

THE GREAT MADNESS: A VICTORY FOR THE AMERICAN PLUTOCRACY

Excerpts from *THE GREAT MADNESS*:

Scott Nearing's 1917 review of the ominous events from 1914 to 1917 that enabled the private interests of large corporations ("plutocracy") to propel the U.S. into World War I for their material profit, thereby permanently degrading and perverting U.S. democracy for the 20th century.

THE GREAT MADNESS: A Victory for the American Plutocracy

The entrance of the United States into the world war on April 6, 1917, was the greatest victory that the American plutocracy has won over the American democracy since the declaration of war with Spain in 1898. The American plutocracy urged the war; shouted for it; demanded it; insisted upon it, and finally got it.

The plutocracy welcomed the war not because it was a war, but because it meant a chance to get a stronger grip on the United States.

[The plutocrats believe there are some things worse than war]: the confiscation of special privileges; the abolition of unearned income; the overthrow of the economic parasitism; the establishment of industrial democracy. The plutocrats would welcome a war that promised salvation from any such calamities; they would also welcome a war that promised greater foreign markets, the destruction of foreign competition, more security for property rights and a longer lease on life for plutocratic despotism.

The plutocrats, or wealth lords, ... were for the war from the beginning. They urged preparedness; they demanded national defense; they cried aloud for reprisals upon Germany because ... it gave them a chance to deliver a knock-out blow to the American democracy.

Big business was in public disfavor. Advertisements, "boiler-plate," news stories, press agents and blatant philanthropies had little effect. The people would not forget the "public be damned" days of the business buccaneers. They had learned about the rebates, the unfair rates, the debauchery of public officials and the criminal practices by which many of the most successful of the big business men had climbed into power. The people were "wise" to big business, and they were getting wiser every day.

The immense success of the parcels post sounded an ominous warning to special privilege. There was general talk that the telephone and telegraph industry would be nationalized next, and that the railroads would follow suit at an early date. If this socializing of industry was once begun, where was it to end?

The public had been educated, through many years, by progressive and radical political leaders, newspaper men, and social workers. There was the labor movement in its various phases - unions, socialism, I. W. W. The people were learning the lesson rapidly. Laws were passed; commissions were appointed; regulations were imposed. Most of the laws

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were violated; most of the commissions were captured by the plutocrats and most of the regulations were evaded. Still public opposition rose stubbornly and surely.

The plutocracy wanted a free hand. Since the Spanish War the United States had been a lending nation. The wealth of the country in 1900 was 87 billions; in 1912, 187 billions; in 1917, 250 billions. There were 120 persons, who admitted, in 1916, that they had incomes of over a million dollars a year. The wealth of the country was vast enough to feed, clothe, house and educate every boy and girl; enough to give all of the necessaries and most of the simple comforts of life to every family. The plutocrats were not interested in these matters, however. They wanted security for investments at home and abroad.

Things at home were in bad shape and promising to get worse. Millions of people were sore on the system which fed the owner and starved the worker; millions of casual laborers - men and women wandered from job to job; from city to city, discouraged, homeless, indifferent. The revolutionary fury that was passing through the country broke out menacingly in Colorado, West Virginia, Lawrence, Paterson, Bayonne and New York. People no longer asked, "Will there be a revolution?" but, "When will the revolution come?"

The plutocrats had lost public confidence. They realized that if they were to hold their position - public confidence must be regained.

The control by the vested interests of natural resources, banks, railroads, mines, factories, political parties, public offices, courts and court decisions, the school system, the press, the pulpit, the movie business, the magazines - all of this power amounted to nothing in a community that believed itself a democracy, unless public opinion was behind it.

How could the plutocracy - the discredited, vilified plutocracy - get public opinion? There was only one way: it must line up with some cause that would command public confidence. The cause that it chose was the "defense of the United States."

THE "DEFENSE OF THE UNITED STATES"

With the immense power of the public press at their disposal; possessing unlimited means; united on a common policy, the plutocracy spread terror over the land.

The campaign was intense and dramatic. Japanese invasions, Mexican inroads, and a world conquest by Germany were featured in the daily press, in the magazines, on the movie screens and in public addresses. Depredations, murder and rapine were to be the lot of the American people unless they built battleships and organized armies.

The campaign to arouse the American people against the Mexicans was so raw that President Wilson felt called upon to make a public statement (March 26, 1916), in which he charged that "there are persons all along the border who are actively engaged in originating and giving as wide currency as they can to rumors of the most sensational and

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disturbing sort which are wholly unjustified by the facts. The object of this traffic in falsehood is obvious. It is to create intolerable friction between the government of the United States and the de facto government of Mexico for the purpose of bringing about intervention in the interests of certain American owners of Mexican properties."

Still the campaign was continued and when the unwillingness of the Mexicans to fight made the manufacture of jingoistic propaganda impossible in that quarter, the advocates of "national defense" turned to Germany as offering the greatest opportunities.

The preparedness campaign was a marvel of efficient business organization. Its promoters made use of every device known to the advertising profession. The best brains were employed and the country was literally blanketed with preparedness propaganda.

[In opposition to this campaign] Officers of the army and navy were frank in insisting that the defense of the United States was adequately provided for. General Miles said: "Having had much to do with the placing and construction of our fortifications and inspecting every one along the Atlantic, Pacific and Gulf Coasts, as well as having had an opportunity to see all the great armies of the world and many of their coast fortifications, including the Dardanelles, I am prepared to say that our coasts are as well defended as the coast of any country with the same class of guns, and heavy projectiles, and I have no sympathy with the misrepresentations that have been made in the attempt to mislead the public." (*Congressional Record*, 2/3/16, #2265)

Still the preparedness campaign continued with redoubled vigor. Congressman Clyde H. Tavenner stated (*Congressional Record*, February 3, 1916, page 2265.) that four firms "constituting the war trust have received army and navy contracts aggregating 175 million dollars." He contended that "army and navy officials have generously paid the war trust from 20 to 60 per cent more than the same supplies could have been manufactured for in government arsenals." He showed that the present "Chief of Ordnance was formerly in partnership with the Bethlehem Company, one of the war trust firms," and that the "powder trust was represented in Washington by an ex-army official and an ex-member of Congress." He then showed the connection that existed between the preparedness campaign and those who were making profits out of the war business, the nickel business, the copper business, and the steel business, interlocked through interlocking directorates; then he established the connection between the Navy League and the firm of J. P. Morgan & Company, 23 Wall Street, New York. Regarding this connection, Congressman Tavenner says: "The Navy League upon close examination would appear to be little more than a branch office of the house of J. P. Morgan & Company, and a general sales promotion bureau for the various armor and munitions makers and the steel, nickel, copper and zinc interests. At least, they are all represented among the directors, officers, founders or life members of or contributors to the Navy League. Especially are all firms of big business represented, and big business invariably heads in at 23 Wall Street, New York."¹

Tavenner concludes: "...the munition patriots founded the Navy League. * * * The armor plate makers are the most patriotic patriots on earth." "There are but three firms in the

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United States who manufacture armor plate - Midvale, Bethlehem and Carnegie companies - each of them is represented in the list of 19 men who, according to the official journal of the Navy League, were founders of the organization. * * * Is it not a rather peculiar coincidence that among these 19 directors who stepped forth from all the millions of the American citizens to save the Republic by advocating larger appropriations for battleships every armor making concern in the United States should be represented ?"

"Defenseless America" the refrain. "Preparedness" was an argument in itself and every channel of publicity in the United States devoted a major share of attention to this argument.

Aggressive Germany was the danger mark. It was against her infamous desire to impose Kultur upon the world that America was urged to prepare herself. It was for this purpose that the President signed a bill during the summer of 1916 appropriating 662 million dollars for the army and navy, a sum larger than had ever before been appropriated for war purposes by any nation in times of peace. Well might LaFollette exclaim, in his speech (July 19-20, 1916) opposing this appropriation, -- "I object, Mr. President, to a game, a plan, a conspiracy to force upon this country a big army and a big navy, to use the Treasury of the country, and if need be the lives of its people, to make good the foreign speculation of a few unscrupulous masters of finance."

The preparedness movement came from the business interests. It was fostered and financed by the plutocracy. It was their first successful effort at winning public confidence, and so well was it managed that millions of Americans fell into line, fired by the love of the flag and the world-old devotion to family and fireside; millions more trembled with the fear of the frightful war that was coming, and other millions were gripped by the hate and the war lust that inspire war madness.

THE "PATRIOTS"

From preparedness to patriotism was a short step. The preparedness advocates had used the flag freely. They had played national airs, evoked the spirit of the founders of American democracy and worked upon the emotions of the people until it was generally understood that those who favored preparedness were patriots.

Patriotism ran high. Enthusiasm for the flag increased. Patriotic committees were organized, but when the names of the patriots appeared in the newspapers they were distinguished by one outstanding fact, the vast majority of them were the successful business and professional men who were the center and forefront of the patriotic movement just as they had been the center and forefront of the preparedness movement.

The price of flags rose rapidly - the flag manufacturers took this opportunity to get their share of the good things that were "going round" - nevertheless, the workers by the hundreds of thousands "contributed" to provide flags for the establishments in which they were employed. Men were discharged when they refused to make such "contributions."

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The business interests were "in clover." After years of unpopularity, after being forced to endure investigation, criticism, and antagonistic legislation, after being condemned by even the conservative element in public life as a menace to American progress and well-being, the business interests suddenly found themselves in a movement that was carrying the people, and they worked it for all it was worth.

"Patriotism" was the refrain of every speech and every article - a patriotism of their own particular brand.

The plutocratic brand of patriotism won the endorsement of the press, the pulpit, the college, and every other important channel of public information in the United States. The "educated," "cultured," "refined," "high-principled" editors, ministers, professors and lawyers accepted it and proclaimed it as though it were their own. Turning their backs upon principle, throwing morals and ideals to the winds, they tumbled over one another in a wild scramble to be the first to join the chorus of plutocratic patriotism.

The American plutocracy was magnified, deified, and consecrated to the task of making the world safe for democracy. The brigands had turned saints and were conducting a campaign to raise \$100,000,000 for the Red Cross. The malefactors of great wealth, the predatory business forces, the special privileged few who had milked the American people for generations became the prophets and the crusaders, the keepers of the ark of the covenant of American democracy.

This campaign was directed by H. P. Davison, one of the leading members of the firm of J. P. Morgan & Co.

ARMED NEUTRALITY

Throughout the war, the United States had been referred to as the "great neutral." At the very beginning of the contest President Wilson had urged the people to be neutral in thought as well as in act. Meanwhile, the British fleet blockaded Germany, closed the North Sea, sowed it with mines, and refused to permit American manufacturers to sell goods to the Central Powers. This constituted a brazen violation of international law. By accepting this blockade the United States became the armorer and the provisioner of the Allied countries. Whatever the Allies wanted was manufactured by the United States and shipped to them, contraband and non-contraband alike. The statement was repeatedly made that we were willing to sell to the Central Powers on the same terms, but the fact that the Central Powers could not possibly buy from us rendered any talk of neutrality the thinnest kind of a sham.

England confiscated cargoes in violation of international law. Her mines sunk American ships and destroyed American lives. Being mistress of the sea she held up mails, despite American protests.

The German submarines sank American boats also in violation of international law. The protests against England's depredations were feeble, those against Germany were

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uproarious. American sentiment was being shaped deliberately in favor of the Allies from whom American bankers, manufacturers and traders were making a billion dollars a year of war profits. Driven by this economic pressure, the country ceased to talk of neutrality, and became frankly pro-Ally, in utterances as well as in business transactions.

American business interests put up a bitter cry of protest when Germany announced a blockade of England by her submarines (as complete as the blockade which England has established over Germany) and [When Germany] warned American shipping away from the waters surrounding the British Isles (in the same way that England has warned American shipping away from the waters surrounding Germany).

The situation was critical. American business stood to lose billions.

The President hurried to the rescue with his preposterous phrase "armed neutrality," and asked Congress for permission to place guns and gunners on American merchantmen. While the President asked for this authority as a peace measure, it was pretty clear that armed neutrality would mean war the first time that an armed merchantman met a submarine.

The President's request for authority to arm American merchant vessels was made in an address to Congress, February 26, 1917, in which he said, - "I am not now proposing or contemplating war or any steps that need lead to it. I request that you authorize me to supply our merchant ships with defensive arms, should that become necessary, and with the means of using them."

"The Armed Ship Bill", authorizing the President to arm merchant vessels was introduced. The newspapers of the country backed it eagerly. The administration pushed it vigorously, but the bill went down to defeat because of a filibuster by a little group of senators of whom LaFollette was the leading figure. Senator LaFollette (4/4/1917) "The demand [to arm merchant ships] came chiefly from the American Line, whose tonnage is less than five per cent of the total tonnage of the United States engaged in foreign trade. The American Line is a subsidiary of the International Mercantile Marine Company, which in December, 1916, had 102 vessels flying the British flag, two flying the Belgian flag and eight flying the United States flag. The control of the International Mercantile Marine Company, prior to the war, was in England. ...When one of the American Line ships, armed with United States guns, sails out to sea the orders to fire will be given by Mr. Franklin's master of the ship, not by the United States gunner. The English owners give orders to Franklin. The English owners take their orders from the British Admiralty. Hence we, professing to be a neutral nation, are placing American guns and American gunners practically under the orders of the British Admiralty.

"The armed ship bill commanded Overwhelming support, not only of the party in power, whipped into line to railroad through the Senate an Administration measure, but also of all - those sinister influences which have been clamoring for war: the munitions makers, the gamblers in war stocks and war contracts and the financial interests who have loaned vast sums to one set of belligerents...plotters, enemies of our democracy."

THE "TRAITORS"

The armed ship bill failed to pass because a handful of senators refused to have it rushed through during the closing hours of the session. The result was electric. The President denounced them as "a little group of willful men." The papers cartooned them and vilified them in the most shameless manner. They were called "German agents" and scores of newspapers presented them with the Iron Cross. Among those senatorial "traitors" were the few senators who had stood for the common people against the vested interests.

The patriots of plutocracy did not confine their attention to Congressmen. The term "traitor" was flung in the teeth of anyone who opposed the seven league steps that the administration was taking toward war. Radicals who had always opposed war; ministers who had spent their lives in preaching Peace on earth; scientists whose work had brought them into contact with the peoples of the whole world; public men who believed that the United States could do greater and better work for democracy by staying out of the war were persecuted as zealously as though they had sided with Protestantism in Catholic Spain under the Inquisition. The plutocracy had declared for war, and woe betide the heedless or willful one who still insisted upon urging the gospel of peace.

The liberal and radical forces of American life - the men and women who had sacrificed, suffered, labored and struggled to make America safe for democracy, were brushed aside by the triumphant Patriotic plutocracy: Morgan, Rockefeller, Guggenheim, Willard, Gary, Schwab, Stotesbury, - were the great patriots. All who opposed them were traitors. The plutocracy had always stood and still stands for special privilege in its most vicious form. By a clever move, the plutocrats, wrapped in the flag and proclaiming a crusade to inaugurate democracy in Germany, rallied to their support the professional classes of the United States and millions of the common people.

THE SECOND OF APRIL

The "patriots" wanted to ship goods to the Allied governments. Armed neutrality for them meant business opportunity. The "traitors" were those who opposed foreign entanglements and alliances and who used every effort to keep the United States out of the war.

No one knows just how serious was the predicament of the Allies in the spring of 1917. After three years of war, during which they had made the most stupendous preparations and spent unheard of wealth and energy they had proved themselves incapable of driving the Germans out of France and Belgium, and were, in reality, still fighting a defensive war. Their credit was strained to the breaking point, and their resources were at a very low ebb. The food situation in the British Isles was serious. The Russians were temporarily out of the fight. Meanwhile, the submarines were playing havoc with Allied shipping.

The economic position of the United States was also serious. Our export trade which had jumped from two billions in 1913 to seven billions in 1917 was threatened with

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demolition. The large manufacturing establishments which had been erected for the purpose of supplying munitions to the Allied governments had delivered most of their contracts and were waiting for additional war orders. The banking interests, led by the Morgan firm, had backed the Allies financially. Allied failure, therefore, meant disaster to American finance. For three years the American plutocracy had enjoyed the benefits of war business, without paying any of the penalties which war entails. These vast profits would cease if the submarine blockade succeeded.

The "great neutral" faced the test of possible commercial disaster. A hundred millions of people in the balance counted as nothing against the menace of economic losses. The President without any authority from Congress armed the merchant ships' and gave Bernstorff his papers. The business interests went wild with joy. When the news of the break with Germany was flashed to Wall Street every banking house hung out its flag and "in twenty minutes Wall Street from Trinity Church to South Street was bedecked like on a holiday." - *Finance and Commerce*, February 7, 1917.

On 4/2/17 the President insisted that Congress follow him still further and declare the existence of a state of war with Germany.

The Administration, backed almost solidly by the press (which saw within easy reach the war for which it had labored so faithfully) demanded that all members of Congress. "stand behind the President."

General Isaac R. Sherwood, a veteran of the Civil War, made a final appeal to Congress on the 5th of April in which he reviewed the history of England's attack upon the United States during the Civil War, warned the American people that they were going to war "as an Ally of the only nation in Europe that has always been our enemy and against the nation that has always been our friend." The President "in the presence of both Houses of Congress, and the Cabinet, and the Supreme Court, and the bespangled Diplomatic Corps, in a spectacular and elaborately staged event wrote a message to Congress and the country, declaring his purpose to enter the world wide conflict in the interests of a world wide democracy. * * * At the distance of 3,500 miles the undesirable and dangerous German Kaiser looks the same to me as the great-grandson of George Third; in fact, all kings look alike to me. I am not willing to vote to send the gallant young manhood of America across the Atlantic Ocean to fight for either. * * * I regard war as the greatest crime of the human race. * * * My experience in the Civil War has saddened all my life. * * * As I love my country, I feel it my sacred duty to keep the stalwart young men of today out of a barbarous war 3,500 miles away, in which we have no vital interest."

There was other opposition equally vigorous and equally well spoken which called down upon the heads of those who uttered it a torrent of the most barbarous abuse from the press, the pulpit, and public men in every walk of life.

On April 6th, with the passage of the resolution declaring the existence of a state of war, the American people found themselves in war, after returning a party to power only five months before because it had "kept us out of war."

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The people were not consulted, their wishes were not considered.

No popular referendum on the war was even proposed by the administration. Like the people in the king ridden countries of Europe, the American people, without any say in the matter were plunged into the conflict.

The make-up of some of the [war-expenditures] sub-committees [is revealing]: Mr. Willard's sub-committee on "Express" consists of four vice-presidents, one from the American, one from the Wells Fargo, one from the Southern and one from the Adams Express Company. His committee on "Locomotives" consists of the vice-president of the Baldwin Locomotive Works, a vice-president of the Porter Locomotive Company, the president of the American Locomotive Company, and the Chairman of the Lima Locomotive Corporation.

Mr. Rosenwald's committee on "Shoe and Leather Industries" consists of eight persons, all of them representing shoe or leather companies. His committee on "Woolen Manufactures" consists of eight representatives of the woolen industry, and his committee on "Supplies" consists of a retired business man, and one representative each from Sears, Roebuck & Company, the Quaker Oats Company and Libby, McNeil & Libby (meat packers).

The same business control appears in Mr. Baruch's committees. His committee on "Cement" consists of the presidents of four of the leading cement companies, the vice-president of a fifth cement company, and a representative of the Bureau of Standards of Washington. His committee on "Copper" has the names of the presidents of the Anaconda Copper Company, the Calumet & Hecla Mining Company, the United Verde Copper Company and the Utah Copper Company. Mr. Murray M. Guggenheim is a member of the same committee. His committee on "Steel and Steel Products" consists of Elbert H. Gary, chairman of the United States Steel Corporation, Charles M. Schwab, of the Bethlehem Steel Company, A. C. Dinkey, vice-president of the Midvale Steel Company, W. L. King, vice-president of Jones & Loughlin Steel Company and J. A. Burden, president of the Burden Iron Company. The other four members of the committee represent the Republic Iron & Steel Company, the Lackawanna Steel Company, the American Iron & Steel Institute and the Picklands, Mather Company, of Cleveland. Perhaps the most astounding of all the committees is that on "Oil." The Chairman is the President of the Standard Oil Company, and the Secretary of the Committee gives his address as "26- Broadway," the address of the Standard Oil Company. The other nine members of the committee are oil men from various parts of the country. What thinking American would have even suggested, three years ago, that the Standard Oil Company would be officially directing a part of the work of the Federal Government?

Comment is superfluous. Every great industrial enterprise of the United States has secured representation on the committees of business men that have openly taken charge of the United States.

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The business interests had played for a great stake. They had played against the well being of the American democracy. The prize they sought was a billion dollars a year in profits. Wrapped in the folds of the flag and uttering resounding declarations of patriotism, on April sixth the business interests won a victory of terrible import to the American democracy.

THE LIBERTY LOAN

As soon as war was declared, the administration undertook to secure, -- money, conscription, and censorship. The first and most important of these was money. Congress passed almost immediately the bill authorizing a bond issue of seven billions of dollars.

The Liberty Loan was important to the American bankers who had financed the Allies, because it guaranteed Allied credit. There were other things about it, however, that were even more significant than its assistance in international business. It gave the local business men a chance to do a piece of work of the utmost importance to their own security.

[In the face of a public apathetic, indifferent or hostile to war] the Liberty Loan gave plutocracy a chance to put in every American home an economic argument (a bond paying 3 per cent) in favor of standing behind the government.

There was another argument in favor of selling the bonds to the people. Now that the plutocracy were the messengers of democracy in Germany and the incarnation of patriotism in the United States, to gainsay or to question their position was to be a traitor to the Stars and Stripes, which they had taken over as completely as they had previously taken over the steel, coal, iron, wheat, cotton, water power, franchises, banks, railroads and the like. Hence, any employee could be asked by an employer in the name of liberty and democracy to buy a bond.

A girl who was working in a department store for \$7 a week "arranged" with her manager to contribute \$2 a week for 25 weeks in order to purchase a Liberty Bond. When the Red Cross campaign was on, a friend found this girl crying and upon inquiring was informed that week the \$5 which remained of her wage had been "contributed" to the Red Cross fund. She was wondering how she could get to the next week and pay her board and food bills.

A man with a family, sick for three months, had contracted several doctor's bills and was in financial straits. He was advised that it would be wise for him to buy a Liberty Bond. Like the cash girl, he was not in a position where he could talk back. He therefore went farther into debt in order to comply with the "suggestion" of his superior.

The Liberty Loan was probably more effective than any other single weapon in the hands of the business world as a club with which to coerce the workers. Heretofore the employer had run his own business as he pleased. Now he was able to go further and tell his workers how they might spend their income.

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The plutocracy saw the advantage which would accrue to them from the Liberty Loan. They did not subscribe themselves in any large degree, but they did use every effort to cajole and coerce the common people of the United States into subscribing. The business interests of the United States stood together and worked together more solidly on the Liberty Loan than on any other measure within the memory of the present generation. It was a business proposition and the business crowd put it over.

The Liberty Loan was a signal victory for the plutocracy, and an equally signal defeat for the democracy. It did more to bulwark the position of the plutocratic despots of the United States than it will ever do for liberty in Europe.

The President's speech on April 2nd, and the "war-vote" of Congress on April 6th, plunged the American people into the war. The Liberty Loan saddled the immediate payment for the war upon millions of unwilling common people and yoked up the next generation to a war debt over which they had no control. The war-madness was beginning to yield its bitter fruit.

CONSCRIPTION

The second measure of importance to the business world was conscription. The labor problem in America was giving the plutocracy a great deal of trouble. The shortage of workers during the years of war-contract activity had put the laboring people in a position of great strategic advantage which they had used on many occasions to advance wages and shorten hours. The workers were relatively prosperous and unusually confident. ...labor solidarity [is] dangerous to plutocracy. Conscription would do much to hamper or destroy it.

Conscription possessed another advantage of supreme importance. Experience had shown that great armies and navies could not be raised by the volunteer system in a democracy. If the plutocracy was to put over its plan for a great army and navy behind its aggressive economic campaign into Mexico, Central America and South America, it must have conscription in order to provide the men for the military and naval forces.

When the Conscription Bill was introduced into Congress there was a general feeling through the country that it could not pass. Even the press hesitated, so un-American was this Bill, which clearly violated the spirit of the constitution and the traditions of American life. [2](#)

Then courage was supplied to the press from somewhere, and the newspapers and magazines of the country went to work with a will. They apologized, explained and insisted. Six weeks after war was declared the bill had passed Congress. Within two months, more than nine million young men had been "selected for service."

The Conscription Bill paved the way for a military system exactly like that which had been so savagely denounced in Germany. It gave the American plutocracy the beginnings of a big, cheap army. It disposed of the uncertainties of volunteering and provided the

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possibility of military education for every young American. At the same time the way was opened for the imposition of universal service, which was all that Prussia has ever demanded in the balmiest days of her militarism. Then, too, a beginning was made toward industrial conscription, and the possibility was opened for the importation of coolie and peon labor, things which were not even thinkable in peace days. America, after two months of war, had ... the rudiments of European militarism in its most barbarous aspects.

Business rejoiced again. The *Chicago Tribune* on June 6th (the day following registration), headed one of its market reports, - "Draft Success Puts New Life in New York Market. Industrials Leaders in Upward Trend. Year's Best Prices Reached." The plutocracy had scored another victory which was immediately recorded in the climbing prices of stocks and bonds - and ten million young men were in the grip of American militarism.

CENSORSHIP

"The United States has been suffering from an over-dose of democracy" insists one ardent supporter of the plutocracy.

The censorship bill was designed to remedy this deplorable situation by sweeping aside personal liberty. The declaration of war was a slap in the face of democracy. The censorship bill bandaged its eyes, plugged its ears and gagged its mouth.

The censorship bill, in its original form, was so drastic and far-reaching that even the newspapers denounced it. So general was the opposition that after weeks of fighting, the bill was approved by the President on June 15th in such a modified form that there was no direct reference to freedom of speech and of the press. But tucked away in an obscure corner of Section 481 was an amendment to the Postal Laws which reads, - "Every letter, writing, circular, postal card, picture, print, engraving, photograph, newspaper, pamphlet, book, or other publication, matter or thing of any kind containing any matter which is intended to obstruct the recruiting or enlistment service of the United States is hereby declared to be non-mail able."

Under this section each one of the 123,387 United States postmasters is made a censor with authority (subject to the reversal of his superiors) to exclude from the mails anything that in his judgment will "obstruct the recruiting or enlistment service." The Federal authorities were not slow in availing themselves of this immense power. The Cleveland (Ohio) *Socialist*, the Detroit (Mich.) *Socialist*, the *Rebel* of Texas, the *International Socialist Review*, the *American Socialist*, the *Masses* and other radical publications were promptly denied the use of the mails. The *American Socialist* (Chicago) had planned a "Liberty Edition" for June 30th. The entire edition and two other editions were held up by the Chicago postmaster acting under instructions from Washington. Other papers were temporarily suspended.

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A storm of protest broke over the country, Within the memory of the oldest inhabitant there had been no such deliberate violation of the freedom of the press which is guaranteed by the First Amendment to the Constitution.

The Texas Rebel, an organ of the Farmers and Laborers Protective Association, was held up by the following order to the local postmaster, from W. H. Lamar, Solicitor General of the Postal Department at Washington, "submit to this office further copies of *The Rebel*, published at your place, for instructions, before accepting for mailing."

The Public (New York) remarked in this connection, "This is even worse than the late Russian Censorship. The Russian Censor would but black out the passage in the paper to which he took exception and let the rest go. But the postal censorship would hold up a whole issue."

While the Federal authorities were engaged in this vigorous campaign to throttle American liberty, local and state officials were equally busy denying the right of free speech and free assemblage. Halls were closed, street speaking was prohibited, the headquarters of socialist and I. W. W. locals were raided by the soldiers and police. Those who criticized the authorities were denounced as traitors. The mere mention of "peace" was infamous.

[Throughout May, 1917] and through the succeeding months the denial of free speech and free assemblage continued; the postal censorship laid its heavy fist on the free press; and sailors and soldiers wearing the uniform of the United States were permitted and in some cases encouraged to disturb and break up meetings of a radical character. During all of that time there was no official utterance from the President on the subject.

The most flagrant invasion of civil liberty was staged in Boston on Sunday, July 1st. The workers had decided to hold a parade, followed by a mass-meeting on Boston Common. Permits were secured for both events. The incidents of the afternoon are thus described by the *New York Times* (July 2nd):

"Half a hundred men in the uniform of Naval Reservists, National Guardsmen, Marines and Canadian 'Kilties' who had watched the formation of the parade, marched across the common in a double column and intercepted the procession at the corner of West and Tremont Streets, and again at the corner of Winter and Tremont Street. In both instances the contact resulted in a street fight. Blows were exchanged, and flags were snatched from the hands of the marchers, while women in the line screamed in fright."

"At Scolley Square there was a similar scene. The American flag at the head of the line was seized by the attacking party, and the band, which had been playing "The Marseillaise" with some interruption, was forced to play "The Star Spangled Banner," while cheers were given for the flag.

"The police had just succeeded in quieting this disturbance when the reserves were called out to quell a near riot at the meeting place on the Common. The first of the peace

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speakers had barely begun his remarks when the reserves arrived. They formed a circle in the crowd, with the police wagon as a center, in front of the speakers' stand, but in spite of their presence there were scores of individual fights in the big gathering. To restore quiet Supt. Crowley, as Acting Police Commissioner, revoked the permit for the speaking and the meeting was called off.

The plutocracy had been trying, for years to hush up agitation and to suppress radicals. Muckrakers, the "labor agitator", socialists, the I. W. W.'s, "anarchists," and other opponents of things as they are were denounced, clubbed, jailed and shot, but the agitation grew through persecution. Despite the ownership of the jobs and the control of the government, despite company stores and company guards, despite its grip on the press, the pulpit and the school, the plutocracy was unable to prevent this agitation. There were Colorado and Paterson, speaking the unmistakable language of a coming revolution.

The war brought the harvest time. Radicals of every stamp who opposed it - and practically all radicals did oppose and denounce it - were "traitors" against whom the fury of the war-madness might legitimately be directed.

SPREADING AMERICANISM WITH THE SWORD

A short two years sufficed to enable the business interests of the United States to take charge of the country. They had previously secured the natural resources, the manufacturing industries, the credit machinery, the public utilities and the merchandising establishments. This economic power, together with the control of the channels of public opinion and of the machinery of politics enabled them over night, in the history of American affairs, to put across their program and prepare to "crush Germany."

President Wilson said very frankly that it was not the German people against whom we were making war. He insisted that our purpose was to overthrow the German autocracy.

The British capitalists had been franker. They had talked openly about the "war after the war." They had even gone so far as to hold a conference at Paris, in which they had discussed the best methods of overthrowing German industry. As Frank Harris puts it in ' his book, "England or Germany" (page 21), "Great Britain had taken up arms to crush a successful trade rival, and for no other reason. As soon as war was declared, The Times and Daily Mail and many other London papers threw off the mask and published column after column showing how this, that and the other department of trade could now be taken from the Germans."

Why did the American plutocracy desire to crush Germany? Was it to destroy despotism there ? The idea is preposterous. The despotism in any bank, factory or railroad of the United States is more complete than that of the Kaiser. The American plutocracy has fattened on despotism for generations.

The American plutocracy was no more interested in establishing democracy in Germany than they were in establishing democracy in the United States. They did want to see

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German industry crushed, however, and since the Kaiser and his group represented German business in its most highly developed form, the Kaiser was the object of their wrath.

The President stated the issue in quite another form, but no matter what he may say, he cannot escape the fact that the plutocracy of the United States was behind him in a body. The plutocrats are no man's fools. They know what they want and they are after it, hot-foot.

The President decided that the best way to "make the world safe for democracy" was to abandon America's traditional policy of isolation; to form an alliance with six democracies and seven monarchies; to mobilize the resources of the country, and to enter the world war as an active belligerent. ... "The world must be made safe for democracy," said President Wilson to Congress on April 2, 1917. Thereupon, without consulting the American people or Congress either, the President pushed the United States into war in an alliance with three of the leading monarchies, including one of the most complete autocracies (Japan) of the world.

"We now chart a new national course," said Congressman Ernest Lundeen (April 5, 1917). "In terms of autocracy we declare our intention to bestride the world with democracy. Our fixed determination is to thrust democracy with loving bayonets down the throats of unwilling peoples.

"Let us look at the company we will keep in performing this benevolent function. We will be marching side by side with the King of Serbia; the King of Italy is our boon companion; the King of Belgium is there; so also the King of Roumania; the Emperor of India and the King of England, our stalwart brother; not to mention the King of Montenegro and various other principalities and rulers, as well as chaotic Russia - only France is a Republic - and last but not least we are to be brothers in blood with our dear friend the Emperor of Japan. And this our Chief Executive proposes as our 'league of honor.'"

The forefront of this alliance to make the world safe for democracy is England - "a hereditary monarchy, with a hereditary ruler, with a hereditary House of Lords, with a hereditary landed system, with a limited and restricted suffrage for one class and a multiple suffrage power for another, and with grinding industrial conditions for all the wage earners." (LaFollette 4/4/17) England, in which "there will never be the ghost of freedom till there is a social revolution," England, "the real enemy of civilization, for more than a hundred years now the chief obstacle to the humanization of man."³

Remember the words of David Lloyd George, Prime Minister of England, "Peace before victory would be the greatest disaster in the history of mankind... Britannia will rule the waves after the war." ... America will fight for liberty and when the right is won, - "Britannia will rule!" (Glasgow speech, June 29, 1917).

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The tradition of American statesmanship had been a mind your-own-business policy. ...[But] by July, 1917, the billboard enlistment campaign was couched in such words as "The regulars are in France, join them now!" "Enlist immediately so as to fight on German and not on United States soil." The German autocracy was on the defensive; the American plutocracy had become the aggressor. The regular army had already been transported four thousand miles and a conscript army of a million men was in process of formation to wage an aggressive war in the interests of the British ruling classes.

Step by step the plutocracy advanced. Point by point they established their position: war bonds, conscription, censorship and a war to crush German industry. Meanwhile they were able to come out into the open and take possession of the government through the subcommittees of the Council of National Defense.

And the American people stood for it. Emotionalized, dazed, stupefied, and blinded by the great madness that possessed their souls, nearly a hundred million people cast aside their most cherished principles, sacrificed their hard-won liberties, and began spreading brotherhood and democracy by the sword. The plutocracy had won everything for which it had been fighting - immunity, power, wealth. The people were war-mad; - at least, there was enough of the war madness in the country to enable the vested interests to put across anything that they wanted.

Three years of ceaseless effort on the part of the press, the pulpit, the school, the screen and the stage had sufficed to infuse millions of Americans with the mob fear and mob hate that are the warp and woof of war-madness. The carefully planned, brilliantly executed scheme of advertising preparedness, patriotism and war, had left a great section of the American people incapable of reasoning or understanding. On April 2nd there were millions who had been worried, harried, and emotionalized through the successive stages of fear, resentfulness, bitterness, hatred and frenzy until they were sufficiently ferocious to be willing to use the knife.

The plutocrats won immunity, power and wealth, measured in seven figures. They won more. First, they secured the big navy and army for which they had worked so faithfully, - an army to menace neighbors and to preserve peace at home during the deluge of misery that will follow the bursting cloud of war-values and war-prices; a navy to guard the hundreds of millions that they have invested in "undeveloped" countries; and seven billions of dollars to be spent at once - much of it on war contracts, which afford proverbially fat pickings.

Again they had won conscription - the right to send a million Americans into the trenches of France to fight for the poor Belgians, for Lombard Street, Wall Street and King George of England.

They had established a spirit that permitted children to go back into factories from which [they had just been rescued]; women to take men's jobs at a fraction of the wage, and the standards surrounding the labor of men to be lowered.

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The plutocrats won another point - a point desired by every despot. They won the right to impose restrictions upon the freedom of speech, of press and assemblage, which are the foundation of democracy. The plutocracy bought the press, subsidized the pulpit, placed their representatives in control of the schools, and by the use of the police and postal censorship they restricted individual liberty.

Beside and beyond this economic, political and social power the Plutocracy had millions of deluded people in its grip incapable of thinking because of the fearful war madness that possessed their souls.

They aroused the people, agitating and irritating them, until they were frantically repeating the blatant lie that the real enemy of American liberty lived in Berlin. Then they stung them with high prices, filched their liberty, plunged them into war, took a million of their brothers and husbands and sons to wage a war of aggression on the battlefields of king-ridden Europe, and because nothing happened at once, they believe that they had won. They had won victory and death.

The plutocracy and the democracy cannot exist side by side. If the plutocracy wins, dollars rule; if the democracy wins, people rule. There can be no alternative and no compromise. During the past three years of struggle, the democracy has lost every move. The power of the plutocracy has been strengthened immeasurably.

Footnotes

1. "The Navy League Unmasked" speech of 12/15/15, #13
2. Daniel Webster said in the House of Representatives, December 9, 1814, - "If the Secretary of War has proved the right of Congress to enact a law enforcing a draft of men out of the militia into the regular army, he will at the same time be able to prove quite as clearly that Congress has power to create a dictator. The arguments which have helped him in one case will equally help him in the other."
3. "England or Germany," Frank Harris, #398

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