War Is Only a Symptom

War is natural, wholesome, beautiful. War is the objective side of growth, the active part of being. Life is no pacifist. War is the vigor of life—its dawn and midday. War is the sun flaring thru the zodiac—March and July. War is the other side of the coin of Life—its outer breath, its maleness, its positive aspect.

Which doesn’t explain the hideous insanity of human beings mangling each other, nor palliate Europe’s mad spree of human blood shedding nor our participation therein. These are the ripening of concrete causes nearer home, the product of circumstances less remote than biologic conclusions—land monopoly’s fruit.

What other fruit did you expect? You thought to change the course of nature, set aside the multiplication table, who thought to banish war between nations while fostering it between individuals and classes.

In a world of brothels, prisons, gallow, disenchantment clearly and boys eat out of garbage cans, and millions of men are idle on billions of idle acres!—You are shocked at war—your tender heart bleeds at the suffering!

The beautiful war is that of humankind against the elemental world—the Mangod wrestling with demon forces. The natural war is that of Consciousness against the unconscious, intelligence grappling with the inert—man breasting the tide of blind events, daring the lightning, whipping the typhoon, beating back the flood, braving the Unknown!

There is no biologic necessity for human slaughter. The vestigial theories, that man must kill man because he is descended from brutes, are sufficiently discounted by the bare fact that hundreds of millions of human beings have lived and died since the dawn of history, and still do, without killing anybody. These vestigial remains, the ancestral bellicosity, that drive men to wholesale manslaughter, never operate on more than ten percent of a population! What a fool science can be. The necessity for modern war is not biologic, but economic—on its objective side. Subjectively, it is the bursting forth of emotional intensity—a passionate expansion—into the only channel afforded by the smugness, the puritanism, and the mechanistic concepts.

Viewed in this light, even this war is a beautiful thing—to the millions who find in it their only avenue of heroic expression. Viewed materially, it is the Hope of the Economic Revolution. Whoever would suppress it, to return to the old status of disemployment, is a public enemy. Whoever finds in this wonderful war awakening his “reason” for not now giving himself heart and soul to the economic revolution, doubtless had some other “reason” before the war, and will find still another after the war. Reasons are easy to find.

This is the hour, above all others in human history, for those who see the light of a true, actual, tangible freedom to press heroically, audaciously toward it. Out of this awakening will come the New Order, the reconstruction of society on the base of equal economic opportunity—or the seizure of the industries by the government and by the syndicalists, which, while the unseized portions remain privately owned, will mean endless disorder and new tyrannies.

Whichever it will be, the one thing the human cause does not want now is peace on the old status, with its greater suffering, greater mortality.

Peace is also part of life. The warrior sleeps at night. But they who ask for lasting peace are the only dead—if any are. Hours of sleep come, hours for reflection, for play—the rest of
there is for the Bray, for war, war to the limit
(the sky)—war against the globe's heats and
colds, its heights and depths, its densities and
distances, disease, death, and the myriad veils
that cover the face of Reality.

Yet the enemy of man is not man, but Fear!
And if for the moment it is our fear of a mad
kaiser bent on ruling the world, merely his
undoing will count for little.

It seems likely now that “the man who kept
us out of war” with Mexico, only kept the faith
in plunging into war with Germany. The
Spirit of democracy prevailed in the one case,
economic necessity drives in the other. Wilson
is the instrument. Finely he voiced the ideal
and made it actual; stubbornly he resisted the
necessity that was bound to have its way of a
civilization based on land monopoly.

Here was a kaiserdun seeking world dominion—and perilously near encompassing it unless
the world united to repel him. The evidence
is pretty clear now that Wilson had no
alternative, that no one could have done other-
wise, or better. And having entered upon the
war, the real Size of the man is shown in the
way he pushes it. He would be more of a
hypocrite than the pacifist thinks him, if he let
the bare forms of democracy hinder. War is
democracy—war is hell—speaking of war
as the murdering of human beings.

There is no democracy in this country—there
never has been any since all the natural oppor-
tunities became privately owned. There was
no free speech or free press before the war.
All were bound by economic necessity—a
greater tyrant than all the laws and courts com-
bined, yet one more easily broken. Statutes
and constitutions for free speech and free press
on a monopolized earth were mockery. What
freedom has one to speak, write, or print
against the interests of those who own the
means of subsistence? —the freedom to starve.

The meanest feature of the war policy is sup-
plied by the superficial apologists for Wilson
who spin out yards of fine reasoning to show
that the President is acting constitutionally
and democratically(1). If he did either now he'd
be a weakling. If we had the tangible element
of democracy there would be no war.

Constitutional provisions and democratic
forms on a monopolized earth are—toys for
good children. Wilson's business now is to
win the war and win it soon. Chance has made
him truly the Man of the Hour, and he seems to
fit the job. The radical press should stop
knocking him and attend to its own business—
which is to create the democracy that the Allies
are to make the world safe for. To fight war,
after it is on, is bootless. To hinder its quick
effective prosecution is of course traitorous.

Whether it is a Wall Street war or not isn't
worth enquiring. What could it be on a
monopolized earth? What was the peace that
preceded it? —the peace! I mean the indus-
trial, daily war of economic life, of which this
war is but the natural and inevitable explosion,
symptom, effect. Was it for Wall Street?
Should war change the ratio of profit?

And this sudden accession of tenderness for
human life which moved so many at the call for
the draft! Was it because their sons were in
jeopardy? With what sweet patience had these
same people (most of them—not quite all, it is
t rue) endured the slaughter of the babes in
the slums, the crushing of childhood in mill, mine,
and sweatshop, the long list of daily tragedies
incident to the wage slavery, pauperism, and
prostitution of Peace! Whoever proposed to
end them quickly was scorned by these same
pacifists, called a mad dreamer, a social
disturber. But when the drum sounded for the
draft and your sons were caught—how sacred
human life became! How suddenly! Twenty
thousand people braved two hundred police-
men and marched into Madison Square Garden
in single file—to demand “Democracy and
Terms of Peace” on a monopolized earth.
Within a stone’s throw of them were a thou-
sand starving infants and a thousand maids
driven to the street for bread—but no mass
meetings for them.

Was it profound sympathy that so quickly
stirred the pacifists? Or was it the fruition of
emotionalism awakened by the drum taps—at
least in those whose knowledge of economic
principles was fundamental? It was no attack
on Privilege. When will we see such a mass
meeting in a frontal attack on Privilege?

Just now we are all shocked and outraged at
the infamous treatment of so fine and good a
man as Herbert Bigelow. He is our friend;
we love him personally. Is that why we are
so deeply stirred? Must the atrocities of the
industrial warfare reach our very physical eyes
and flesh before we awake? Must our own
homes be violently invaded before we will spe-
cifically and directly attack privilege at its base?

Death and destruction are the blessings of
plutocracy. On a privately owned earth noth-
ing else brings such “good times” to so large
a number of people. San Francisco's earth-
quake and fire was a blessing. It halted star-
vation and pauperism instantly. Just before it
occurred many were in deepest penury, children
starved, thousands were unemployed. Immedi-
ately thereafter everybody had at least enough
to eat and a warm bed. This period in San
Francisco well typifies the “democracy” of
which our pacifists are now so keenly jealous.

Before the earthquake, the stores, warehouses, and homes of a few rich people, were glutted with necessities and luxuries. The surplus was so great that quantities of it were destroyed. Shelter was so abundant that thousands of houses, offices, and stores were vacant. Yet there were thousands of people there without adequate shelter, with little or no food, and in shabbily clothes or rags.

The earth shook, starting a general conflagration, which to claimmate, dynamite was employed. In a few hours nearly the whole city was in ruins, all the warehouses and stores with their accumulations of necessities and luxuries were destroyed. The devastation was complete—and pauperism was ended.

Immediately food, clothing, shelter, and transportation were offered to all—to whoever needed them. If one found himself possessed of a surplus of anything, he hunted up someone who lacked. There was no one starving—where just before hundreds starved. For months every human being on the peninsula fared much better than thousands had fared amid the filled warehouses and stores. No child went hungry, or insufficiently clad and housed. There was work for everybody and wages were high. There was no destitution or acute poverty in San Francisco for several years thereafter—not until the city had been rebuilt and great warehouses again were filled with surpluses. Then want came again, the slums returned, disemployment ensued, wages fell.

That is our American (and English, and Christian) society of whose "democracy" some people are now so anxious. Amid plenty, many are in want and some must starve. Amid devastation, food, clothing, shelter and transportation are accorded to all who need, according to their need. It was so in San Francisco, in the Chicago fire, the Charleston earthquake, the Baltimore fire; it is so everywhere in Christendom, that is to say in Plutocracy, for Plutocracy rules everywhere in Christendom (the in lesser degree in Denmark, Switzerland, France, and Australasia, where the land is held largely by the people—in Mexico where the peons have regained their land, and in the New Russia—hopeful exceptions!)

It is so today under war conditions. Times were never so good. Disemployment is gone. Wages are higher, trade busier. Fewer are insufficiently fed than for fifty years before.