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Universal Military Service

(Chicago Tribune).

The only leg that opposition to universal military service has to stand on-and it is wooden and a foot short-is composed of respect for the conscientious scruples of the citizens. A citizen may not think his country is right in its conflict with another nation. The issues of the conflict may outrage his principles and his morals and fill him with dismay.

In the free will system he is able to express his sorrow and his disagreement by remaining aloof from the nation's activities. He cultivates his soul and weeps over the spectacle presented by his country's unjust procedure.

A nation will not always be right. Any nation in which opinion is freely developed and more freely expressed will contain men who think that whatever it does is wrong. German Socialists are not, satisfied with German procedure. We know that many Englishmen are indifferent to Britain's procedure. Some Russians must object to what Russia is doing, and we know that although now France with the enemy on her soil, seems united, the approach to war was obstructed by many Frenchmen.

The elemental objection to the conscientious scruple is simply this: A time can be reached when the individual conscience is of no importance. There is something which transcends it. A man cannot remain in a community and wholly elect the terms upon which he is willing to serve it or subscribe to its laws. He lives in certain advantages which he does not make. They are made for him by the presence of other people. The fact of association is essentially important to him.

The chief requirement is that the association be maintained. There is nothing in his life so important as this. He cannot or will not live on an otherwise uninhabited island. Yet that is the only place in which a free play of individuality and conscience could be had.

Call the association a nation and there must come a time in its affairs when the question of whether it is right or wrong is unimportant. The question is its success. If its success is of no importance, it is of no importance.

If it is of no importance, it is not worth talking about, much less fighting for. If it is of importance, it reduces the individual, his conscience, and his morals to a secondary position. The individual cannot set himself up as a judge of his nation, not when that nation is a democracy trying in its best fashion to work out its destiny for the benefit of its

Subscription to national purpose may come hard sometimes. It may be a real and positive martyrdom. The essence of the thing is that it is a necessary martyrdom. If an individual believes that his country is so constituted that its impulses always will be in the direction of wrongdoing, his conscience should lead him out of it in short order and thereafter bother him no more on that score.

If he so much believes in the general morality of his nation that he is content to remain a citizen of it, it is not within his election to say when he will serve it and when he will not. Conscience has a place of operation. That is before the nation is finally committed to a course of action from which it cannot withdraw.

People seem to be constantly in confusion upon this point. So long as a nation has not committed itself, it is not only the privilege but it may be the duty of its citizens to make their influence felt in the processes which are leading to a decision.

The fact that an administration has committed itself to a theory or to a contention does not stop the play of the citizen's opinion. He may think and say what he pleases until the government has committed the nation. Then argument stops. Then the citizen, whether he agrees with the reasoning preceding the final decision or whether he disagrees with it, is committed with the nation. And for the very good reason that the nation is more important than his thoughts or his conscience. If he does not think so, he is stealing benefits he does not deserve.

For that reason universal military service is not an unjustified invasion of a man's rights nor an unjustified affront to his conscience. It may give him a terrible duty to perform. A war in which the man's heart is not is a doubly terrible war for him, but there is a greater need which transcends the need of his own individuality.

If this were not so no nation would be worth any

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BRITAIN WARLIKE.

W. D. AIKEN, Superintendent Accident Dept.

"We are going to see this fight through to a finish," writes a British officer of high command to a friend in this country. "We have been slow but 'the mills of the gods grind slow but they grind exceedingly sure, and we have learned all our lessons, some of them from the Germans, and are coming along in fine shape. We have only commenced."

Another officer writes from Flanders: "Our gun and shell supply is daily growing and before we are through with the Huns they will learn some lessons in artillery and shells, although we admit that our initial instruction came from them. During our retreat we held trenches while they fired 50 shells to our one, but before the war concludes we shall be firing 1,000 to their 10. It is a war of figures, and while we English may be slow to learn, we are strong on figures."

Women at home who are unable to work in munition factories are working to limit of their endurance making necessaries for men in the field, and all are giving up their luxuries and many a large part of their incomes for good of the country. England is a vast camp, all hands contributing to the well-being of the services.

No need to warn the man on the street against talking of movement of troops and military plans. Every Englishman now thoroughly realizes that this is absolutely a war to the end and that it is the nation's war and not of a clique in the House of Lords, as some smaller wars in the past have been. As one prominent American who returned a few weeks ago from England said: "England is warlike in the true sense of the word, i.e., every man, woman and child is working together like clockwork for the war, and all other matters are excluded." - Wall Street Journal.

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