

PACIFISM

The preservation of peace at any price by the people of the United States can only be regarded as a counsel of perfection. It is too much to expect that a people strong and conscious of its strength will pursue in time of war that passive policy of watchful waiting which has been defined as "Watch till you see an American citizen killed, and then wait until you see the next American citizen killed", and at each of these outrages shall turn the other cheek, placidly remarking, "We are too proud to fight." The only way in which the United States can keep out of another world war is by preventing another world war. To keep from being involved, once such a war has broken out, would require, as Woodrow Wilson foresaw as early as 1914, that impossible neutrality, a neutrality in thought. In the presence of a great war only those can be neutral in thought who do not think at all.

But pacifism cannot be passed over as summarily as imperialism. There is a powerful pacifist element in the United States which includes some millions of voters. It is this element which turned a dozen normally Republican states in the West and centre to re-elect Woodrow Wilson President in 1916 under the spell of the Democratic slogan "He kept us out of War." And it is this same element which mistakenly, but not unnaturally, thinking itself betrayed and duped when the re-elected Woodrow Wilson carried us into war less than six months later, joined in unholy alliance with the isolationists to give the death blow to the League of Nations at the election of 1920.

To these gullible pacifists our politicians pander - in the intervals between voting money for new battle cruisers - with Kellogg Peace Pacts, peace pacts which even tiny Paraguay tears into scraps of paper. The dictum of Hobbes written three centuries ago still holds the field: "Covenants without the sword are but words and of no strength to secure a man at all".

The peace at any price pacifist often pays lip service to the policy of international co-operation, which he hinders in fact by his refusal to put teeth in any of his peace pacts. The pacifist may be defined as a man who is willing to talk for world peace, the internationalist as a man who is willing to fight for it. Many pacifists actually still oppose America's entrance into the League of Nations because the League does not promote their pet nostrums in foreign policies, for instance, the freeing of India from the imagined tyranny of England, or because the League Covenant contains clauses calling for defence, by military force, of an attacked member. Still other pacifists in their short-sighted inconsistency uphold the Stimson doctrine which constitutes the most critical danger spot in American foreign relations today, if we continue to live up to it.

The pacifist in his sentimental horror of war lets the rain of his abhorrence fall alike on the just cause and on the unjust. "Was there ever a war waged by any nation that was not a war of aggression?" cried a school marm, quite old enough to know better, to a gathering of enthusiastic peace at any price men, and the silly sheep bleated loud applause. My request for an explanation of the aggressive element in Belgium's four year's fight for freedom against Germany went without an answer.