THE

CO-OPERATIVE UNION

LIMITED.

IDEAS OF PEACE

AND

RECONSTRUCTION

BY

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Ideas of Peace and Reconstruction.

WE are living in a time of war. At such a time people's passions are naturally inflamed; and the events of the moment stand out in all their magnitude. Hence, whilst there is a general desire in this country that this shall be the last war, the inflamed passions of the people make it difficult for them to take that calm and long view which must be taken if the terms of settlement are to secure that enduring peace which is generally desired.

There are differences of opinion regarding the causes of the war, differences of opinion regarding the policy and methods adopted in carrying on the war, and some difference of opinion regarding the terms upon which we ought to be willing to end the war and secure peace; but there is a striking unanimity of opinion—in this country at any rate—that war is a barbarous method of settling our international differences and a reflection upon our boasted civilisation. War is wasteful; it destroys wealth, it destroys life, it destroys idealism. For generations we and other nations have been laboriously building up the wealth of our respective countries only to see it ruthlessly destroyed in the attempts we are making to destroy one another. For many years now we have been developing medical skill for the purpose of protecting life and making it more enduring; and our social consciousness has been awakened and cultivated by various social reform agencies intent upon the improvement of the health and physique of the nation; and after all our efforts we see the fittest of our manhood thrown into the furnace of war. Is this to be the end of our efforts for social progress? Is civilisation to proclaim itself impotent, unable to reap the harvest of its painstaking endeavours to improve the race?

There are those who think war regrettable but inevitable; and there are those who think it not only inevitable but desirable, providing, periodically, a much-needed stimulus to a nation's activities. But war destroys the best of a nation's manhood; it brutalises rather than refines; and any stimulus that war provides can be provided equally well from other sources. A war upon poverty and suffering waged in earnest, might equally call forth the inventive genius and the industrial activity of a nation as well as provide those opportunities for sacrifice and public service which are thought to appertain so particularly to war. Though not entirely confined to that country, it is in Germany that we find the home of the idea that war is a benefactor of mankind, yet German writers do not advocate war between the North of Germany and the South or between the

East and the West. If peace means decadence and war means progress, it would be well for Germany to keep the wars at home and let other nations decay through the practice of peace. We know that these inflammatory writers have other motives. Class interests rather than national interests are served by war; and those who worship the God of War are usually the people who think that if their class interests are served, the national interests are also served. That standard can not be allowed in the future.

I do not look upon war between intelligent people as either desirable or necessary. War represents competition organised in its extreme form; and progress is to be attained by co-operation and not by competition. Men have made material progress by exchanging commodities; intellectual progress by exchanging ideas; moral progress by adopting the higher standards of other nations. Now exchange is a matter of co-operation. It involves two persons. Each of them gives up something he values less in order to secure something he values more. Exchange benefits both parties; and it is a fallacy to suppose that exchange impoverishes one or both of the parties to the exchange, a fallacy that needs to be exploded. It is also a fallacy to suppose, as so many do, that trade is a matter of competition; it is an act of co-operation for mutual advantage between the parties to the exchange. When we realise, and act upon the realisation, that trade is a matter of co-operation, our views in regard to both domestic and foreign trade will be modified. We shall recognise that the prosperity of other countries, properly acquired, is no disadvantage to us but rather an advantage, since any increase in the output of wealth in any country increases the quantity it can offer us in exchange for our goods. The world suffers by the impoverishment of any nation. The destruction of wealth by the belligerents and the diversion of their labour energies into war services are acutely affecting the welfare of other countries, in some of which, supplies are more restricted and prices are higher than in our own country.

Men's welfare is interdependent and it is not to be promoted by war or any other form of competition, but by harmony and co-operation. Progress has been most rapid where the co-operation has been most complete. There was a time when men in different parts of England made war upon one another; but progress was impossible until this internal strife was stilled and until men from all parts of the country united with good will in efforts to promote their common welfare. If, to-day, a man of Lancashire and a man of Kent quarrel they do not resort to warfare to settle their dispute. We are not willing to sacrifice advantages gained from co-operative efforts in promoting national welfare for the sake of minor differences; and we do not think we are justified in resorting to the sword in order to compose these differences. Can we not look forward to the time when nations will no more think of resorting to the sword to settle their differences than do the

people of Manchester and London when they have differences? Are we to look to the future as a period of war with interludes of peace, as a period of peace with interludes of war, or as a time when peace will rule and men will compose their differences without resorting to the sword? I, personally, strongly desire the last-named and believe it possible of attainment. War never proves who is right and who is wrong; and I do not believe that any settlement of a dispute will be permanently satisfying unless it is a settlement that is morally right. Disputes can be settled on this basis without resorting to the sword. There is much to cheer those who take the view that wars can be eliminated. Never before during a period of war has it been urged so insistently that this must be the last war, that it must be a war to end war, that the settlement must be based upon what is right and not upon the basis of the victor's power to exploit the vanquished, and that this settlement must bind peoples together and not leave them embittered.

In this connection, I think the time will come when those who follow us will be proud that Britain in its Military Service Acts made special provision for those who were conscientiously opposed to combatant service. I take this view because I believe that the rank-and-file classes of the different countries have little inclination to become embroiled in war against one another. When war is declared, however, the position is altered. National pride and prestige are affected and strong feeling is roused. When the people are given the option of refraining from fighting on grounds of conscientious objection, the way is being paved for an increase of their numbers, and for the cultivation of the disposition to find other means than war for the settlement of international disputes. It may be objected that it is fatal for one country to adopt this measure of relief from combatant service whilst others do not. It can be shown, however, that most social reforms have been begun on a modest scale. The ideas have then spread, not only within the country of their origin but in other countries as well; and I do not doubt that the example of our own country will ultimately be copied by others; it has already been copied by the United States. Upward movements must start somewhere. Slavery was not abolished the world over at one stroke. The example of enlightened countries had to lead the way. I do not think that the number of persons claiming this relief would ever be so much greater in one country than in other countries as seriously to disturb the balance of the fighting forces and therefore—even from a military standpoint—be likely to affect the military result; but it does pave the way for the growth of opinion against resorting to warfare as a means of settling international disputes. Nor do I think that the real conscientious objector desires a German victory or is unwilling to recognise his social obligations and refuse all forms of useful service. I repeat my opinion that the British Government in giving exemption to conscientious objectors have taken a great step towards securing permanent

peace and have gone farther than they realise towards ... war as an institution, for wars are likely to recur as long ... are willing, or are forced against their will, to take ... settlement of disputes. Wars will cease when disputes a... or abolished and when nations decline to take life in t... ment.

If an enduring peace is to be secured, we must be sure ... the peace settlement is a just one and not likely to promote furt... wars. Annexations, indemnities, the restoration of Belgium a... other outraged countries, are likely to be questions discussed at t... peace conference. Forcible annexations as a reward for the victo... must be resisted as inconsistent with the rights of self-determinatio... and the maintenance of a permanent peace. Belgium and othe... outraged countries must be restored by those responsible for the... outrage. Indemnities in the ordinary sense will not be worth... having if they endanger a permanent peace by perpetuating ... spirit of revenge. The happiest form of indemnity would be a... agreement to refrain from expenditure upon armaments. ... would it benefit us if we received an indemnity of ... and had to spend it within five or ten years upon the ... of armaments? Far better for a permanent peace to ... agreement to restrict armaments and save this am... restrict armaments is to save the world's wealth; to ... indemnity and spend it on armaments is to waste ... wealth; and this waste is not confined to the amount ... indemnity but extends to the counter-expenditure upon arm... which is provoked.

This leads me to speak of the League of Nations, or, as I prefer to call it, a "Commonwealth of Nations." The p... League of Nations suggests a partial enrolment of nations a... possible rival league, whereas a Commonwealth of Nations sugg... something wider: a voluntary union of nations formed for ... purpose of ensuring their common weal. This Common... of Nations must have restriction of armaments as a part of its policy, for it must be realised that the commonweal is not to be promoted by lavish expenditure upon armaments in order that nations may "stand in arms" to threaten one another. The Commonwealth must be open to enemy as well as to allied nations as soon as the former, in spirit and act, are willing to co-operate for the realisation of the commonwealth ideals. It will be a long time before the German atrocities are forgotten and before some people in this country will feel friendly disposed towards the German nation; but nothing should be done to foster the ill-feeling which is already strong enough nor to widen the breach which is already wide enough. Why do I say this? Because there can be no real or permanent peace in a world where hostility prevails. We have to choose between a world in which force shall rule and one in which agreement and goodwill shall rule. We entered the war as a protest against the rule of force.

as must see to it that the peace settlement does not strengthen to peace-laims of force to be the ruling power in the world of to-morrow. resorti nly guarantee against this is a real commonwealth of nations t-name ich all nations are included and in which the commonwealth prevails.

From these considerations, one is led naturally to the question of international relationships and the connection between the ideas of peace and those of reconstruction. Many people when they speak of reconstruction are thinking only of restoration; they want to re-create the world of August, 1914. That I suggest is not good enough. We need a real reconstruction. The world of August, 1914, was a world of competition, rivalry, jealousy and distrust. To restore the conditions of 1914 is to restore conditions favourable to the outbreak of war. The restoration of those conditions is inconsistent with the abolition of war. The reconstruction must be based upon the recognition that men's welfare is interdependent and has to be sought through harmonious joint effort not through competition and rivalry. It is this fact which links up the reconstruction at home and the reconstruction of international relationships. There can be no satisfactory League or Commonwealth of Nations if we continue to live by competition at home. We can not simultaneously worship competition in our industrial and social relationships at home and cultivate co-operation and goodwill in international relationships. A man cannot change his outlook on life or his attitude towards his fellows according to their colour or language. We must learn to live co-operatively at home if we wish to live co-operatively in our international relationships.

The competitive and money-grabbing spirit which prevails in our commercial relationships at home has its reflex in the competition and rivalry between merchants of our own country and those of foreign countries. This competition breeds jealousy and ill-feeling which are accentuated by living under different governments, each striving to protect and help its own nationals. International jealousy and ill-feeling are thus fostered and jealousy and ill-feeling have proved a pregnant cause of war. We cannot hope to establish co-operation and goodwill between nations unless we establish co-operation and goodwill at home. We must recognise the interdependency of human welfare at home if we are to recognise it internationally.

From a consideration of the questions of industrial organisation and international relationships, one passes naturally to consider the question of free trade and fiscal policy. Free trade has been advocated for its economic advantages—which are great; for its political advantages—which are also great; and, less often, for its moral rightness which is its greatest claim to support. Economically, it is sound. If it is economically advantageous to exclude foreign goods from this country by means of tariffs, it must be economically advantageous for London to exclude the

products of Manchester and for Manchester to exclude the products of London by similar methods. We know that it would be ridiculous to do this. Free trade is politically advantageous, for even in a competitive system of industry the linking up of countries through trade helps to create a better understanding between them. But the greatest claim of all which Free Trade can make upon our support is its moral soundness. It was not the people of Lancashire who created the natural conditions which make Lancashire so peculiarly suitable for the cotton industry, nor the people of India who created the conditions favourable for the growth of tea, nor yet the people of America who created the copper deposits which contribute so much to the wealth of that country and of the world ; and we have no moral right to prevent the free exchange of commodities between countries with different natural gifts. Mankind is the common inheritor of the world's treasures and possibilities ; and the accident of our birth in a country, rich in minerals or in enjoyment of a favourable climate, has not made us owners but only trustees of the natural gifts for which the country of our birth may be celebrated. Mankind is the inheritor ; we are only trustees of our country's natural gifts ; and on high moral grounds it can be asserted that no nation has a right to prevent other nations sharing on equitable and reciprocal terms in the treasures it enjoys. The institution of a system of tariffs would be a denial of this doctrine; and there can be no enduring peace if nations indulge in the building of tariff walls. Free trade is essential to the success of co-operative principles in international relationships ; and only by practising free trade and co-operation in their economic activities can the nations of the world get the best out of the world's resources.

Co-operation, then, must rule at home and in international relationships ; but before it can rule, individualism must be exorcised. There must be the *spirit* of co-operation as well as the form. We sadly need a new social ideal that will replace the old ideals of individualism. This new social ideal must be the establishment of a commonwealth in which the interdependency of human welfare will be recognised, in which peace and goodwill will rule, and in which men will work in the spirit of true co-operation for the promotion of the common weal. There can be no satisfactory reconstruction unless individualism is exorcised and co-operation becomes the guiding principle in men's industrial and social relationships, until joint effort is substituted for competition. There can be no satisfactory scheme of reconstruction that does not embrace this view of social relationships.

The spirit of domination must also be exorcised in the world that is to be. For many years now, the spirit of domination has been growing. Prussianism is only its extreme form. This spirit of domination and the lust of power are not confined within any section or any group or class. They can be found in working-class organisations as well as in others. They are attributes of the individual, and the individual often seeks to exercise it on his own

behalf within the organisations of which he is a member and, through his organisation, over other people and organisations. Even individuals and organisations which have posed as extremely democratic have been willing—and often anxious—to impose their wills upon others. So long as this spirit exists there can be no true co-operation. There must be more toleration if the Co-operative Commonwealth is to be realised. We shall do well to cultivate the spirit of toleration. Minorities at home and small nations in world politics must be given such freedom for self-determination as is consistent with the welfare of majorities and of other nations.

I may be asked how the desirable ends I have outlined can be attained. In the first place by education. The example of Germany has shown us how the mentality of a nation may be changed in even a single generation by means of education. In the second place, by extending the practice of co-operation. There is an art as well as a science of co-operation. We can not get the best out of co-operation except by practising co-operation, by learning how we can co-operate more and more for all purposes of human life. As we practise co-operation and explore its possibilities we shall find our opportunities for applying its beneficent principles growing ever wider; we shall co-operate more effectively with our fellows; our faith in co-operation will be strengthened; and our co-operative habits will grow. Even co-operators have realised insufficiently that co-operation is a method of living as well as a method of trading, that it stands for a new view of social relationships, fraternity instead of rivalry, the hand of fellowship instead of the fist of jealousy.

The first place must be given to Education. We must have an educational ideal and that ideal must be consistent with the social ideal. In the past we have had a wrong ideal and motive in education just as we have had them in industry. We have thought of education as an instrument to help us to "get on," to earn a few pounds a year more; and one result is that education of a type which may develop our manhood but does not increase our earning power is looked at askance. Another result is that our young people come to think that "getting on" is the supreme object in life; and individualism is encouraged thereby. Some have urged the claims of education as a means of increasing technical efficiency, that our workmen through their greater efficiency may enable this country to compete more successfully with Germany and other countries. To look upon education merely as a means of making a man a more efficient machine is to prostitute education. Technical Education and efficiency are both valuable. As a result of technical education, a man's knowledge of, and interest in, his work are increased; and the efficient workman gets more pleasure out of his work than an inefficient one; but education should do more for a man than make him an efficient machine.

Our educational system in the past has been fundamentally wrong because it has been devoted to making us more efficient to

compete, instead of more efficient to co-operate with one another. We need an educational system that will increase the desire to co-operate and increase our ability to co-operate with success for all social purposes. In the past, our motto has been "education for profit" instead of "education for use"; and from this educational system has sprung our industrial system of "production for profit" instead of "production for use." We shall never have an industrial system based upon "production for use" until we educate for service instead of for profit.

In Germany also there has been a wrong motive. Education has been used for the purpose of developing a false patriotism, increasing the spirit of German domination and fostering militarism. This also is wrong.

The educational ideal we need is "education for service." Education must create the desire for social service and fit the individual for his social responsibilities. It must develop the whole of the individual's potentialities and direct them to uses most serviceable to the community. It must have a physical and moral purpose as well as an intellectual. What will it avail us in our work of reconstruction or in the world of the future if we merely make more clever a man who is a rogue? Education must lead us to do right things as well as clever things; and we shall not secure the right kind of reconstruction unless our education has a moral purpose as well as an intellectual purpose.

Our economic studies will need revision. We must take a wider view in the future. Instead of studying the ways in which a man does, or can, increase his own private income we need to study the ways in which the welfare of the community can be best promoted. There is something more in life than material wealth; and, at present, in our efforts to increase our store of material wealth we lose other things that are far more valuable to ourselves and to mankind in general. We must take a wider view in future. Welfare rather than wealth must be the subject of study; and the group rather than the individual must be the unit of study.

The changes I have suggested can not be effected immediately, though they can be commenced at once; and we should keep them in view in our work of reconstruction. Before the Commonwealth can be established, the community's outlook upon life must be changed; and we can not expect to effect this change at one stroke. It will only be made slowly as the result of education and of that informal education which we name experience. But if we have the vision, if we have faith, and if we have the will to secure the change, and if we apply in our reconstruction the principles I have enunciated we may look forward to a great and glorious future, to a Commonwealth not only in this country but the world over. The Commonwealth is a thing of the spirit; it springs from the spirit of human relationships rather than written agreements; and the co-operative spirit is the only spirit that can create the Commonwealth.

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