and the threat of legal compulsion, have failed to rouse the British workman's interest beyond the fight

for higher wages and shorter hours, and when finally, helpless at home, England mobilized the industrial forces of the United States for the prosecution of the war, the same labor troubles began here.

The question then is: are the masses of England so degenerate as to be incapable of responding to the appeal for patriotism, or do they consider, that this war is not their war, but is the war of the ruling classes, of the financial and business interests, while to the masses of wage earners the questions of wages and working hours appear more important than the issues for which England contends against Germany? And if so, what assurance have we, that in case of the United States being once implicated in war, our masses will respond as they have done in former wars: our industrial conditions are similar to those of England, and there is no friendly feeling between our labor organizations and our militia.

Patriotism requires a solid foundation, and can not be created in a few months by newspaper articles and appeals, but such quickly created pseudo-patriotism - as aroused now in England - fails when sacrifices are demanded, such as facing death in the trenches.

In Germany, a powerful social democratic party has, years ago, forced the ruling classes to make substantial concessions, and the social conditions of the German wage earners, while not all they demand, is decidedly better than that in any other country. The masses thus have something to lose by the destruction of the German industrial organization, and as the result, even their most revolutionary organizations are allied with the government in the national defense. On the other hand, the masses in England are no better off than in any other industrial country, thus have nothing to lose and nothing to defend, and their interests center in the industrial war for better conditions: higher wages and shorter hours.

In America, the industrial conditions of the masses have always been superior to those in any other nation, due to the unlimited opportunities of the new country; everybody thus was personally interested in the maintenance of existing conditions and patriotically responded in war time. But rapidly now the condition of the industrial masses is drifting towards the same level as in other industrial nations, and if ever the time comes, when the wage earner in America will not be any better off than in other industrial countries, then, when his patriotism will be called for sacrifice in the national defense, the appeal may be in vain, as it is now in England, and Ireland.

Thus, when we study the problem of our national defense, let us realize that the first and most important step lies in the shaping of the social and industrial conditions of the masses, to establish and maintain a condition, where everybody has something to lose and something to defend: the patriotism of the masses is far more important in the national defense than all battleships and armament, but patriotism presupposes a substantial foundation in a social condition better than in other countries.

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