

Creaking Organs

P. J. KING, Financial Secretary Lodge No. 264

THE World War released forces, reactions, and attitudes which could not fail to affect the life and movement of Labor. The war accelerated developments which it would have taken history a generation or more to incubate. A mechanical revolution was ushered into a world which had not nearly digested the effects of the industrial revolution of the preceding century.

The war necessitated an eruptive release of creative energy for the purpose of destruction. Mechanical sciences were told to go full speed ahead. New machines and better ones replaced old ones in use, and production was massified beyond comparison with pre-war levels. Industrial efficiency was given every aid for the creation of immense supplies of goods, of food, of war ammunition. Cost was no obstacle.

A far different attitude was taken toward the minds of the people during that period. For five years there had been no free play of public opinion in the world. Confronted by the inexorable necessities of war, governments conscripted public opinion as they conscripted men and money and materials. Having conscripted it, they dealt with it as they dealt with other raw recruits. They mobilized it. They put it in charge of drill sergeants. They goose stepped it. They taught it to stand at attention and salute.

This governmental control over public opinion was exerted through two different channels—one the censorship and the other propaganda. As war progressed, the censorship became less and less a factor, and propaganda increased in importance. The organized manipulation of public opinion was as inevitable a development of modern warfare as airplanes, tanks, and barbed wire entanglements.

There were two kinds of propaganda, one represented the appeal to reason and the other the appeal to any emotion that could be directed toward winning the war. The other kind of propaganda resembled, in general way, the activities of the cheer leaders at a football game. It was noisy and emotional and spectacular, and as such it often served a highly useful purpose.

When the Armistice was signed and demobilization began, public opinion was demobilized, too. It was turned loose to shift for itself and naturally, felt a little awkward in

civilian clothes. It had been trained to think only in terms of war and had almost forgotten how to think in terms of peace. Moreover, it was like the emancipated slaves of the South after the Civil War. Its shackles were struck off, but it did not quite know what to do with its freedom. It was in the habit of being told what to think and what to feel, and when it was left to its own resources it was bewildered.

At this point private propaganda stepped in to take up the work that Government had abandoned, and when we deal with public opinion today we are dealing largely with private propaganda.

Government suppressed the truth; Government distorted the truth; Government lied glibly and magnificently when occasion seemed to require; but, after all, governmental propaganda was at least directed toward war ends, and those ends were the protection of the country and its institutions against its armed and embattled enemies.

When we come to the question of private propaganda we are on wholly different ground. Private propaganda is not one of the by-products of the war, but it has taken on new



COURTESY LOCOMOTIVE ENGINEERS' JR.