

A WAY TO PREVENT WAR

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A Way to Prevent War by Allan Louis Benson

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ALLAN LOUIS BENSON

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PREFACE

If the people were in favor of war, the way to end war would be to convert the people to peace. This book is devoted to the task of showing that since the people are opposed to war the logical way to end it is to take the power to declare war from minorities who misuse it and vest it in the people who may be depended upon not to use it at all. Public sentiment in favor of peace can be of little practical value so long as a minority in each nation control the war-making machinery.

The ideas upon which this book is based began to come to me twelve days after the outbreak of the Great War in Europe, while I was writing an article on the war for *Pearson's Magazine*. It seemed such a colossal wrong that perhaps fifty men should have the power to force war upon 350,000,000 who did not want it. I had written more than half of the article when the idea came to me that only the people, voting by direct ballot, should have the power to declare war—and thus it was that the demand for a referendum on war was first made in an article devoted to the war in Europe.

For the next seven months, I did little else but develop the idea, write about it and speak about it.

One article, when re-printed as a pamphlet, had a circulation of more than 2,000,000 copies. The Executive Committee of the Socialist Party has endorsed the plan in principle and, as noted on Page 102, it has received enthusiastic support elsewhere.

All except the last chapter of this book was printed serially in the *Appeal to Reason*, the Socialist weekly published at Girard, Kansas. The last chapter was first printed in *Pearson's Magazine*.

A. L. B.

Yonkers, N. Y., April, 1915.

A WAY TO PREVENT WAR

CHAPTER I

TO THE WORKING CLASS OF THE WORLD

THE knife is at your throat and the pistol is at your heart.

You must end war or war will end you.

What the great men of the world have failed to do, you must do or you die. What the great men of the world have failed to do you can do, because you are wholly opposed to war and they are not.

It is idle to say that the ruling classes of the world could not end war if they wholly believed in peace. Between sunrise and sunset of any day they could sink their navies and disband their armies. Disarmament is both simple and effective. But no nation disarms because each nation is governed by a small ruling class of capitalists who do not really want perpetual peace.

Every ruling class is opposed to every war in which it sees no opportunity to obtain profit for itself. But every ruling class favors war if it can accomplish its purpose in no other way. The capitalists of Great Britain regretted our war with Spain, but did not regret their own war with the Boer republics. The capitalists of the United States regretted the war between

Russia and Japan, but did not regret our war with Spain and the Philippines.

The time has come when the working class, the world over, must speak or die.

Civilization cannot long endure if it be subjected to many more such assaults as the great war that broke out in Europe in the summer of 1914.

Civilization could and did survive the wars of the past, but the wars of the past were as nothing in comparison with this war.

Grant so shed human blood that, in the dark days of the American Civil War, thousands called him a butcher.

The generation that judged Grant did not know what butchering meant.

Beside the European commanders of to-day, Grant was a mere brawler. Grant, in all his life, never shed so much human blood as these men shed during the first three months of the war. Nor did Napoleon.

All through the ages we have looked to the butchering class to devise means to end butchery. We should no longer look to the butchers—we should look to ourselves.

If civilization is to endure, the working class cannot forever be kept upon the operating table.

The working class must set its face against the farce of a peace tribunal housed in a palace built from the profits on armor plate—a peace tribunal that can prevent all wars except little wars, medium-sized wars and big wars.

The working class must sweep aside these qualified opponents of war and station its own huge bulk in their place.

We do not depend upon burglars to frame our statutes against burglary—why should we depend upon capitalists to bring peace and keep peace?

]The only peace these creatures bring to us is the peace of death.

Instead of balm, they give us bombs. After worship, they give us warships.]To end war they are willing to do almost anything except to keep the peace. The net result of all their efforts in our behalf is the European war of 1914—the greatest calamity that ever befell the human race.

Yet it would not be accurate to charge that the capitalist peace movement is sheer hypocrisy. It is sincere as far as it goes. It fails only because most of the men behind it want peace with a proviso—peace always if it can be had without detriment to profits; peace always for neighboring nations whose quarrels are without interest to their neighbors; but peace never when the ruling class of a nation believes it can accomplish its purposes in no other way.

A program will now be presented which, if adopted, would bring to the world peace without a proviso—peace without end.

It is not a program that the butchers will approve.

It is not a program based upon a plan that has failed.

It is a program based upon the needs of the working