

BRITISH TRADE UNIONS AND THE WAR

General Federation manifesto to its members and affiliations in Europe and America, heartily supports war; and demands new statesmanship in dealing with after effects.

IN Germany, Austria, and the neutral States of Europe and America, persistent attempts are being made to misrepresent the attitude of the British Labor movement towards the Government, and towards the crisis through which Europe is passing. Extracts from speeches and cuttings from newspapers are collated, and conclusions drawn which cannot be justified by facts, and which do not represent the real opinion of the British working-class movement.

Under such circumstances, an organization like the General Federation of Trade Unions, which represents, and is to a great extent interested in the financial stability of 1,006,904 Trade Unionists, must remove all doubt concerning its own position and intention.

No Delusions Here.

It is, and always has been, on the side of international as well as industrial peace. It has consistently tried to develop fraternity between peoples of different nationalities: it early identified itself with the international Trade Union movement, attended its congresses, contributed to its upkeep, and endeavored to extend its influence. members, faith in the common interests of working humanity, and determination to advance them, was warm and strong, while the possibility of war was regarded as one regards the shadow of an indescribable catastrophe.

The Federation entertains no delusions concerning the consequences of war, or the share of these which the class it represents will bear, and in placing its position before the world it is actuated only by the desire to prevent misapprehension, and to secure effective national and ordered consideration of all those interests it directly or indirectly represents.

Fully to analyze and discuss the

causes of the war and the responsibility for its outbreak is beyond the intention of the Management Committee. Sufficient for the moment to say that, in the opinion of millions of Trade Unionists, the responsibility for the war does not rest upon the policy or conduct of Great Britain.

This opinion is supported from our own side by documentary evidence, and by the fact of our own unpreparedness, and from the opposing side by the utterances of their soldiers, their statesmen, and their teachers, and by their terrible and immediate capacity for striking effective and terrorizing blows.

What Germans Said.

Of this capacity to strike the Press of the world has, since the beginning of August, borne daily testimony. The intention to strike whenever and wherever opportunity offered has been openly and generally expressed, and was facilitated by the fact that the German Army is, in effect, always mobilized.

The following quotations from German writers represent not merely the opinions of Bernardi and the teachings of Treitschke, but the considered conclusions of the dominant section of their countrymen:—

The idea that the weak nation is to have the same right to live as the powerful and vigorous nations represents a presumptuous encroachment on the natural laws of development.—Von Bernardi.

Our people (the Germans) must learn to see that the maintenance of peace never can or may be the goal of a policy.—Von Bernardi.

Such theories only too clearly disseminate the false and ruinous notion that the maintenance of peace is the ultimate object, or at least the chief duty of our policy. To such views, the offspring of a false humanity, the clear and definite answer must be made that, under certain circumstances, it is not only the right but the moral duty of a statesman to bring about a war.—Von Bernardi.

Of Frederic the Great it is said: "None of the wars which he fought had been forced upon him; none of them did he postpone as