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**THE CASE FOR DISARMAMENT**

While the Government schemes for taking in the unemployed are in course of progress or remain in the paper stage, and the politicians in the Press and on the platform are chasing after the elusive indemnity, the question of disarmament becomes the main topic of discussion. The limitation of armaments, like the indemnity, the exchanges, and the economic desolation of Europe in general are each and all related to unemployment. In fact we are assured on all hands by experts and politicians alike that these phenomena account for the present unemployment. There may be something in this contention, but it is passing strange that we have had severe enough attacks of unemployment at times when Europe was a going concern, exchanges registering without any fuss and Germany paying her way like other people.

Our thoughts are on disarmament and our eyes are turned on Washington. The Press says so, and what the Press says on so important a matter is not to be questioned. The Washington Conference is a step in the right direction, and every lover of peace will welcome any reduction of armaments it can obtain.

Quite apart from material considerations, the great body of the working people desire peace, and industry free from the making of instruments of war. In 1914 some £400,000,000 was spent on weapons of destruction by six great European States, including Great Britain. This sum was taken out of the taxes, and when warfare ceases the money now spent on this madness will be at our disposal for all kinds of decent industry and municipal expansion. Any limitation of armaments but turns so much money and labour to another field of enterprise. The same amount of employment is available. The form of employment changes, but the substance remains. If the taxpayer has at any time any surplus income let him look at the public roads that require remaking and mending, to say nothing of the extensions that are urgently required all over the country. Armament making can come to an end without lessening employment, and its complete stoppage is the only way to save society from both the ravages of war and its aftermath.

The British Government has led the way through this peace opening by cancelling an order for battleships involving an expenditure of some £30,000,000. This decision should work out in a saving to the

taxpayer and thereby increase his purchasing power. But what about the 10,000 shipbuilders eager and hungry for the employment they were promised?

There is general sympathy with the workers affected by this venture of faith, and it is to the credit of the people everywhere that the sympathy mingles with a profound feeling of satisfaction that the step has been taken. Nor does this wider and more humane view of the case apply only to those placed outside the shipbuilding industry. It is shared by those inside as well. The lesson of the war came home to the out-of-work shipbuilder as to other people and in his heart he can rejoice over the prospect of disarmament, as a means to peace.

The case of the shipbuilders now cast down can only bring us to a consideration of the bigger problem, whether there is to be work for all, or work for some only. An able Liberal pressman, one who is an adept at keeping out of sight all reference to economic teaching that goes beyond the established rules of the debate, recently declared: "We must meet the immediate hardships of unemployment even at a cost which appears to be wasteful. Industry cannot escape the responsibility of maintaining in time of depression the reserves which it requires in good periods." Here in a sentence we have the common view of the matter. The blame is thrown upon industry, and the real villain of the piece, monopoly, escapes. Will the writer or someone of the same persuasion not take time to give us an idea of how industry, as such, is responsible for unemployment? Why cannot these writers disentangle industry from monopoly once and for all, and so set their overflowing pens to real constructive thought? Are they afraid of a democracy in economic freedom, or are they merely ignorant of the laws that govern the distribution of wealth and power? In either case the question arises, why put industry in the dock instead of monopoly? If it were not so amusing and so easily seen through it would be a tragedy, as it must appear to be to the countless thousands who do their thinking by delegation, or who are not by way of applying the test of a cardinal principle to the subject matter of political economy.

The same writer tells us "that the vast waste of material resources in the war must be made good by an era of rigid economy." He does not think it necessary to explain how economy can make good the vast waste, but it must be clear to many that it is production and not economy that will save the situation. Economy, however practised, cannot promote industry; it is contended by some that, under present-day conditions, it can even stand in the way of industrial expansion. What is true is that no mere saving, which is a negative quantity, can produce anything. Like the talent buried in the garden, it can yield no increase. Economy cannot open one door to industry without closing another; without production, there can be no economy nor anything else to cure the ills of the body politic.

And here we get to the crux of the matter. If Europe is poor and in distress why cannot her people get to work? What is keeping them in starvation for want of things their own labour can produce? The war did not diminish the natural supply of land and all that it contains. And if industry

is brought to a standstill it must be due entirely to political wrong-doing and incompetence. The exchanges will right themselves when the politicians are made to free industry from their menace and control.

What industry wants is peace and security. In a word, it wants to be relieved of the presence of a set of interfering muddlers, amateurs and bureaucrats whose idea of industry appears to be that it needs their help in the first place, and secondly that they must keep it in leading-strings for the benefit of their own friends. Industry has managed to keep going so far in spite of so much misdirection and lost opportunities. When we think of how the business men of the country have so patiently and without protest accepted the legislation and the financial burdens passed over on them these past three years one can only conclude that as a class they know nothing whatever about the underlying laws of trade. The business men will require to go to school and to get to know how their business is affected by politics, or politics, certainly the kind now in season, will at best but continue to manoeuvre them out of one difficulty into another.

Private enterprise has been charged with failure to solve the housing question, the unemployed question, and the wage question, and some say we must in the interest of the worker and the community redirect its course, and where it fails utterly we must put it out of commission and substitute a government department to make good. That is in brief a summary of the case put forward by the politicians. That is the dominant issue behind their never-ending cry for State support for this, that and the other "dead-end." Whatever belief they may have in individual liberty it is always subject to, and tainted by, the vision of an industrial life under some sort of State control.

The times seem out of joint for abstract Liberalism. The Liberal Party must move on to the higher ground that its great achievements in the past have opened out. New occasions teach new duties, and the work of the Liberal Party is to cut away from industry the parasitical element that is draining its life-blood. It must aim at this or bury itself in the bosom of the Labour Party, who are frankly out for the regulation of industry by the State, having no great faith in the individual freedom that Liberalism stands for. The workers are not so attached to the methods of restriction as some people imagine them to be. They are out for economic independence and co-operation as the sure path to the brighter day, and in striving towards this high purpose they ought to be directed to the place where the real enemy abides and where his strength takes root.

And this brings us to the land question, where all are brought who seek to do something to better the common lot. Mr. Asquith at Glasgow last month once more broke the silence about the need for radical land reform. Addressing a Liberal demonstration he declared: "I am far from thinking that we have come to an end in our methods of taxation. To give only one illustration, one which is of deep interest in Scotland, particularly in this part of Scotland, I hold as strongly as I did in 1909 that machinery can and ought to be devised for levying a contribution, both in relief of rates and

taxes, upon the unimproved value of land." It is but a gesture, but it was punctuated, so says the newspaper report of the speech, with loud and prolonged cheers. It has been so for the past thirty years.

The taxation of land values, as Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman said in his last public speech, "is a subject that is not small and the reform is not trifling. The need of it comes home to every man among you," and he added, "I know, therefore, that you will support us [the Liberal Government] in the firm demand, which we shall repeat, that the remedy be applied without delay." These words of wisdom were spoken fourteen years ago by a man who understood the question and who had made it his own. How the later Liberal Cabinet was responsible for the delay is a story we have dealt with before and may deal with again. There is a place in our politics to-day for a leader with "C.B.'s" understanding and high courage to bring home the need of the reform to every man.

Disarmament rightly understood means not only putting an end to the building of battleships and all the rest; it means the end of war itself. It is not armaments that provoke war, it is war that brings armaments. A generation ago it was realized by those with eyes to see and ears to hear that the war of the future would be a commercial war. The land in settled communities was locked up by monopoly conditions. This system was accepted without question alike by the politicians and the captains of industry. The globe was traversed and surveyed for what it was worth in providing new markets. It was a case of every nation for itself and the devil take the hindmost. As new tracts of valuable territory were discovered the new values were capitalized and new companies formed to appropriate the new values. At bottom it was a land question. Greed and selfishness played their part. Free Trade was challenged as a played-out superstition. Landlordism and protection were over it all, and battleships and vast armies were mobilized to defend the usurpations and concessions.

In these ways the pace was set for war, whatever the diplomats may say about one another in their coloured books, or whatever may be said of them by our school of desperation critics who delight in separating saints from sinners in their own and in other camps. The diplomats, like the politicians who placed them in office, were but the puppets that danced in front of the stage while their masters pulled the strings behind the curtain; and the sad thing is that men who ought to know better talk and write about the subject as if the puppets and the politicians so engaged were of the stuff to cope with an earthquake.

And what about the worker who manufactures the material of war now threatened with the loss of his job? He has, and is entitled to, our full sympathy and help, but it must be help that will help him to better occupation. The taxation of land values and the untaxing of industry will provide the worker with alternative employment, with employment that will spring from peaceful industry.

J. P.