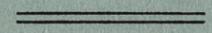


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Death or Life ?
A CALL TO CO-OPERATIVE
WOMEN

BY
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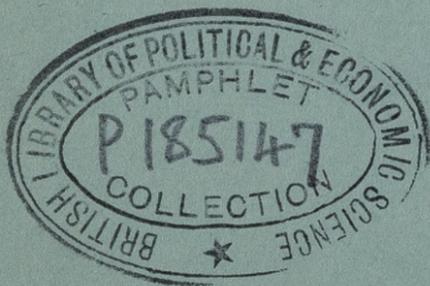
Death or Life?

A Call to Co-operative Women.

By MARGARET LLEWELYN DAVIES.

THERE is no class to whom the cause of Peace can make a stronger appeal than to International Co-operative Guildswomen, for war casts its dread shadow in a special way on the lives of wives and mothers. Nor is there any class whose ideals can more effectively undermine the causes of war. For the brotherhood of nations is the religion of Co-operators, and under an International Co-operative system of trade and industry the material interests of nations are no longer in opposition, but the resources of the globe are pooled and divided in the interests of all. Therefore, it is natural that our newly-formed International Guild should begin its life by declaring its unconquerable opposition to war, and by considering the actual practical means by which it may be destroyed for ever.

It is the very moment when lovers of peace in every country should act with International solidarity. For, after a period of exhaustion and disillusionment created by the world-wide war, we are face to face with a situation of great and immediate danger. The state of the world calls aloud for a new kind of warfare, for the creation of a new kind of force, inspired by a new gospel. During the war, each country demanded from its men and women a stupendous, united effort on behalf of a military victory for its own side. Now a call has gone forth to all men and women of goodwill in every country to unite and serve under the banner of Peace, and never to cease from mental strife till a victory has been won throughout the world for universal brotherhood.



Europe an Armed Camp.

There is, indeed, no time to lose. For what do we see? Obvious lessons have remained unlearnt in spite of the bitterest experience. The twice-blessed qualities of generosity, justice, and mercy have been trampled under foot, and the deadly brood of pride, hatred, and self-interest have been allowed to flourish. Europe is now an armed camp on a far vaster scale than before "the war to end war," and the minds of its Governments, instead of being bent on peace, have been turned towards future war. All the newly emancipated States have rushed into militarism, and in spite of the disarmament of Germany, Austria, and Bulgaria, the standing armies of Europe are actually increased by 1,300,000 men beyond their numbers in 1913, while the killing power of the world's military armaments is twice as great. The French army, with its new equipment, is a greater fighting machine than has ever been known before, while reserves of coloured troops are being prepared in Africa, where France has introduced conscription since the war. England's native forces in India are available for uses outside India.

Murderous Science.

Not only this. The new methods of warfare, instead of filling men with such horror as to lead to their suppression, are being calmly investigated and perfected, and the military problems opened up are discussed with shameless interest. General staffs in the different countries have set men of science and inventors to discover the most hideous means for the wholesale destruction not only of armed forces but of civilian populations also. Science, which is capable of being the great liberator and benefactor of mankind, is becoming its perverter and destroyer. Let me summarise very shortly the curse which science is bringing on us.

America, where a large Chemical Warfare Corps is a special branch of the army, is responsible for the burning gas called Lewisite. This gas is invisible, sinks into cellars and dug-outs; if breathed, causes instant death,

or, if it settles on the skin, death within twelve hours. It is estimated that twelve one-ton air bombs loaded with Lewisite could, with a favourable wind, eliminate all life in a town the size of Berlin.*

The French Air Service has invented an aeroplane which can be steered by wireless and drop bombs automatically. It is calculated that a fleet of 300 machines carrying cargoes of bombs, manipulated from a single control station in Paris, could, within twenty-four hours, unload nearly 2,000 tons of bombs in Berlin, London, or Geneva. It is prophesied that while fleets of aeroplanes would attack the industrial and governing centres, fleets of fast-moving tanks (in the invention and use of which Great Britain led the way), would cross a frontier and obliterate every living thing by the discharge of tons of liquid gas.

We have heard much lately of attempts in various countries to utilise rays that would shrivel up flesh and blood, and it is reported that experiments are even being carried out on bacilli, with a view to spreading disease among an enemy's army and civilian population. So far have methods of war against civilians been developed, that at a recent Public Health Conference it was recommended by a doctor that gas-tight dugouts and gas masks should be provided, and that anti-gas drill should occupy a definite place in school routine.

When we read of such things, when we think of the unspeakable horrors and suffering of war, we cannot help asking how is it that otherwise humane men will lend themselves to such devil's work? What is the reason for this perversion of the wonderful ingenuity and creative intelligence of man? Is civilisation carrying us back into barbarism? What are the causes of such hostility between civilised peoples, leading to suicidal competition in armaments and preparations for another devastating world-wide war?

* See *The Next War*, by Will Irwin, prepared for the American League of Women Voters.

The Causes of War.

The chief causes of hostility between nations are Economic Rivalry and Nationalist Pride. It is the egotistic desire for wealth and power among groups of capitalists and nations which arouses enmity—this desire becoming associated with a mistaken view of patriotism.

Economic Rivalry.

Everywhere to-day manufacturers are seeking new outlets for trade, to the exclusion of other manufacturers, and financiers are on the look-out for larger profits than they can make at home. To secure such markets and profits they exploit weak Governments, such as China, and backward races as in Africa, where natural resources are abundant and native labour cheap. For these purposes and to oust other competitors, capitalists seek the backing of their Governments, and antagonisms between capitalist groups lead to enmity between nations.*

Nations, as well as capitalist groups, are beginning to compete for the control of raw materials. The most flagrant example is in connection with oil. Engineering inventions, enabling crude oil to be used as motor fuel, have led to what amounts to a revolution in transport possibilities. National requirements for navies, armies, and air forces have now become a dominating factor in the competition for oil resources, and it is easy to foresee what a great danger this may be to peace. Oil, in the form of rival American and English companies, has helped to keep Mexico in disorder. Oil delayed peace with Turkey because of the British claims to possible resources

*These methods are well exemplified by what has taken place in China—one of the greatest danger-points in the world. This country, with a divided Government and in a state of unrest fomented by foreign financial aid, is flooded with financiers from America, Japan, England, and France, intent on securing spheres of influence, concessions for working coal and other mines, and control of railways, each capitalistic group calling on their Government to urge their claims on the Chinese Government.

For another effect of capitalist ambitions on national policy we have only to turn to the French occupation of the Ruhr. Here the underlying pressure has largely come from the French heavy industry in its desire to control this important coal-field.

at Mosul, and is keeping thousands of British troops in Mesopotamia. The rivalry between the American Standard Oil and the Anglo-Dutch Oil Companies was an active force behind the scenes at the San Remo Peace Conference, 1920. Oil decided Britain to withdraw opposition to the French occupation of Syria in return for oil concessions in French colonies. Oil has placed a large Ukrainian population in Galicia under Polish rule. Oil is the reason for the British desire to dominate Persia, and for the proposed expenditure of millions on a naval base at Singapore (now abandoned by the Labour Government).

Thus we see Governments trying to secure commercial prosperity and political dominance for their own countries at the expense of other countries. And to do so they adopt the same self-seeking, exclusive policy which characterises private profit-making.

Nationalism.

This policy is strengthened and complicated by the sentiment of Nationalism. We admire and sympathise with the feeling for nationality when it is bound up with a struggle for freedom on the part of an oppressed nation, and when it stands for a desire to develop independent cultural and social life. But experience almost invariably shows that, after winning its own rights, a spirit of domination and aggression comes over a nation, and the rights of other nationalities are disregarded. The Cap of Liberty is exchanged for the Sword of Tyranny, and the beautiful ideal, expounded by the great Italian Mazzini, of a free nation in a community of free nations is replaced by imperialist ambitions. The Nationalist States claim "sovereign rights," that is, they consider they are a law unto themselves, and refuse to admit any authority higher than their own. National ambitions are disguised in the garb of patriotism, and actions and sentiments which would be condemned in private life, such as violence, vanity, greed, and sharp practice, are excused and applauded if the object is the assumed

benefit of the nation. Even love of one's own country is chiefly shown in hatred and suspicion of other countries.

Fear.

It inevitably follows that every country lives in dread of being attacked by its neighbours, of losing its economic position, and of being cut off from its economic resources. So, on the plea of defence, each country piles up armaments, increasing the fear in all the others. Fear is one of the greatest enemies to peace, for it creates a general atmosphere of suspicion and distrust, preventing constructive action for disarmament, and makes the inflammable condition in which some small spark sets the whole world ablaze.

The Material Unity of the World.

The ideas that the well-being of nations and individuals can only be secured by egotistic exclusiveness, and that the gain of one nation is another nation's loss, are inherited from a different state of society and trade, and do not correspond to present conditions. Science, in pursuit of legitimate ends, has, by its amazing inventions of the last 100 years unified the world and made the human family one, in other than a moral sense. Steamships, railways, motors, turbine ships, aeroplanes have caused the world to shrink from what seemed boundless space to an area encircled in a few weeks. The Post Office, telegraph, telephone, and wireless have obliterated time. Cinemas turn local events into world affairs, and newspapers make ideas and opinions common property throughout the East and West. Through marvels of discovery and extended channels of communication and transport the range of products which each country can enjoy has been enormously enlarged. Trade has increased gigantically, and the world has become one vast market, where the food and raw materials of the Tropics are exchanged for the manufactures of Europe and America, and where shortage of food in Central Europe is made good from Russia and America.

The war has proved to us the reality of this economic unity. We have seen that if one nation suffers, all the rest suffer with it; the brotherhood of man holds good as a truth in the economic as well as in the moral world. It is because the economic ties were broken by the war that we have had unemployment in England, starvation in Russia, sweated wages and misery in Germany, dire poverty in Central Europe, high prices and lowered wages everywhere.

Co-operative Trade and Internationalism.

It would have been thought that such interdependence and communication would knit nations together in the bonds of friendship. But this will not be the case as long as the competitive profit-making of a minority exists, nor as long as our political institutions are exclusively nationalist. To fit in with the new conditions of unity and interdependence created by science, we must have a Co-operative economic system, and political organisations of an International character. These will supply the forms appropriate to the new facts and the new ideals.

Do not let us be afraid of such fundamental changes. "Revolt against tradition," Tolstoy says, "does not cause a thousandth part of the damage brought about by our respect for habits, laws and institutions, which have no longer any real value for our time."

Co-operation Must Conquer Capitalism.

Co-operative women! Here is your supreme vantage ground as peace-makers. You represent the people organised as consumers, whose interests over-ride national boundaries. You, with your basket power, are indispensable to the success of our national Co-operative movements, which will form the basis of the International Co-operative Bank and of the International Co-operative Wholesale Society, which it must be our immediate aim to build up.

In the modern world of industry and commerce the real power rests with the banks, which control finance

and credit. The socialised control of money power is an essential condition to the existence of a Co-operative Commonwealth. As each country advances towards this goal the obstacles which financiers can place in the way become a danger to peace, and the necessity for Co-operative Banking, national and international, increases.

An International Co-operative Bank and an International Co-operative Wholesale Society are instruments for peace. Through them the surpluses of trade would be pooled and divided amongst the nations, and International commerce would become, not a fight between nations to over-reach each other, but a harmony in which the interests of each and all are one. International Co-operation undermines all the time the pernicious and ingrained idea that each nation can only prosper by the consideration of its interests alone. International Co-operation is the embodiment of the truth that the interdependence of nations fosters the prosperity of all nations.

The establishment of an International Co-operative Wholesale Society and Bank would also provide some of the machinery needed to enable the raw materials and foodstuffs of the world to be controlled by all the peoples for the benefit of all.

Internationalism Must Complete Nationalism.

Side by side with our work as Co-operators for peace will come our work as Citizens of our own countries, and as Citizens of the world. We must give allegiance to *International* political institutions, and we must bring our own national political institutions into accord with these. We have already in the League of Nations, imperfect as it is, an opportunity for working out International problems with a view to the promotion of Peace. But no real progress can be made until Russia and Germany are included in it; and, to make it potent, the help of America is needed. The present weakness of the League is mainly due to the fact that national Governments have little faith in it, and instead of developing the new methods to the utmost are always resorting to old methods, and giving the lie to the spirit of the

Covenant. It is clear that our fundamental duty as national citizens is to put only those Governments into power which will utilise the League of Nations, enlarge its scope, and be true to its spirit. An enlightened International public opinion is needed, which would lead to just decisions on the part of the League, decisions which should be honoured by every country.* For example, it is most important that each country should carry out the agreements arrived at through the International Labour Office.

And might not each country establish a Peace Ministry, to be, as it were, a connecting link with the League? A beginning has already been made in England by the Labour Government, by placing a new department in the Foreign Office under our representative on the League of Nations. It should be the business of Peace Ministries to initiate and investigate new proposals which would lead to the unity of Europe. They might, *e.g.*, consider the suggestion† that European countries should federate for certain definite purposes, such as the institution of an International coinage (thus dealing with the terrible problem of the rates of exchange), and the adoption of a common language (to be taught as a second language in all schools). Our International Guild has warmly espoused this last proposal. The great French pacifist, Romain Rolland, says: "We must forge the instrument of liberation, the Universal Language, which will enable all who believe in human liberty in every country to unite."

Above all, we should work to create the demand in every country for Universal Disarmament, so that Governments may be impelled to take serious action to stop the horrible preparations for war, and to promote practical schemes for total disarmament, for restriction of armaments, and for the abolition of the private manufacture of armaments.

* The proposal of a Committee of the League of Nations for a Treaty of Mutual Assistance needs most careful examination, very strong arguments having been brought forward against it, which would probably lead to its rejection by an enlightened public opinion.

† This idea has been put forward by Sir Max Waechter in a pamphlet entitled *The United States of Europe*.

Just as International Guildswomen, as Co-operators, must use their basket-power on behalf of Peace, so as Citizens they must use their votes in support of the International institutions needed to build up a world without war.

The Spirit of Fellowship.

But economic and political institutions will not have the vital force to change the world unless they are informed with the spirit of Fellowship. War and science have brought home to our generation the truth of William Morris's saying: "Fellowship is Life, and lack of Fellowship is Death." We need a faith strong enough to overthrow vested interests, to replace inertia and prejudice by a living will to use the marvellous results of science and industry for the good of all. In creating this faith, we see how the action of the pioneers in refusing any war service, and in standing for immediate disarmament on the part of their country, lights the way to the reign of Peace. We may look with thankfulness upon the International War Resisters movement, with its army of Youth in every country. It may be said that the Kingdom of Peace is a way of life, and that it comes by the triumph of one way of living over another. A Russian student who refused to serve in the army was told that his "idea was right, but that the kingdom of God had not yet come." "No, sire," the student answered, "it may not have come for you, but it has for me." And the faith is needed which was expressed by the well-known Englishwoman, Miss Maude Royden, when she said: "Nothing will persuade me that the world is not ready for an ideal for which I am ready." The recent action of the new Labour Government in Denmark in proposing that its country should practically abolish its armaments is a splendid example to other countries.*

* George Lansbury, writing on March 15th, 1924, in the *Daily Herald*, says: "No nation has yet shown itself willing to give up its reliance on armaments. I am certain that if our nation would do so, and at the same time give up all exclusive right to dominate other parts of the world, other nations would follow us. Some nation must start. The nation that does start . . . will not go down to destruction, but will become the greatest nation the world has ever known."

A More Excellent Patriotism.

The spirit we must strive for entails new views of Patriotism and Education. The sentiment of Patriotism belongs to the old, blind "herd" instinct of self-preservation. It contains a motive of much value to the community, but one which needs transforming and turning into channels which are in keeping with the modern conditions of life. Nowadays, security and prosperity for our own country can only be gained by acting together internationally. To love and to serve our country we must show active goodwill and give service to the whole human family. Each country, in its own interests, must abandon its claim to "sovereign rights" and its exclusive loyalty to itself, and must acknowledge International law and show allegiance to the Community of Nations. It is altogether out-of-date for English people to sing of their country—

"Wider still and wider, shall thy bounds be set,
God, Who made thee mighty, make thee mightier yet."

The expansion of an Empire, or even of a Commonwealth, is a poor and empty ideal beside those of Internationalism and Peace.

The forces of Labour as they gain, to our joy, the power of forming Governments, will need to be on their guard against taking over the old egotistic view of patriotism. The workers must beware of succumbing to national pride, of becoming infected with the imperialist spirit, and of exploiting other races for the benefit of our own country. Patriotism of the blind self-centred kind is prominent in war-time. The patriotism which must distinguish Labour politics must be an enlightened patriotism finding its constant and lasting expression in times of peace. Its pride will not lead it to possession and the desire to dominate, but to creation and the desire to contribute. To excel in Art, Science, Justice, and Truth will mean that a nation is enriching its own life, and at the same time enriching the international stock with treasures of beauty, knowledge, and fellowship.

What a force in spreading these views should all the Adult Workers' Educational organisations be! How much valuable work can be done in our own Guildrooms amongst the wives and mothers of all lands! Our hearts can be set on the Brotherhood of Man, and our minds informed with facts, so that we shall be strong to resist and expose the specious arguments and "stunt" methods which the press and politicians are too ready to deal in, and by which the people have been duped in the past.*

Education for Fellowship.

The changed world-conditions, and the new gospel which accompanies them, will entail a change in all Education. It is at present permeated with capitalist and nationalist ideas, and we fail to realise how biased it is. Just as we saw that our economic system must be made to fit into a materially unified world, so our education must be adapted to a Co-operative rather than a competitive society. Children should be taught to think, and not only expected to absorb ready-made information. This will mean changes in the methods of teaching, and in what is taught. It is encouraging to find signs of change in all countries.† The idea of authority is yielding to that of freedom of thought, and to self-expression and self-government on the part of children. Experiments are being made in many countries. History is being re-written in the light of Peace and International Ideals, and the good idea has been put forward that the text-books of one nation might be written by historians of other countries. It is interesting to note that the new German Republic declared in its constitution that "*a reconciliation with the nations*" should be included in the aim of all schools.

As mothers, Guildswomen in all countries should get into touch with the work of the schools, and with the

* The American Women Voters are making special efforts to show that competitive profit-making causes war. They are trying to educate women against the insidious attraction of phrases like "Making the supreme sacrifice," "Giving one's all," &c. "Do you want," they say, "'to give your all' for oil, or coal, or steel?"

† The new movements have mainly sprung from the methods worked out by Madame Mortessori in Italy, and the ideas put forward by Professor Dewey in America.

teachers. In accordance with the resolution passed by the I.F.T.U. Conference last year, they should encourage the Youth Peace Movements, and the united work of mothers, teachers, and young people. As municipal and national citizens, Guildswomen should use their votes to elect authorities who will develop Education on these new and progressive lines, and will see to it that no military training or military corps of any kind are allowed in the schools, whether openly avowed, or disguised as physical exercises; and that no grants for such a purpose should be given, as in England, by Governments. It is shocking beyond words when boys are put through bayonet practice; and the idea that military discipline is valuable morally belongs to the capitalist world.

If we are taking effective action through our power as citizens and by our efforts as mothers to create a right atmosphere in the home and the school, we need not worry about children playing with toy soldiers, or think that a certain amount of pugnacity in childhood is fatal to pacifism. For military toys are a symptom, not a cause, and do not represent to children, nor obsess their minds with the horrors attached to them by adults; nor does organised modern warfare arise from the pugnacious instinct of the individual, but, as we have seen, from economic and political causes. Indeed, the pugnacious instinct, if transformed, for example, into a mental fight against poverty and injustice, is a valuable characteristic of a good citizen.

The Old Order Changeth.

Nor let anyone say that the ideals advocated in this paper are beautiful but unattainable, and that human nature does not change. We have seen how many forces are fighting on our side—Science, Economics, Morals are showing us that we must learn to live at peace or perish. New movements are growing in Education, and the Youth of all nations are joining hands.

And when we realise the advance that has been made by mankind from savage times, the way in which primitive

instincts have been rationalised and transformed into civilised qualities, how, for instance, the instinctive parental care amongst animals has developed into the highest forms of human love and self-sacrifice, there is no reason why we should place a limit to the height to which human nature can attain. War is a return to barbarism. To come forth from the kingdom of darkness and death into the kingdom of light and life, humanity must establish Peace on Earth. Let us go forward with limitless expectation, with steadfast and quenchless hope. The vitality of our faith and the strength of our purpose decides the course of the world.



Peace Programme for International Guildswomen.

As Co-operative Guildswomen—

(1) To build up a strong Guild and Co-operative movement in each country by (a) buying loyally, (b) voting progressively, (c) reading the Co-operative press.

(2) To work for International Co-operation by (a) studying International Co-operative questions and developments, (b) creating enthusiastic public opinion for the International Co-operative Women's Guild, the International Co-operative Alliance, and the formation of an International Co-operative Wholesale Society and Bank.

As Citizens—

(1) To vote for representatives in favour of International Peace.

(2) To secure the election of Governments pledged to the control of trade and industry by the People for the People, and to the creation and active support of a real League of Nations.

(3) To work for the establishment of a Peace Ministry in Governments.

(4) To support a pacifist Co-operative and Labour Press.

(5) To work for new ideals in Education, and to see that militarism is not given a place in school life.

As Mothers—

(1) To give children no false views about war.

(2) To encourage in the home feelings of friendship towards other countries.

(3) To encourage Pacifist Youth Movements and intercourse between the young people of different countries.

As Human Beings—

To have Faith, Hope, and Charity.