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"I Bring A Sword"

War in the embryo exists wherever and whenever the conditions which bring about the economic slavery of the people prevail. Which means, everywhere and always.

The only way to abolish war is to make men free. All the schemes advanced to rid humanity of bloody conflict fail to recognize this fundamental truth. They proceed from the false notion that nations fight, while the most patent fact is that war is merely the organized expression of the urge for economic security which results in strikes, thievery and legalized rascality within the nations.

Political economy does not recognize national boundaries—any more than chemistry does. Nature has made no provision for nations in its scheme of things. Neither has she ordained any rules for segregating peoples into races, clans, governments or ideologies. These are but the mechanisms of man, the primary purpose of which is to enable some men to deprive the rest of their production.

For men live only that they may live and enjoy life. And for this purpose they work and they play. If the things they produce for themselves are appropriated by others, whether by highwaymen, tax-collectors or legalized landlords, their lives are, to the extent of that deprivation, frustrated. That the robbery is sanctioned by the formality of government, or sanctified by the glib rationalizations of learned professors, does not in the least mitigate their sense of injustice. They are irritated and want to fight. In fact, the successful screening of the robbers behind plausible phraseology merely increases the hurt, for an unknown and unseen enemy is the most aggravating.

Let men alone, let them enjoy the products of their labors, and they will not fight. There is no other way.

The governor of Minnesota and the governor of North Dakota do not have to enter into any defensive or offensive treaties merely because the citizens in these political divisions can trade with one another more or less freely. Except for some petty—scandalously unnecessary—interferences from officialdom they hardly recognize boundary lines. They swap their products to their mutual advantage, the girls and the boys fall in love and marry, and the notion of war between the states is unthinkable. Yet, once a governor of Minnesota sent his militia to the border to prevent the drought-stricken cattle of North Dakota from being driven to the more fertile fields farther east. The resentment of this interference with the right to live was so strong that only the withdrawal of the troops prevented trouble.

We hear a lot of balderdash these days about ideological wars. People do not fight because of phrases. Ideologies are thought-schemes devised by intellectuals to flatter their word-mongering proclivities, and used by politicians, plutocrats and plutogues to bedevil the impoverished populace. What an elusive scapegoat an ideology is! How nice to tell your hungry people that the cause of their hunger is the wrong thought of their neighbors! If only we could get these benighted neighbors to think right—at the point of a bayonet—all of our problems would be over.

And then we are told that war can be averted only if we isolate ourselves from other nations or join with them in some sort of collective security pact. Everybody knows

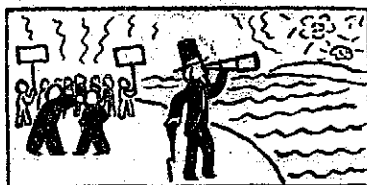
there is no such thing as isolation. When we want rubber we send our automobiles to Africa in exchange for this product. For our morning cup of coffee we give to Brazilians whatever we have that they want. Japanese girls make silk for the stockings worn by American girls, and American men pay the bill with scrap iron. The way to isolation is the way to doing without. If every nation isolated itself—if it could—the world would die from attrition.

As for collective security, upon analysis this chimerical scheme resolves itself into the taking of sides, the preparation for war. Fundamentally the idealists who advance this proposition suffer from that "better-than-thou" complex which always leads to a fight. For anyone who refuses to adhere to this compact, because he feels he can satisfy his desires better by not limiting himself, becomes ipso facto the bad boy who must be punished. Every collective security pact must contain a sanction clause. Sanctions are war.

Suppose America should free its own people. Suppose every American could go to work whenever he wanted to, without being required to pay tribute to a monopolist for the privilege. That means, of course, that his wages would be determined only by his skill and industry. All he produced would be his. Suppose, too, that the government did not take any of his wages from him—the tax collector abolished. He would be truly rich. He would not envy his neighbor, nor would he hate anybody, regardless of race, creed or color. If he produced more of a certain kind of thing than he needed he would find at the market, whether in this country or abroad, others who would be glad to exchange their surplus products for his. What would he want to fight for?

To establish peace with our neighbors we must make for peace in our own home. External strife is merely an expression of internal strife, arising from poverty and the fear of poverty.

—F. C.



I am delighted to hear of the remarkable advance which the School has made, and I wish it every possible success. I look forward with pleasure to visiting the School when I am next in New York, if you will give me the privilege of doing so.—ALBERT J. NOCK.