

Welcome, Soldiers and Sailors

HOW IT STANDS IN THE U. S. A.

By EADMONN MacALPINE

[From an Exchange]

WHEN the United States entered the war the problem of withdrawing two million men from industry was one of the vital topics of the day. Many suggestions of more or less value were offered, whereby this huge depletion of industry could be affected without throwing the whole industrial machinery out of gear. The army of unemployed, which is one of the concomitants of Capitalism, and the influx of women into industry, however, solved the problem without the aid of the experts. Nevertheless much ink was spilled and great anxiety for the welfare of the country was manifested.

But now we are faced with the much greater problem of turning two million men back into industry the experts, for the most part, are silent and the newspapers and magazines are apparently ignorant of the entire subject. The soldier, who during the war was a hero, the idol of the crowd, the darling of the nation, has now become a disagreeable problem. He is no longer mentioned in polite society. After he has been brought back, paraded through the streets and showered with the verbal laurels, he is expected to return to the obscurity from which he sprang and to take his place in the ranks of the jobless, not as a returned soldier wearing a uniform with service chevrons and with stripes on the sleeves, but as an ordinary member of the proletariat, who through hard luck is out of a job, to whom society owes nothing and who must expect nothing from society.

When he insists on looking for work in his uniform he is covertly reproached for his lack of taste, and when he very naturally replies that he is in uniform because he has no civilian clothes, society assumes an air of injured dignity and says "something must be done." The "something" usually takes the form of a charity bazaar or concert, and when it is found that the soldier cannot be comfortably disposed of in the same way as our industrial cripples—by relegation to an institution—society becomes very annoyed indeed and leaves him in his own resources.

It must not be assumed, however, that the returned soldier is not welcome. All the newspapers say so, electric signs blazon forth the fact to the world by night, while appropriately colored posters herald it by day. Every railroad in the country announces the fact; aldermanic resolutions inscribe it on city records; triumphal arches, monuments of the contractor's art, (and the bills for same, monuments to his imagination), establish it beyond dispute. There is no lack of the external symbols of welcome. And every succeeding troopship that reaches port is a signal for new parades. But after being welcomed the soldier is supposed to gracefully disappear.

When he sailed away to France, service flags were flung to the breeze. Every employer hung out a banner, the number of whose stars told the immensity of the sacrifice made by the firm in allowing its employes to march off to war, hired new employes and forgot about the matter until the casualty list caused the substitution of a gold star for one of the blue ones. Now the service flags have disappeared, and the suggestion that it should be replaced by a flag showing the number of returned soldiers reinstated in their old jobs is quietly ignored. The truth of the matter is that the employers being first and last a business man, does not want men who have developed the independence and self-reliance that comes to those who have stared death in the face.

The master dearly loves a willing slave, and the employee whose slave training is unbroken by adventure in foreign fields invariably proves the better servant. The man who has daily brushed shoulders with death is not likely to cower before a foreman's glance. And so the returned soldier's welcome ceases when he returns to civilian life and offers

himself for sale in the labor market. He has been welcomed and feted and he must step down to make room for the next batch who will be welcomed and feted in its turn.

But the returned soldier must live, he must find employment, and what better occupation could he get than assisting in the welcome to his brothers in arms. A new industry is created by the spirit of welcome. Flag buttons, proclaiming the welcome are manufactured and offered for sale. And who can refuse to buy from a soldier, especially if he was wounded in the country's service? Here is the solution of the problem! Let the soldier sell the welcome button—the soldier is kept busy, the public is ashamed to refuse the salesman, and the manufacturer makes money.

Thus the streets of our cities are swarming with soldiers in uniform, offering gaudy buttons and buntings for sale. Fine up-standing fellows are reduced to street hawking, and street hawking is a hard job. The returns are small, the hours of work are long and the experience is humiliating. After a spell of this work the spirit is broken and the slave psychology again gains the ascendancy. Any job, where the begging element is absent, is welcome and the foreman's glance regains its old power.

CEDAR AND EDEN PAUL RESIGN FROM THE I. L. P.—A Letter to the "Labor Leader"

Sir,—We ask for space in which to give a brief exposition of the reasons that are leading us, at this juncture, to resign membership of the I. L. P. and B. S. P. In so far as we have any personal feeling in the matter, it is one of profound regret at having to sever ourselves from organizations in which so many valued comrades remain at work. This said, let us confine ourselves to principles.

(1) Apart altogether from the question of Sovietist versus Parliamentary tactics, we incline to the view that the purely political type of Socialist organization has outlived its usefulness. The political, social, and educative functions that have attached to such bodies in the past will (so we believe) in the future, be branches of the activity of the new type of industrial organization. Upon the workers' committees and shop stewards' movement, therefore, we wish to concentrate such time as we can spare for public work. We would suggest, further, that the new periodicals issued by the various workers' committees afford an interesting indication of the growth of the new movement, and that these sheets are likely to replace, as the means of effective revolutionary propaganda, the older and more sedate party and trade union official organs.

(2) We consider that the second International is not merely dead, but damned. We are convinced that the success of the working class movement (or, in other words, that the complete overthrow of capitalism) is inseparably connected with the success of the new Red or Moscow International. The I. L. P. supports the Berne International, and cannot get further than a "refusal to condemn Lenin." The B. S. P., better advised, goes so far as to refer to the branches the question of adhesion to the Communist International. (Were this the sole issue, we should await the result of the referendum before withdrawing from the B. S. P.).

(3) The absolutely vital question, however, is that of affiliation to the Labor Party. There is a hopeless divergence between those who expect to realize Socialism through Parliamentary democracy and those who expect to realize Socialism through communist ergatoeracy—the administration of the workers by the workers for the workers—with (as a preliminary stage) the dictatorship of the revolutionary proletariat exercised through workers' committees or Soviets. Here is the crux: and no pious resolutions of sympathy with our Russian comrades can veil the fact, that, after

the Easter Conferences of 1919—four years after Zimmerwald and eighteen months after the Bolshevik revolution—the I. L. P. and the B. S. P. remain affiliated to the Labor Party, and therefore remain committed to Parliamentary methods.

To sum up. The conferences at Huddersfield and Sheffield have shown that neither the I. L. P. nor the B. S. P. has adequately realized that the world stands at the threshold of a new era. Not merely do they fail to grasp the necessity of new tactics for the social revolution, but they even fail to perceive that the revolution for which we have so long been working is actually in progress. The cry is "Show your colors!"

For the undersigned the only practicable "Socialist unity" is the unified activity of the revolutionary left wing—Yours, etc.,

EDEN AND CEDAR PAUL,

7 Featherstone Buildings, London, W.C. 1.

We miss something, you and I, in not attending the annual meeting of the shareholders of the Midland Railway Company. Especially have we missed the eloquence of shareholder Miss F. E. Budge of London:

Ladies and gentlemen, I may say here that I have been for twenty-five years in business, and I am going to tell you that if I were on the Directorate, do you think I should have seen my shareholders, in the face of an increase in the cost of living of 120 per cent, have to take the same dividend as before, if there was any chance of increasing that dividend? We have earned it, ladies and gentlemen; if we have not, of course, do not let us have it. Do you mean to say that if we were paid for all the work which has been done on the British Railways in connection with the war that we should stand where we are today? Of course not.

In other words, she would not budge. With all "due respect" to the directors, she continued, "we must have an increased dividend because we have earned it."

Miss Budge was followed by the Rev. W. S. Carter D.D., of Fulham, who declared:—

"I wish it had been possible to have more details as to the future of our beloved railway."

The Rev. G. F. Marson of the Church Army says (Daily Telegraph, 18-3-19) that

"Mesopotamia was the biggest pride of the war. Its fertility was so wonderful that, with a proper irrigation scheme, it was estimated that in five years its produce would pay for the war. It could be made the greatest cotton-growing country in the world.

But who is to get the prize?

The lads with the wooden legs? The relatives of the dead who lie in the marshes at Kut or by the roadsides of Flanders?

For them the blanks. They are to have memorial tablets in the Parish Church; they are to get a "nation's warmest thanks;" they will be requited with the knowledge that they have made the world safe for Democracy and a fit place for heroes to live in, where the rights of man as man shall not perish, and where Righteousness shall sheathe its sword until the eternal truths have been made manifest, and where Treitsche lies buried in the welt-politik of the Saar Valley, . . . etc.

And it is written, their bellies shall be filled with the east wind.

LONDON, May 27.—Thousands of discharged soldiers and sailors out of employment, armed with stones and other missiles, marched towards the House of Commons yesterday. They came into conflict with the police barring the approaches and were scattered.

Later the procession was re-formed and marched toward Buckingham Palace, but the demonstration broke up before it reached the palace. There were no further disorders.

The demonstration followed a mass meeting in Hyde Park, where the discharged soldiers and sailors demanded work and a minimum wage scale.