

## CHAPTER I

### THE NEW AMERICA

The war has released the imagination of men. It has cured inertia, shaken up bureaucracy, and forced men to think in new terms.

We mobilized 4,000,000 men in a few months' time. We clothed them, fed them, housed them. We gave them guns, equipment, huge engines of war.

We built a great navy and merchant marine. We sent an army of 2,000,000 men overseas. It had never been done. Military experts said it could not be done. We achieved the impossible. That is the thing to remember. It can never again be said that a thing cannot be done because it never has been done.

The war has disclosed the latent, wasted power that lies within the nation. It has shown undreamed-of capacity of wealth-production. It has proved that a nation can live in reasonable comfort while pouring out billions in war consumption.

With millions of men taken from the ranks of labor, we increased the production of wealth by many billions. New machines were invented, new processes devised, new economies introduced. Hours of labor were shortened and still the increase in wealth-production went on. The worker, who ceased to fear for his morrow's job, worked normally and produced more per unit than ever before, while millions of men, condemned by industrial conditions to work at tasks for which they are unfitted or in which the possibility of production is necessarily low, found new openings in which their productive capacity was allowed full play. The cost of the war could be wiped out by merely keeping the productive power of the nation employed. Our annual waste in failing to work to reasonable capacity would pay for the war in a few years' time.

The war released the natural forces of men. There was economic stimulus from the bonus system, and wealth poured from the mills and factories at an unprecedented rate. It is possible that our wealth-production was increased 50 per cent. during the four years from 1914 to 1918.

**New Uses of Credit.**

Credit has been harnessed. It has been made to perform a new kind of service. Government credit has built houses for workingmen; it has aided farmers to plant and harvest their crops. It has stabilized the price of wheat, insured the lives of soldiers, and performed many other functions new to America. Banking and credit, heretofore almost solely agencies of private business, have become agencies of social welfare. The savings of the people have been put to new uses.

All this and much more has been done, not as we assumed it would be done—with political graft and corruption, ignorantly directed and more ignorantly executed. The socialized homes America has built and the consideration she has shown for the workers in the midst of a war that commanded all of our energies, exceeds anything the most optimistic reformer felt could be achieved in a quarter of a century.

The war has called into service thousands of men, who found in social activities greater enjoyment than they ever had before in private employment. Quite as important, it has shown

us that life is the important thing; that man is of more consequence than inanimate wealth, and that the great agencies of banking and credit, of transportation, of fuel, of iron, and of steel, can be made to provide a higher standard of living and promote a wider distribution of comforts than was believed possible during three centuries of competitive struggle.

**Democracy.**

America may have stirring times to face in the future. Industrial and social problems must be faced and courageously solved, for states decay when economic conditions are wrong. Great wars have hastened such decay. That is what happened to Rome after the wars with Carthage. That is what happened to Germany after the Thirty Years' War. That is what happened to England after the Napoleonic Wars.

The task of to-morrow is to lay the foundations of a New Democracy—not for the soldier alone but for our own children as well. It must be a democracy of far greater freedom than that which existed four years ago. There were too many millions in the coal-pits, the

steel-mills, the cotton-factories, the sweat-shops. There were too many little children in the cotton-mills. There were too many farm-tenants and agricultural drudges. The "homeless, wifeless, jobless" I. W. W. of the West is a product of economic license. We thought of work, of wealth, of everything but *man*. We must think more of *man* and less of wealth.

America owes that much at least to the returning soldier.

#### **Free Men.**

Democracy in Europe is fast becoming economic. With us democracy is legal. It must be made economic, industrial, social. That is the next step in democracy everywhere. Hunger, destitution, worklessness are dangerous things even in a republic. An empty stomach is no respecter of political reforms.

Russia, Austria-Hungary, Germany, Italy, France, Great Britain, even Canada, find that the demobilized soldier has been transformed. Under shell-fire in the trenches he has lost respect for things that once seemed important. He has become a very realistic person.

Real freedom is economic. It always has

been so. There is no real freedom without economic freedom. Men may vote. They may rise in the world. Their children may rise above them in social standing, as thousands do. But the mass of men remain wage-workers, subject to the will of some one else. And they reflect their status in their political as they do in their social relationship. This is not only true of the serf of Prussia and Austria-Hungary, it is true of the peasant of England and the tenant and worker of America as well.

**Democracy in Europe.**

The liberty of France is not due to the constitution of that country. Nor is it due to any ethnic qualities of the French people. France has been a democracy for a hundred years because the peasant owns the piece of land he works. His ancestors owned it before him. It was taken from the nobility at the time of the Revolution, and it has never been returned. The democracy of Denmark, of Holland, of Switzerland, of New Russia is born of the fact that the farmers in these countries own their own farms and work for themselves.

Even the education of a people, their culture, their ambitions for their children, the hope they have and their outlook on life is traceable to economic conditions.

Nearly a century ago Lord Macaulay wrote regarding America: "The test of your democracy will come after the exhaustion of your free lands." We are going through this test now. What new opportunities are there available in this country to absorb the energies of the men who will return after the war?

We should make a far better world than did our fathers. Power has been harnessed. The productivity of man has been increased until the labor of a single individual often yields as much as was produced by a village one hundred years ago. And we should justify ourselves in the war for democracy by providing for the soldier a home-coming that will not be a "hand-out" from a job-giver but a free life in a free state. The protection and promotion of democracy at home was the task that was left to those of us who did not go to the front.