

“With Respect for Existing Obligations”

THE IDEALISM expressed in the Roosevelt-Churchill formula for peace must bring hope to every heart of good intent. We look forward now to specific implementation of the purposes outlined, with a prayer that such implementation will make of the formula a reality.

Until specification of the means for carrying out the eight “common principles . . . for a better future for the world” is offered, there will be much speculation. Those of us who emphasize the basic economic causality of social movements will be particularly interested in a subordinate clause in the all-important fourth principle, which reads as follows (emphasis ours):

“They (Messrs. Churchill and Roosevelt, speaking for their respective governments) will endeavor, *with due respect for their existing obligations*, to further the enjoyment by all States, great or small, victor or vanquished, of access, on equal terms, to the trade and to the raw materials of the world which are needed for their economic prosperity.”

What does this clause, which we have italicized; mean? What is the nature of these “existing obligations,” to whom have they been made, and why should not the sovereign States abrogate them if such action is necessary to the economic prosperity of the world?

Until further details are offered, our cogitation on these questions, based on knowledge of economic principles and historical processes, leads us to conclusions that do not point to a successful implementation of the ideal.

If trade “on equal terms” between the nations of the world means free trade, why is it necessary to wait until the conclusion of war to begin it? Indeed, the world might accept and acclaim the sincerity of purpose of the entire peace plan if a mere token were offered immediately, such as free trade between England and the United States. And such a token would have the added advantage of accelerating the supply of essential war materials from the “arsenal” to the “fortress.”

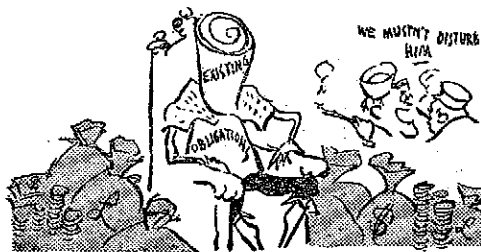
Do the “existing obligations” apply to the interests which profit by protective tariffs?

As for access to the raw materials of the world, how is this to be accomplished by any other method than the abrogation of the title deeds to the sources, now in the hands of monopolists? Here again we venture the suggestion that taking over rubber plantations in Malaya by the British government, or copper mines by the United States—two raw ma-

terials sources which, in private hands, are increasing the cost of the war—would make for universal recognition of sincerity of purpose.

Are the restricting “existing obligations” to the cartellists whose greed has had much to do with preventing access to the raw materials of the world?

Such speculation is inevitable. Nor does it arise from any doubt of the moral or intellectual integrity of Messrs. Churchill and Roosevelt. As representatives these men must give “due respect” for “existing obligations” based on the laws, traditions and customs prevailing in their respective countries. They are bound by the *mores* of their times.



And, so long as the educational processes of both countries are molded by the very interests which profit by protective tariffs and the monopolizing of raw materials, just so long will the people continue to support institutions which make for national and international discord. The wisest statesmen cannot help an ignorant people.

Things being as they are, we can only hope for a miracle. Unless that miracle comes to our rescue, precedent points to peace terms dictated not by ideals but by the relative condition and position of the contending military forces at war's end. In the past such peace terms have always become the preamble to a new declaration of war.

But the age of miracles is not past. The thousands of men and women over the country who are awakening the great public to the fraudulent nature of these “existing obligations,” who are teaching the people to abolish institutions that make for war and to replace them with institutions that make for permanent world peace—these thousands of men and women are creating the conditions under which a Georgist formula for peace one day may end war for all time. Who is to say that these men and women may not be the instruments of a Divine Providence?