

# A PRACTICAL PROGRAM FOR A JUST PEACE

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Preprinted from

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journal published in the interest of constructive synthesis  
in the social sciences. Single copies \$1.  
Annual subscription \$3.

Will appear in  
Vol. 3, No. 4.

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50 East 69th Street, New York 21, N. Y.

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## A Practical Program for a Just Peace

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*" . . . Thy Will be done on earth . . . "*

SOME OF MY FRIENDS who are seriously disturbed about the future frequently ask me why I do not drop criticism for a while and give them some constructive ideas for the peace. Well, it is essential that everything that passes should be watched carefully and examined under the light of skeptical criticism because through lack of this procedure everything went wrong with the last peace. Ninety-nine percent of the people were led to believe that they were fighting for high ideals. After the Treaty of Versailles the world learned that no war ideal had reached as high as that of the charitable gangster who is good to his family.

The greatest difficulty we have to face when inclined to think of what the peace should be is that no one has the faintest conception of what the conditions in Europe are now or what they will be when hostilities end. It is no exaggeration to say that there is no agreement whatever among the hundred and one groups who for the past two years have been considering plans for the reconstruction of Europe. In recent weeks, since the great divisions in the ranks of the United Nations have become common property and are being discussed freely, I have seen ideas put forth that are so antagonistic to one another that the bravest heart quails at the thought of making plans for a peace.

The future of Europe is in the hands of not more than a dozen men. Only the other day a well-known British editor said the partition of European States depended on the military success of "one man in the west and another man in the east of Europe." This remark, however, does not touch the grave problems of the people in the occupied countries; what they will have to say about the future is a riddle to which the shrewdest men in England can find no answer. Such questions as shifting boundaries, policing States, forming blocs, and limiting spheres of interest east and west are similar to those that engrossed the minds of the politicians at Paris in 1919 when the secret treaties, made before and during the war, were the immediate and dominant concern of the victors. The European labyrinth is one of dark passages that cannot be lighted by the "penny dips" carried by alien freshmen.

### I

WHAT THE PEOPLE of Europe want is peace without imperial politics. The workers there demand economic reform—relief from the exactions

which keep them poor. They seek security of land tenure for themselves. As it is here with our workers, so it is there with the people of Europe: they want a distribution of wealth on a just basis. They want the spectre of poverty removed from their lives. Indeed they wish to enjoy the work of their hands. Their demands will be economic, not political. And the war will have taught them the lessons of endurance which will enable them to defeat the efforts of those who would deny them justice and fetter them once more to the system they abhor.

The only practical step we shall be able to take in doing something positive for the peace of Europe is to insist that our representatives at the peace conference have a mandate from the people of the United States embodying proposals for the economic emancipation of the toilers upon land and in the urban centers. If our representatives were empowered to seek for Europe the conditions of land tenure and freedom of trade which Richard Cobden one hundred years ago offered to the continent, more would be done towards removing tariff barriers and national animosities than has been done at any previous peace conference.

But the adoption of such suggestions is their concern. These are their own problems, and they will have to work them out for themselves. Perhaps if we attend to our affairs and seek justice for ourselves, we shall succeed in setting an example to Europe, which will be worth far more than all the blueprints we can make for their political future; worth far more than any charitable schemes we can devise. If we raise the standard of justice here, it will float above the discords of hate and envy and be a signal to Europe that our men have not fought in vain.

## II

LET US BE HONEST with ourselves and ask the spirit within us if we really believe a genuine philosopher can be an advocate of war and peace. Think of the last war! Look up the shocking record of the leaders in the churches, the parliaments, the establishments of learning, who imagined they were supporting "a war to end war." Then turn to the "peace" conference and read the story of wrecked hopes, of bitter animosities engendered among the Allies, which led to another mad race for armaments. The lesson of the last war must be learned again if a repetition of that aftermath is to be averted.

What, then, are we really waiting for? May I suggest that it is a lead, an advance taken by one who has never had his eyes bandaged with the cloth of nationalistic and political deceptions. Is it not a voice that we

are waiting to hear, the voice of one of deep understanding, the voice of a champion of justice? It must be justice. Nothing else will serve, for there can be no freedom without it. It is thoughtless, when it is not wicked, to talk of freedom from want—when the basic claim to justice is not considered first. After two thousand years, those who still ask for bread are offered a stone.

Yet, when the Roman tyranny fell with crushing force upon the Jews, there came forth the Nazarene who gave new hope to men. Out of the unknown there appeared the Prince of leaders. His message was one of absolute justice. He came not to destroy the law but to fulfill it. He, the despised, rejected of men, left behind Him the memorials of a kingdom of thought which have been counted as the priceless treasures of a long civilization. And the early Christian Fathers, between the time of His crucifixion and the mission of Augustine to Britain, spread the gospel of justice among the men of a pagan Europe bereft of all that was worthy before His coming. There is scarcely a period in what is called the Dark Ages when the light set burning at Nazareth was not kept aglow; yet so dimly at times it seemed as if it would flicker out. This is one of the marvels of the persistency of the Christian soul to face any worldly extremity for God's sake. Tyranny, persecution, torture on the rack and at the stake failed to kill the hope planted in the souls of men by Jesus of Nazareth. He was born to live in the hearts and minds of all who realized that justice was the key which would open the gates of the kingdom on earth.

No other gospel, no other philosophy of which we have record has been submitted to the searching tests that the Nazarene's has borne. For nearly twenty centuries the wisest have put the principles of it into the intellectual testing mills and found them impervious to the drills of skepticism, and today its adamant strength is unimpaired by all the vicissitude of controversy and war, of ridicule and doubt, of apathy and ignorance; still to be taken in all its fullness by men for the sole purpose of destroying no more but fulfilling the law—the law common to all who seek the kingdom on earth.

From this it must be clear that we have not to look far for a gospel. Our search may then be confined to that of choosing the man who is endowed with the gifts of the true missionary and who has the courage to call men to listen to the voice of reason. The charge we face today, which is made on every hand, is that the churches have failed. The very institutions that arose upon the principles of the Nazarene are in disrepute. There is no more unseemly spectacle than that which is enacted before us every

day, of men in pulpits supporting the crimes Jesus denounced. When high prelates of different sects ally themselves with power politicians, what chance is there for a missionary who would go to the soldiers with the gospel of the Nazarene? The failures of the last war in this respect will be multiplied ten thousandfold when this strife comes to a temporary end. And yet there are indications which give us some hope that it may be different this time; indications not so clearly defined in the last war. To many it is evident that those on the battlefronts, and also those who stay at home, are sick of the slaughter and desire a radical change in the system which canonizes Moloch and Mammon.

### III

ARE WE PREPARED then for the men when they return from the battlefronts? Are we ready to answer the questions they will put to us? "Who is this God the churches have told us to worship?" was asked by many a soul-tortured creature after the last armistice. "What kind of an All-Father can He be who is used for the political expediency of statesmen and prelates?" It is time to take soundings, and they must be taken now, no matter what may be said about military necessity.

Think! when the millions of men who joined the Brotherhood Movement in England at the beginning of the last century<sup>1</sup> discovered that the churches of Great Britain gave them little or no satisfaction, a revolution took place which, had it not been for the Great War, might easily have brought about a complete change in the economic and political system. When the working men of England determined to conduct their own religious services and debarred pastors from their platforms, the churches—Anglican and Nonconformist—began to seek ways of restoration within. In the poorer districts they succeeded to some extent, but all attempts failed in the well-to-do neighborhoods because their altars had been raised to Mammon. The largest subscribers feared to lose their methods of har-

<sup>1</sup> The Brotherhood Movement grew out of the Pleasant Sunday Afternoon meetings, which were organized by men attending the Nonconformist chapels. There were, moreover, many churches such as Whitefield's Tabernacle, in London, that held large men's meetings. One of the great leaders was Silvester Horne, who for years was the pastor of Whitefield's, and his meetings were undoubtedly models followed by the men who started the P.S.A. and afterwards the Brotherhood Movements. When the men took hold of these movements, they determined, as one of the leaders said, to "relieve the clergy of the trouble of discussing social problems from the pulpit, and thus enabling them to devote their sermons to things of the spirit." The men's services were simple. The Lord's Prayer, a reading from the Bible or New Testament, three hymns, a speech upon any subject, and a Benediction—all party politics were taboo. The length of the service was an hour. Indeed, it followed very nearly the lines of the services practiced by the Stephen Girard School at Philadelphia.

vesting ill-gotten gains. The Phoenician god had supplanted the Man of the Cross.

Suppose a Brotherhood Movement were begun in our land when the soldiers and sailors return, what would the churches do? Where would the pastors stand in relation to the desires of the men? It is when we ask ourselves such questions that we realize the urgency of this matter. It is immediate. It cannot be postponed no matter what politician is annoyed in the process. It is useless to look for hope from the State, for the State is organized especially to exploit the economic means. Indeed, it could not exist for a day if the men demanded justice. For justice does not permit the State to take from those who produce. "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's" is a principle that does not permit the taxation of wealth, for Caesar can only exist upon the wealth he takes from the producers.

When the men return to this country, what will they expect; what will they look for? After the great promises that have been made about freedom from want, will they be satisfied to go back to the old jobs in the murk and toil of factory existence? We ought to think of this now before they return to us. The reports that have already reached us from correspondents who have interviewed the men on the battlefronts reveal an almost unanimous hope that life will be easier for them all when they come back. What are we doing to make life easier for them? We are piling up a debt that we expect them to pay. We have uprooted their homes; we have sent their wives into war factories; we have neglected their children; and we have made life harder for their parents. Will the soldier be content to accept a batch of ration tickets from us, and be allotted a job in which he is expected to produce enough to pay the debt? Those who think so are living in a fool's paradise, and such thoughtlessness might easily lead to revolution here which would destroy every vestige of the liberty we have enjoyed. It is best to be frank and look ugly facts squarely in the face.

#### IV

WHAT, THEN, CAN BE DONE to make life easier for the man who returns expecting at least as much for himself here as our statesmen say we are ready to extend to those who live beyond our shores? There is only one way to meet his desire, and that is to relieve him of the economic pressure of existence such as he knew before he took up his gun. Everything has been thought out for the plan that should be adopted. If it is not to be Marx and Lenin, it must be Jesus and justice. The incompatibility of the

two alternatives has been exposed over and over again, and I believe that the time has come when Jesus and justice will win the men far sooner than the nostrums of Marx. But it is not to be expected that the returning soldiers will experience a miracle of intuition and suddenly be illuminated with the yearning for justice. They must be told what justice is. Hence, the need for a leader, a voice, a missionary who is not afraid of Caesar, one who has never been a worshipper at the shrines of Moloch and Mammon.

It cannot be expected that the men will come out of the battles with their minds filled with the thought of the Nazarene. They will be so happy to be released from the drill sergeant and the storm and stress of the carnage that perhaps for some months they will have no time to think of their future welfare. Pensions will tide them over the first economic difficulties, as they did the last time, and the victory balls will give them a false notion of the gratitude of those who stayed at home. Therefore, it is necessary to make plans now and start to work upon schemes which will hold their attention from the first, and which will prove to them that their future has been considered while they have been abroad.

The dislocations of returning industry to a peace basis and demobilization of all the forces will mean that certainly not less than 50 percent of the most vigorous male population of the country will be affected. It may be urged, as it was after the last war, that their domestic burdens piled up by the government may be relieved by a direct capital levy. Already there are advocates who suggest destroying half the paper, but it may be pointed out that the burdens of taxation before the war were too much to be borne by labor. In 1939 the debt was about 40 billions—almost twice that of 1932 when millions of men were on relief. How can the advocates of burning half the paper imagine that, as the debts before the war were far too heavy, labor can shoulder a debt of even 100 billion? There are still people who imagine the capitalists must bear this debt. When it is pointed out to these socialistically-minded folk that capital cannot pay anything unless labor produces the wealth, they have nothing more to say. So it seems from this argument that we must rely upon a totally different method of taxation if the burdens are to be lifted from the wealth producers. We need not look very far for the method by which this can be achieved. Indeed, it is here at hand.

There is nothing simpler than taking rent for the use of the community because it is created by the community. This is the only way to relieve the producers of wealth from the burdens of taxation. In this method, we go to the root of justice. Rent, the value of land without improvements,



is created by the presence of the community because all are land animals and cannot live or work without it. From land all food, fuel, clothing, and shelter are produced by labor with the aid of capital, which is wealth used in the production of more wealth.

But how is it to be done? There are many examples in Australia, New Zealand and elsewhere of attempts made in the direction of taking land values (rent) for the use of the community and leaving improvements free of the burdens of taxation. These attempts failed because they were not carried out completely. Still, remarkable things were done by partial effort. If an attempt should be made here, it should first start in each State of the Union. But it will be said the legislators of these States would soon find the vested interests opposed to any attempt to enact measures for the taking of rent. Alas, we know from experience in several of the States that this is only too true. This happened in New York and in other States, where the monopolists were so strong that the legislature was powerless to act for the welfare of the people. What, then, is to be done? How can we make our delegates understand that, when we send them to a legislature, we have not surrendered our rights?

V

HERE AGAIN WE TOUCH what is fundamental in the Constitution of this country. The old law runs: "Grievance before supply." This means that the petitions of the people must be dealt with before taxes will be voted. It was the exercise of this constitutional right that made this country a Republic, and in the history of England the people had resort to it in times of stress, notably when Hampden challenged Charles I's claim to ship money. It is high time our political delegates learned the lesson again that they are the servants of the electors; but so long as the voters imagine their duties end at the ballot box, their elected representatives will harken to the voices of the interests in the lobbies of the legislatures. Hence, it is not to be expected that the representatives at the State capitals will call for grievance before supply in a crisis. But if they seek the suffrage when the fundamental question is the necessity of removing the grievances of the people before voting taxes, every candidate would be tested before polling day, and he would have to choose whether he would support measures for the relief of the people or vote to protect the interests of the monopolists.

Oftentimes when this constitutional question has been discussed, it has been asked what power is left to the people if the delegates do not keep their pledge and, when they have taken their seats, disregard the desires of

the electors. Even in such a case the people are not left defenseless. The same constitutional principle that is laid down in grievance before supply is not exhausted, for it remains with the people themselves.

Surely the Creator meant that the people were sovereign. The sense of absolute justice in the people is only sleeping; it is not dead. Who, then, will rouse it into action? Who will make the fundamental of the American Constitution a living force? Many voices will be raised when the men return from the battlefronts, and many doles and legislative sops will be offered to them. To whom will they lend their ears? Why, to the one who will appeal to their sense of justice. Every other appeal will bear the stamp of political trickery and knavery, and they will classify it as part of the old game.

Then, if this is to be adopted as a means of securing a more equitable distribution of the wealth that is produced and, owing to the pressure of taxation on land values, forcing land into production and opening up the channels of equality of opportunity, it means a course of education in the fundamentals of production. Yes, it does. But where is the machinery to be found that is indispensable to such a scheme of education? It is all at hand, but it has never been used save in one instance, and that was when the Brotherhood Movement in Great Britain was in its strength. Without it, it would have been impossible in the short time to have introduced land values legislation into the House of Commons in 1909. Within two short years a peaceful revolution took place. Thousands of petitions went weekly to the Prime Minister and, as it gathered force, some of the Anglican churches even opened their doors to the advocates of justice. That the great effort failed was no fault of the people. The responsibility for its failure lay upon the government which was false to its pledges. There was no time for the people to act again because in a few years the war killed all effort to restore justice.

## VI

HERE IN AMERICA the time is now ripe for a true religious movement, but it should be clearly understood what is meant by the words "a true religious movement." According to Lactantius, religion is that which binds man to an invisible Creator. This definition is so wide that it embraces every denomination and every sect. It makes no distinction between race, nation, or creed. Therefore, this religious movement which I suggest is one that should appeal to all denominations.

There is no sound reason why the cause of justice should not be taken up by the clergy of the land. Since the turn of the century most of the

churches have attempted to deal with the superficial social problems, but few have thought it necessary to expose the causes of injustice, although most of the pulpits have given forth, Sabbath after Sabbath, the sayings of Jesus on this very question. The social problems that are discussed in the churches undoubtedly arise from the system which supports an unequal distribution of the wealth that is produced.

Most clergymen would today agree with that statement. How many would accept the charge that the issue has been shirked and that all the time spent upon the many different aspects of the social problems has been wasted, so far as urging the parishioners to take action. There is no more significant evidence of this than the action of the Archbishop of Canterbury, the late Catholic Archbishop of Westminster, the Chief Rabbi, Dr. Hertz, and the Moderator of the Nonconformist churches, who together have counselled a reform of the tax laws and boldly advocated the taking of land values for the benefit of the community. This means that at last, after more than fifty years of discussion of the question, they have come to realize that, if the social problems they have preached against so long are to be dealt with, the removal of economic injustice must come first.

On this question the churches suffer from palsy. Only here and there a voice is raised on behalf of the principles laid down by the Nazarene. And yet, great preparations are being made for the reception of the men when they come home. What are these preparations? What do they amount to? Is there anything in them that will attract the mind of a man that has been seared by the horror of war? Is there in them any promise of a fundamental change that offers these men the hope that such things as they have suffered will not come again? What will the men say? They will say what was said by the heroes of the last war, "*We fought for liberty and got a dole.*"

Is there any reason why the preparations that are shaping should not include the gospel of the Nazarene? Why do the churches hesitate? What have they to fear in this extremity from a free avowal of the necessity of justice as the true solvent of economic evils and the systems which make wars? They have everything to gain. All that is required is courage, but courage born of knowledge. Once this is realized, the educative process may begin with the parents, relatives and friends of those who are absent. Begin with them, the people who meet Sunday after Sunday, and teach them the true gospel, so that when their men return, they may enter households prepared for their coming. Teach a father what he is to say in reply to the searching questions of the son. Teach a mother the same lesson that

was learned for hundreds of years after Wyclif: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his justice; and all these things shall be added unto you."

In such a plan as this the parents become the deputed missionaries of the clergy—just as it was in all the periods of great revivals in England. Mighty things were done then but not carried through. This time—perhaps the last our civilization will experience—the law must be fulfilled. How can we go from year to year, from generation to generation, offering up the prayer, and glibly saying: "Thy Will be done on earth," when we do not understand the words we utter and take no action that will restore the source of God's bounty to his children? "Your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things, O ye of little faith." It is time the clergy began to show faith for, when the legions return, they will demand fundamental change, and woe be unto us if we fail to satisfy their demands.