

Are we, the people of Canada who are at home, doing our proper part to help to win the war?

If a war were conducted with the full strength of a nation, it would mean that every part of the fighting power, the labor, and the resources of the country were being used towards a single end. Each man would either be fighting or engaged in providing materials of war, food, clothes and transport for those that were fighting, with such extra food and such few clothes as were needed for themselves while engaged in the task.

This is a war economy. This is the fashion in which the energies of a nation would be directed if some omniscient despot directed them and controlled the life and activity of every man.

A nation so organized, if it were possible, would be multiplied as ten to one.

In place of it look about us. Thousands, tens of thousands, millions of our men, women and children are engaged in silly and idle services or in production that is for mere luxuries and comforts and that helps nothing in the conduct of the war. They are making pianos, gramophones, motor cars, jewelry, books, pictures, clothes in millions of yards and millions of dollars, that are mere needless luxuries, furniture that could be waited for, new houses where our old ones would still do, new railroads that lead nowhere—in short, a multitude of things that have no bearing whatever on the great fight for life and death which is going on in the world without. Such people, though they work fourteen hours a day, are but mere drones in the hive as far as the war is concerned. Every crippled soldier that comes home and looks upon our so-called busy streets feels this by instinct, with something, perhaps, like hatred in his heart.

These workers pay their taxes, it is said. By levying taxes on what they made we get the revenue that helps to pay for the war. Quite true, as far as it goes. But follow this poor argument in its tracks and you will see that it goes but an inch or so and then falls. It springs out of the perpetual confusion that arises in people's minds by mixing up the movement of money to and fro which they see and think they understand, with the movement and direction of the nation's production which they do not. The so-called War-Tax is but a small part of a man's earnings; let us say, for the sake of argument, one-tenth. This means that nine-tenths of the man's work is directed to his own use and only one-tenth for the war. Or let us put the case in the concrete. Let us suppose that the man in question makes pianos. The net result of his work is as if he gave one-tenth of his pianos to the Government. With that tenth there is no quarrel. The Government can exchange it for foreign gunpowder; this is the same, at one remove, as if the piano man made gunpowder. But the other nine-tenths is all astray. This the piano man exchanges for wheat, vegetables, meat, clothes, and so on; thus, as far as this nine-tenths of the man's work goes, he is a mere drone or parasite feeding himself and clothing himself, but not helping to fight the war at all. Worse than that. The farmer who raised the food is a parasite, too. For although food is a war material, this particular piece of food is not.