

THE TRUTH ABOUT GERMANY

Fair Election Now Would Give Socialists Control of Reichstag
—Demand for Reform Insistent, But Militarists Are Given Support in Feeling That Peace Terms Will Be Better If Country Appears United.

BY CARL W. ACKERMAN.

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Socialism has been growing so rapidly in Germany during the war that if a national election were held today and all men permitted to vote the Socialist party would dominate the Reichstag. Officials and army leaders realize this, and it is one of the reasons there were no elections for parliament last fall as the German constitution provided. Socialism and democracy go hand in hand in Germany. Just before Ambassador James W. Gerard left Berlin everyone was talking about the reform which would come after the war. Desiring peace above everything else, the Socialists and the people who want changes in their system of government, are supporting the military leaders because they believe a united Germany can get the best terms from the Americanized Entente.

To keep up with the growth in socialism the Government has had to make a large number of changes in policies during the war. When food first

became very scarce the Socialists demanded that the Government confiscate all food supplies, so that the available food might be equally distributed. Philipp Scheidemann, the dominant Socialist figure in German politics, is credited with having originated the bread card. When the Government food department was established and President von Batocki was called from East Prussia to head it, the Socialists demanded that they be recognized. And for the first time in the history of Germany the Kaiser appointed a Socialist—Dr. Charles Mueller—as one of the members of the food board. Last fall, when the emperor came to Berlin to discuss the food situation with representatives from all parts of Germany he held a long conference with Dr. Mueller at the chancellery's palace. Afterward the newspapers announced his majesty had received this Socialist and discussed earnestly with him the food situation. It had a good effect upon the Socialists and the people when they read that their Kaiser had really consulted one of their number.

Radicals Oppose Credits. When the war broke out the Socialist

members of the Reichstag as a unit voted with the other members for the war credits. But since then the party has split, and at present there is a Social Democratic party led by Scheidemann, and a Socialist Labor party, led by Wolfgang Lieke and Eduard Bernstein. Scheidemann's group has been the strongest supporter of the Chancellor and the Government in the Reichstag, and because the Chancellor has used so many concessions to this group Scheidemann has been considered a semi-official spokesman of the Government. The radical wing of the party, however, is not only opposed to the principles of the Social Democratic group, but its members believe the Socialists made a mistake in voting for the first war credits. During the last two sessions of the Reichstag, when war credits were voted, this minority party voted against the proposed funds for the continuation of the war.

It is difficult to tell in war times which one of these groups represents the most people. In the few elections which have been held to fill vacancies in the Reichstag caused by the death of members the two groups have fared about equally. Scheidemann, because of his popularity among the people, and because he is practically the only Socialist who is permitted by the Government to travel about and speak, is considered the most influential Socialist in Germany. Bernstein and his followers, who are secretly anti-Hohenzollern and anti-army, are prevented from holding public meetings, and the Government has refused to recognize their group as a special political party. When the Chancellor called the party leaders to his palace for a conference he never invites the radicals. But from the standpoint of democracy in Germany this small Socialist Labor group has the most advanced ideas. Bernstein was one of the first Germans to approve the ideas of the American League to Enforce Peace, and he has been an exponent of American ideas in Germany as far as Scheidemann or Germany. He is an old man, and therefore, but having spent some time like fifteen years in England and having a son in London today, he is at heart a thorough democrat and a man who believes in a republican Germany.

Scheidemann Forceful Leader.

Personally Scheidemann impresses one as being sincere and earnest. He is as well educated as any public man in Germany today. He is one of the most forceful orators there, and his masterful executive ability. He is practically the dictator of the policies and ideas of the Vorwarts. Many of the leading editorials in this newspaper are written by him. He has his office on the fourth floor of a factory building, together with other of his Socialist colleagues, and his advice and help are sought by so many people as to be one of the most difficult men in Germany to see.

The chief Socialist centres in Germany are Berlin, Munich, Essen, Leipzig and Stuttgart. The Berlin Socialists are not as radical as those in Bavaria and in the Rhine industrial section. For instance, last fall when food became so very scarce that many people began to fear there would not be enough for the country to hold out, the Munich Socialists wrote to the Chancellor suggesting that all food in Germany, even that in possession of private families, be confiscated. The poor know that people with money have been able to buy food in large quantities both inside and outside of Germany and store it for the "siege." The people know, also, that those who live on big estates and farms keep back all the food they need for themselves and only sell what they have to. So the Munich Socialists recommended to the Government that food be taken away from all persons in Germany. A further proposal was that the Government organize soup kitchens and restaurants throughout Germany and compel every one, high and low, rich and poor, to eat the same kind of food in Government cafes. This was bitterly opposed, of course, by everyone in Germany who had food or who could live at home. The Chancellor paid no heed to this proposal from Munich, but if this year's harvest should be as bad as that of last year the Government may be compelled to accept the Munich plan after all.

Socialists Are Elected.

During the last year there have been elections held in Germany for seats on the Reichstag to fill those vacated by death, illness or the retirement of members because of age. When the election was held in Potsdam, the Kaiser's home, a Socialist was elected to take the place of Dr. Karl Liebknecht, who was sentenced to two years' imprisonment. Socialists also carried elections in Cologne and in Essen, where the great Krupp munition factories are located. The Government has been watching

this advance in socialism very carefully. It has tried to keep abreast of the times by establishing state socialism in Germany during the war. The present method of controlling and distributing food is purely socialist. At present the "Z. E. G." which is the official bureau for purchasing and controlling the sale of food, is absolutely socialist in its nature. No German firm and no private citizen can buy food wholesale or retail in any neutral country in Europe and bring it into Germany without having the supply confiscated by this organization. The result is that no German firm today buys food in neutral countries. Everything available in Holland, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland or Hungary is purchased by an agent of the "Z. E. G." and shipped into Germany in freight cars owned by this organization. Travellers in neutral European countries will see on the railway sidings white freight cars with the following sign in big black letters:

"Zentral-Einkaufsgesellschaft, Deutschland"—the so-called "Z. E. G."

Before this bureau was organized German merchants had been buying in these countries, and bidding against each other for the available food. The result was that prices became almost prohibitive. Now the Government sends one man to buy the supplies and offers a certain fixed price.

Socialist Schemes Succeed.

This is one of the ways by which state socialism has been established in Germany during hostilities. Because the government was successful in the food department, similar bureaus were organized to care for other common needs. A government department to buy, sell and conserve all edible fats was organized. Another bureau to control the oil market and another to purchase old clothes and still another to have charge of wool and cotton were founded.

On the whole these socialistic schemes have been so successful that many Socialists and officials are looking forward to the peace. They think when these ideas can be extended. It has been suggested already that the government take over what remains of the German steamship companies and establish a government monopoly in merchant ships. It has been suggested that the government import all raw materials and export all manufactured articles. The place of the universal war party of the past. The Socialists on principle are against war, and the people are so weary of this war that they will not look forward to future wars with any degree of hopefulness.

During the past two years the radical Socialists have been fighting hard for recognition, but because the government has been against them and because the army has hated them they have been unable to carry out many of their plans. They are, however, ever by the United States of America and her allies if the present military leaders are defeated and dismissed. As long as the army can say to the people: "We defended the country; we kept the enemy out of our country; we fought a successful war," a great many Germans will be misled and the reform movement in Germany after the war will not be as successful as it otherwise will be.

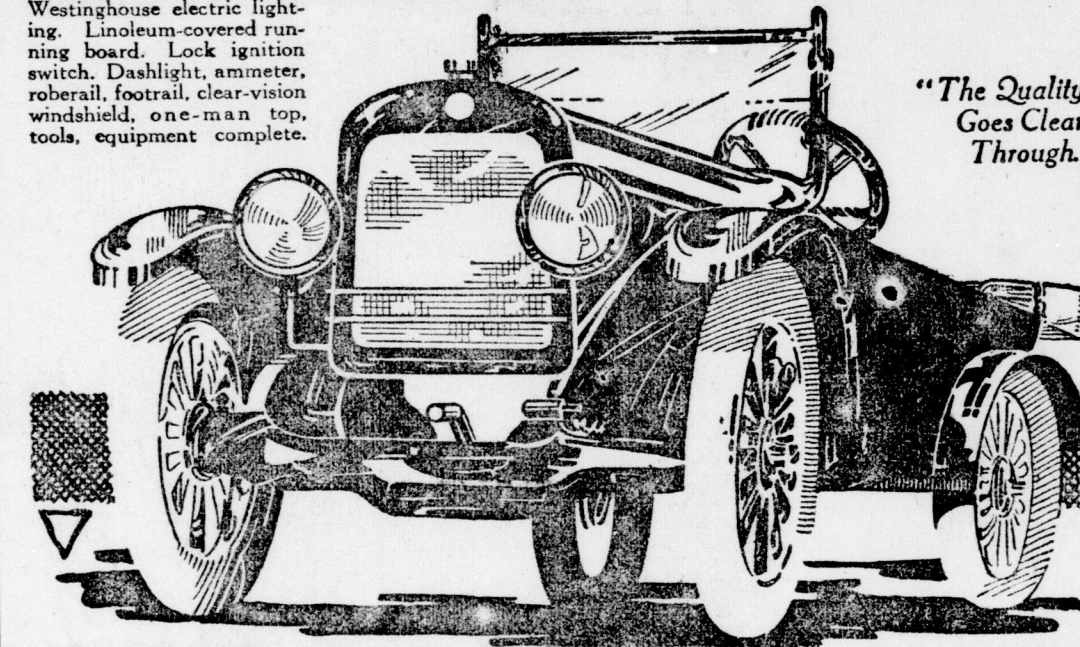
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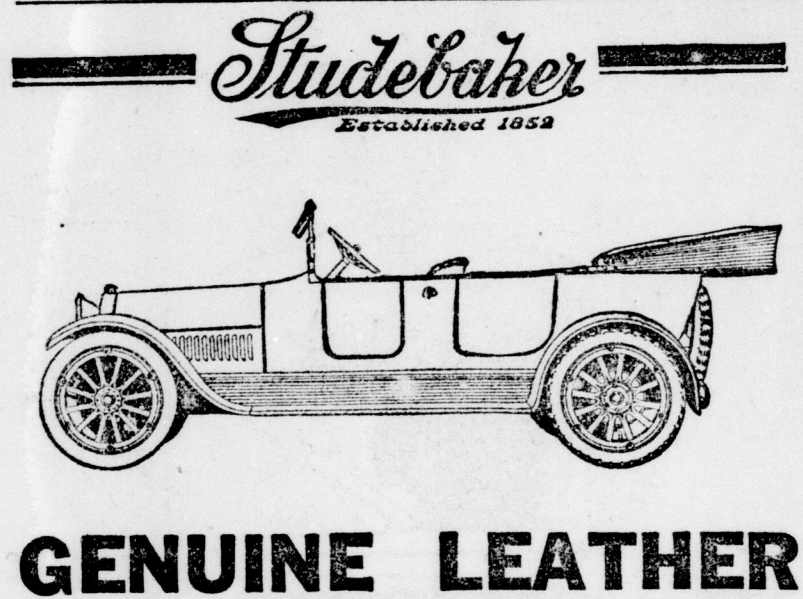
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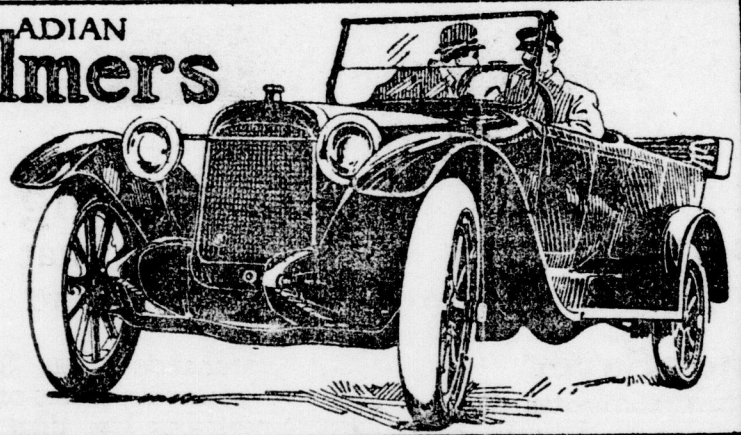
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