

# What Is a "Liberal?"

The two most violent attacks on the liberals who followed the banner of President Wilson in supporting the American cause in the great war which have yet appeared are *Liberalism in America*, by Harold Stearns, and *Untimely Papers*, by the late Randolph Bourne. Both books assume, without attempting to prove, that no consistent liberal could support the war and insist that those who did forever lost caste among progressives; having forfeited their birthright by succumbing to "war hysteria." Mr. Stearns even permits himself the unjust and ungenerous remark (p. 112) that the pro-war Socialists—he mentions particularly Messrs. Walling, Russell and Spargo—were conscious hypocrites and took the stand they did in the interest of "press

clippings" and greed for popularity. He is not satisfied with calling his opponents fools and traitors for being unable to stomach German or Bolshevik tyranny; he must also call them cowards and knaves. This does not seem to us the true spirit of liberalism!

Mr. Bourne's book, with an identical thesis, is written in a more philosophic mood. He, too, attacks individual liberals who were not neutralist during the war, notably Professor Dewey of Columbia; but his attack is made in sorrow rather than in anger. It is the book of a too sensitive spirit, dying brokenhearted in a world that seemed hopelessly insane and misdirected. Whatever we may think of the substance of these essays there can be no question of the delicate beauty of their expression or the evidence they give of the patrician dignity and courage which marked the author's personality.

*Liberalism in America*, by Harold Stearns.  
Boni and Liveright. *Untimely Papers*, by  
Randolph Bourne. Huebsch.