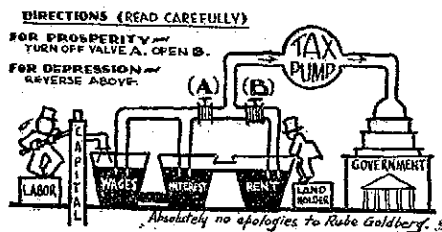


## Two Shillings and Keep

THE ULTIMATE of Statism is War. The individual may fight or even kill as a result of an emotional explosion, caused by personal affront, or in defense of life, or to acquire or retain property. Leaving aside the pathological sadist, it is personal gain or satisfaction that always motivates physical violence between individuals. One fights for an ideology only when, through conditioning, the mind has acquired a sense of personal possessiveness in that set of ideas; the function of a State bent on war is thus to condition the minds of its subjects, and to prevent free thought, "fraternizing," or counter-prop-



aganda from permitting the natural impulse for peaceful living to express itself.

Only the State desires war. It needs war. Through its two tentacles of taxation and monopoly-privileges it sucks the life-blood of production to the point where vast numbers of its subjects are unable to secure bare sustenance. A hungry man is an incipient revolutionist—a danger to the permanence of the State. Alms are resorted to as a palliative. But taxation and the private appropriation of rent continue to siphon the wealth produced by labor. The more alms the more poverty. The innately peaceful man is maddened by the hopelessness of his existence. The feeling of being unwanted by the social order is an affront to his sense of personal dignity. He is a perfect tinder-box for inflammatory propaganda.

War comes. The individual has disappeared. He has been merged into the mass concept—the State. His desires, his hopes, his aspirations are as unimportant and as non-existent as those of a cockroach. Only the plan has any being or purpose.

But here, however, is a break in the logical process. All individuals within the confines of the State do not merge into its mass purpose. For some the prerogatives of individual existence do not disappear. And in the process of war one ascertains that the State-idea is merely a refinement of the slave-idea.

In England there is a growing popular demand that conscientious objectors be forced to work on farms at soldiers' wages—keep and two shillings a day. The higher wages in munitions factories have depleted the ranks of agricultural workers, and the resulting food shortage prompts impounding as agricultural slaves those men who refuse to kill.

There is sense in this proposal. But it is not carried to its logical conclusion. Since war is a collective enterprise for the preservation of the State, every individual within its scope should cease to exist as an individual. The levelling process should be applied to all—for it is an anomaly to recognize differences between individuals when the individual has disappeared. If "two shillings and keep" is the established conscript wage, it is the wage that should in honesty be paid to every Englishman—from king to commoner, from private to field marshal.

The English news item before us, however, reveals innocently enough why such a levelling process is not applied and also what the State-idea really is. It says that unless workers are provided for the farms, the farmers will be unable to pay rents to the land owners. Land values must be maintained. Production must go on, not only to provide food for soldiers, but also to provide rent for landowners.

The State, then, is not an all-for-all idea. It is, rather, a concept that involves a class that collects and rules, and a class that works and obeys. Omitting the political abracadabra, in what way is this different from the slave-idea?

*Editorial note: The references to the English news item are merely incidental. The State-idea is not confined to one geographical entity. Its identification with the slave-idea is even more clearly seen in those countries where the fiction of political democracy as an economic instrument has been ruthlessly wiped out.*

## The Freeman

A Monthly Critical Journal of Social and Economic Affairs

Published monthly by The Freeman Corporation, a non-profit corporation, at 30 East 29th Street, New York, N. Y. Officers and Directors: Lancaster M. Greene, Chairman; Anna George de Mille, President; Otto K. Dorn, Secretary-Treasurer; Lloyd Buchman, Counsel; Ezra Cohen, Frederic C. Leubuscher, John C. Lincoln, Leonard T. Recker, Frank Chodorov. Entered as second class matter at the Post Office at New York, N. Y. under the Act of Congress of March 3, 1897. Single subscription, fifty cents a year; five or more, forty cents each. Title registered U. S. Patent Office.