

Liberty

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The Peace Racket

A Challenge to Visionaries and Worse:
Leave It to the Men Who Stopped Our
Last War to Keep Us Out of Another

says MAJOR GENERAL
SMEDLEY D. BUTLER

HAVING devoted most of my life to the study of legalized murder—meaning war—I cannot follow those idealists who are innocent enough to believe that world peace is merely a question of joining the World Court, the League of Nations, or some other international association for the promotion of brotherly love.

War is a racket. But the cause of peace is becoming another racket. There are a hundred or more peace societies operating in America, most of them with headquarters in Washington, D. C., and probably several hundred minor groups. Every one of these organizations must have money with which to function—money for salaries, for printing, for office rents, for lecturers' fees and expenses.

Where are they getting all this money, running into millions? We gullible Americans are digging down in our pockets. We are buying memberships on national committees; we are flattered when our names are listed with those of distinguished philanthropists and world-peace advocates. Every penny that is being spent is coming from the pockets of the American people.

I don't mean that all these societies are promoted by profit-seekers. Some are headed by sincere but misguided enthusiasts. But in most instances the peace racket of today is purely commercial, and if the professional pacifists-for-profit used the same tactics in nearly any other field, they could be convicted of fraud.

I am not saying that world peace is an empty dream; that just because we have always had wars, we must always have them in the future. I used to think that way. But since my retirement I have spent the past few years meeting and mingling with people all over the country. I have a new conception of the American mind, and today I am convinced that we can look forward with some hope to eventual world peace. It may not arrive for fifty or a hundred years; but meanwhile we can increase the intervals between wars.

However, there is only one element in American citizenship that can keep us from having another war, at least for some time to come. That element is composed of the men who stopped the last war—the *real* overseas veterans, who really know what the hell of war is all about.

The revelations of the Nye Committee have demonstrated that the provoking of wars for profit is an established profession, whose practitioners are politically shrewd and commercially smart. They use practical methods. Well, if that is how people start wars, then that's how we will have to stop them—by being practical, hard-headed, and politically intelligent.

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"Where are they getting all this money?" demands 'Old Gimlet-Eye' Butler. "If pacifists-for-profit used the same tactics in other fields, they could be convicted of fraud!"

The real overseas veterans are held together by a bond of comradeship that can never be dissolved by religious or political differences. It makes possible a nationwide organization that can really do something practical toward peace. Since the World War, the average overseas veteran has acquired hard knocks and common sense. He is thoroughly disillusioned about the glories of war. He knows now that he was merely a pawn in a game that was being played by others, that all his patriotic emotions were artificially stimulated, that most of those who patted him on the back and told him to "give the Kaiser hell for me!" never really cared a tinker's damn whether he came back or how well he might fare if he should. Sad experience has made him practical.

That's why these veterans have reached the conclusion that the only way to stop war is to take the profits out of war. Witness the growing demand among them for a universal draft policy. In time of war they want to see the workers in a factory paid proportionately as a doughboy in uniform is paid. They would let every foreman have the equivalent of a corporal's pay, every superintendent that of a lieutenant's pay, and so on up. As to wealth and properties, the government should have the same right to take over a building or a manufacturing plant as it has to draft a human being. As a direct result of this plan being promoted by veterans, I am predicting that legislation of this character will soon be approved by Congress.

But these veterans further demand that the constant menace to peace be destroyed before it becomes too late. They ask immediate control of all munitions plants. They would stop the sale of arms and munitions in peacetime to nations that may later declare war upon the United States and use the selfsame guns and munitions to annihilate armies of American young men.

And more than one million veterans are today affiliated with the five major veteran groups. Before long the great majority of America's approximately four and one half million ex-service men will be banded together.

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Peace will be assured when we make it impossible for any one to profit through the promotion of wars. That we can do only when Congress passes the necessary legislation. Congress will never pass it until the individual Congressmen are told that they have to vote for it or lose their places on the government pay roll.

When our peace advocates eventually realize the logic of all this, they will throw absurd ideas overboard and turn to the men who brought our last war to a close to keep us from becoming involved in the next war.

And the resulting movement is certain to become international. The veterans of France, England, and Germany too will be impelled to demand national control of munitions plants in their respective countries. And when that is accomplished, the peoples of the world will be far closer to universal peace.



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