



THE ANTIWAR CLASSIC BY
AMERICA'S MOST DECORATED SOLDIER

WAR IS A RACKET

BRIGADIER GENERAL SMEDLEY D. BUTLER
INTRODUCTION BY ADAM PARFREY

*I spent 33 years in the Marines, most of my time being a
high-class muscle-man for big business, for Wall Street and
the bankers. In short, I was a racketeer for Capitalism.
—from War Is a Racket*

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War Is A Racket

By Major General Smedley Butler

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Born: West Chester, Pa., July 30, 1881

Educated: Haverford School

Married: Ethel C. Peters, of Philadelphia, June 30, 1905

Awarded two congressional medals of honor:

1. capture of Vera Cruz, Mexico, 1914

2. capture of Ft. Riviere, Haiti, 1917

Distinguished service medal, 1919

Major General - United States Marine Corps

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Lecturer -- 1930's

Republican Candidate for Senate, 1932

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CHAPTER ONE

War Is A Racket

WAR is a racket. It always has been.

It is possibly the oldest, easily the most profitable, surely the most vicious. It is the only one

international in scope. It is the only one in which the profits are reckoned in dollars and the

losses in lives.

A racket is best described, I believe, as something that is not what it seems to the majority of

the people. Only a small "inside" group knows what it is about. It is conducted for the benefit

of the very few, at the expense of the very many. Out of war a few people make huge

fortunes.

In the World War [I] a mere handful garnered the profits of the conflict. At least 21,000 new

millionaires and billionaires were made in the United States during the World War. That

many admitted their huge blood gains in their income tax returns. How many other war

millionaires falsified their tax returns no one knows.

How many of these war millionaires shouldered a rifle? How many of them dug a trench?

How many of them knew what it meant to go hungry in a rat-infested dug-out? How many of

them spent sleepless, frightened nights, ducking shells and shrapnel and machine gun

bullets? How many of them parried a bayonet thrust of an enemy? How many of them were

wounded or killed in battle?

Out of war nations acquire additional territory, if they are victorious. They just take it. This

newly acquired territory promptly is exploited by the few -- the selfsame few who wrung

dollars out of blood in the war. The general public shoulders the bill.

And what is this bill?

This bill renders a horrible accounting. Newly placed gravestones. Mangled bodies.

Shattered minds. Broken hearts and homes. Economic instability. Depression and all its

attendant miseries. Back-breaking taxation for generations and generations.

For a great many years, as a soldier, I had a suspicion that war was a racket; not until I

retired to civil life did I fully realize it. Now that I see the international war clouds gathering,

as they are today, I must face it and speak out.

Again they are choosing sides. France and Russia met and agreed to stand side by side. Italy

and Austria hurried to make a similar agreement. Poland and Germany cast sheep's eyes at

each other, forgetting for the nonce [one unique occasion], their dispute over the Polish

Corridor.

The assassination of King Alexander of Yugoslavia [Yugoslavia] complicated matters.

Yugoslavia and Hungary, long bitter enemies, were almost at each other's throats. Italy was

ready to jump in. But France was waiting. So was Czechoslovakia. All of them are looking

ahead to war. Not the people -- not those who fight and pay and die -- only those who foment

wars and remain safely at home to profit.

There are 40,000,000 men under arms in the world today, and our statesmen and diplomats

have the temerity to say that war is not in the making.

Hell's bells! Are these 40,000,000 men being trained to be dancers?

Not in Italy, to be sure. Premier Mussolini knows what they are being trained for. He, at

least, is frank enough to speak out. Only the other day, Il Duce in "International

Conciliation," the publication of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, said:

"And above all, Fascism, the more it considers and observes the future and the development of

humanity quite apart from political considerations of the moment, believes neither in the

possibility nor the utility of perpetual peace. . . . War alone brings up to its highest tension all

human energy and puts the stamp of nobility upon the people who have the courage to meet it."

Undoubtedly Mussolini means exactly what he says. His well-trained army, his great fleet of

planes, and even his navy are ready for war -- anxious for it, apparently. His recent stand at

the side of Hungary in the latter's dispute with Yugoslavia showed that. And the hurried

mobilization of his troops on the Austrian border after the assassination of Dollfuss showed

it too. There are others in Europe too whose sabre rattling presages war, sooner or later.

Herr Hitler, with his rearming Germany and his constant demands for more and more arms,

is an equal if not greater menace to peace. France only recently increased the term of

military service for its youth from a year to eighteen months.

Yes, all over, nations are camping in their arms. The mad dogs of Europe are on the loose. In

the Orient the maneuvering is more adroit. Back in 1904, when Russia and Japan fought, we

kicked out our old friends the Russians and backed Japan. Then our very generous international bankers were financing Japan. Now the trend is to poison us against the

Japanese. What does the "open door" policy to China mean to us? Our trade with China is

about \$90,000,000 a year. Or the Philippine Islands? We have spent about \$600,000,000 in

the Philippines in thirty-five years and we (our bankers and industrialists and speculators)

have private investments there of less than \$200,000,000.

Then, to save that China trade of about \$90,000,000, or to protect these private investments

of less than \$200,000,000 in the Philippines, we would be all stirred up to hate Japan and go

to war -- a war that might well cost us tens of billions of dollars, hundreds of thousands of

lives of Americans, and many more hundreds of thousands of physically maimed and

mentally unbalanced men.

Of course, for this loss, there would be a compensating profit -- fortunes would be made.

Millions and billions of dollars would be piled up. By a few. Munitions makers. Bankers.

Ship builders. Manufacturers. Meat packers. Speculators. They would fare well.

Yes, they are getting ready for another war. Why shouldn't they? It pays high dividends.

But what does it profit the men who are killed? What does it profit their mothers and sisters,

their wives and their sweethearts? What does it profit their children?

What does it profit anyone except the very few to whom war means huge profits?

Yes, and what does it profit the nation?

Take our own case. Until 1898 we didn't own a bit of territory outside the mainland of North

America. At that time our national debt was a little more than \$1,000,000,000. Then we

became "internationally minded." We forgot, or shunted aside, the advice of the Father of

our country. We forgot George Washington's warning about "entangling alliances." We went

to war. We acquired outside territory. At the end of the World War period, as a direct result

of our fiddling in international affairs, our national debt had jumped to over

\$25,000,000,000. Our total favorable trade balance during the twenty-five-year period was

about \$24,000,000,000. Therefore, on a purely bookkeeping basis, we ran a little behind year

for year, and that foreign trade might well have been ours without the wars.

It would have been far cheaper (not to say safer) for the average American who pays the bills

to stay out of foreign entanglements. For a very few this racket, like bootlegging and other

underworld rackets, brings fancy profits, but the cost of operations is always transferred to

the people -- who do not profit.

CHAPTER TWO

Who Makes The Profits?

The World War, rather our brief participation in it, has cost the United States some

\$52,000,000,000. Figure it out. That means \$400 to every American man, woman, and child.

And we haven't paid the debt yet. We are paying it, our children will pay it, and our children's children probably still will be paying the cost of that war.

The normal profits of a business concern in the United States are six, eight, ten, and sometimes twelve percent. But war-time profits -- ah! that is another matter -- twenty, sixty,

one hundred, three hundred, and even eighteen hundred per cent -- the sky is the limit. All

that traffic will bear. Uncle Sam has the money. Let's get it.

Of course, it isn't put that crudely in war time. It is dressed into speeches about patriotism,

love of country, and "we must all put our shoulders to the wheel," but the profits jump and

leap and skyrocket -- and are safely pocketed. Let's just take a few examples:

Take our friends the du Ponts, the powder people -- didn't one of them testify before a

Senate committee recently that their powder won the war? Or saved the world for democracy? Or something? How did they do in the war? They were a patriotic corporation.

Well, the average earnings of the du Ponts for the period 1910 to 1914 were \$6,000,000 a

year. It wasn't much, but the du Ponts managed to get along on it. Now let's look at their

average yearly profit during the war years, 1914 to 1918. Fifty-eight million dollars a year

profit we find! Nearly ten times that of normal times, and the profits of normal times were

pretty good. An increase in profits of more than 950 per cent.

Take one of our little steel companies that patriotically shunted aside the making of rails and

girders and bridges to manufacture war materials. Well, their 1910-1914 yearly earnings

averaged \$6,000,000. Then came the war. And, like loyal citizens, Bethlehem Steel promptly

turned to munitions making. Did their profits jump -- or did they let Uncle Sam in for a

bargain? Well, their 1914-1918 average was \$49,000,000 a year!

Or, let's take United States Steel. The normal earnings during the five-year period prior to

the war were \$105,000,000 a year. Not bad. Then along came the war and up went the

profits. The average yearly profit for the period 1914-1918 was \$240,000,000. Not bad.

There you have some of the steel and powder earnings. Let's look at something else. A little

copper, perhaps. That always does well in war times.

Anaconda, for instance. Average yearly earnings during the pre-war years 1910-1914 of

\$10,000,000. During the war years 1914-1918 profits leaped to \$34,000,000 per year.

Or Utah Copper. Average of \$5,000,000 per year during the 1910-1914 period. Jumped to an

average of \$21,000,000 yearly profits for the war period.

Let's group these five, with three smaller companies. The total yearly average profits of the

pre-war period 1910-1914 were \$137,480,000. Then along came the war. The average yearly

profits for this group skyrocketed to \$408,300,000.

A little increase in profits of approximately 200 per cent.

Does war pay? It paid them. But they aren't the only ones. There are still others. Let's take

leather.

For the three-year period before the war the total profits of Central Leather Company were

\$3,500,000. That was approximately \$1,167,000 a year. Well, in 1916 Central Leather

returned a profit of \$15,000,000, a small increase of 1,100 per cent. That's all. The General

Chemical Company averaged a profit for the three years before the war of a little over

\$800,000 a year. Came the war, and the profits jumped to \$12,000,000. a leap of 1,400 per

cent.

International Nickel Company -- and you can't have a war without nickel -- showed an

increase in profits from a mere average of \$4,000,000 a year to \$73,000,000 yearly. Not bad?

An increase of more than 1,700 per cent.

American Sugar Refining Company averaged \$2,000,000 a year for the three years before

the war. In 1916 a profit of \$6,000,000 was recorded.

Listen to Senate Document No. 259. The Sixty-Fifth Congress, reporting on corporate

earnings and government revenues. Considering the profits of 122 meat packers, 153 cotton

manufacturers, 299 garment makers, 49 steel plants, and 340 coal producers during the war.

Profits under 25 per cent were exceptional. For instance the coal companies made between

100 per cent and 7,856 per cent on their capital stock during the war. The Chicago packers

doubled and tripled their earnings.

And let us not forget the bankers who financed the great war. If anyone had the cream of the

profits it was the bankers. Being partnerships rather than incorporated organizations, they do

not have to report to stockholders. And their profits were as secret as they were immense.

How the bankers made their millions and their billions I do not know, because those little

secrets never become public -- even before a Senate investigatory body.

But here's how some of the other patriotic industrialists and speculators chiseled their way

into war profits.

Take the shoe people. They like war. It brings business with abnormal profits. They made

huge profits on sales abroad to our allies. Perhaps, like the munitions manufacturers and

armament makers, they also sold to the enemy. For a dollar is a dollar whether it comes from

Germany or from France. But they did well by Uncle Sam too. For instance, they sold Uncle

Sam 35,000,000 pairs of hobnailed service shoes. There were 4,000,000 soldiers. Eight pairs,

and more, to a soldier. My regiment during the war had only one pair to a soldier. Some of

these shoes probably are still in existence. They were good shoes. But when the war was

over Uncle Sam has a matter of 25,000,000 pairs left over. Bought -- and paid for. Profits

recorded and pocketed.

There was still lots of leather left. So the leather people sold your Uncle Sam hundreds of

thousands of McClellan saddles for the cavalry. But there wasn't any American cavalry

overseas! Somebody had to get rid of this leather, however. Somebody had to make a profit

in it -- so we had a lot of McClellan saddles. And we probably have those yet.

Also somebody had a lot of mosquito netting. They sold your Uncle Sam 20,000,000

mosquito nets for the use of the soldiers overseas. I suppose the boys were expected to put it

over them as they tried to sleep in muddy trenches -- one hand scratching cooties on their

backs and the other making passes at scurrying rats. Well, not one of these mosquito nets

ever got to France!

Anyhow, these thoughtful manufacturers wanted to make sure that no soldier would be

without his mosquito net, so 40,000,000 additional yards of mosquito netting were sold to

Uncle Sam.

There were pretty good profits in mosquito netting in those days, even if there were no

mosquitoes in France. I suppose, if the war had lasted just a little longer, the enterprising

mosquito netting manufacturers would have sold your Uncle Sam a couple of consignments

of mosquitoes to plant in France so that more mosquito netting would be in order.

Airplane and engine manufacturers felt they, too, should get their just profits out of this war.

Why not? Everybody else was getting theirs. So \$1,000,000,000 -- count them if you live

long enough -- was spent by Uncle Sam in building airplane engines that never left the

ground! Not one plane, or motor, out of the billion dollars worth ordered, ever got into a

battle in France. Just the same the manufacturers made their little profit of 30, 100, or

perhaps 300 per cent.

Undershirts for soldiers cost 14¢ [cents] to make and uncle Sam paid 30¢ to 40¢ each for

them -- a nice little profit for the undershirt manufacturer. And the stocking manufacturer

and the uniform manufacturers and the cap manufacturers and the steel helmet manufacturers

-- all got theirs.

Why, when the war was over some 4,000,000 sets of equipment -- knapsacks and the things

that go to fill them -- crammed warehouses on this side. Now they are being scrapped

because the regulations have changed the contents. But the manufacturers collected their

wartime profits on them -- and they will do it all over again the next time.

There were lots of brilliant ideas for profit making during the war.

One very versatile patriot sold Uncle Sam twelve dozen 48-inch wrenches. Oh, they were

very nice wrenches. The only trouble was that there was only one nut ever made that was

large enough for these wrenches. That is the one that holds the turbines at Niagara Falls.

Well, after Uncle Sam had bought them and the manufacturer had pocketed the profit, the

wrenches were put on freight cars and shunted all around the United States in an effort to

find a use for them. When the Armistice was signed it was indeed a sad blow to the wrench

manufacturer. He was just about to make some nuts to fit the wrenches. Then he planned to

sell these, too, to your Uncle Sam.

Still another had the brilliant idea that colonels shouldn't ride in automobiles, nor should

they even ride on horseback. One has probably seen a picture of Andy Jackson riding in a

buckboard. Well, some 6,000 buckboards were sold to Uncle Sam for the use of colonels!

Not one of them was used. But the buckboard manufacturer got his war profit.

The shipbuilders felt they should come in on some of it, too. They built a lot of ships that

made a lot of profit. More than \$3,000,000,000 worth. Some of the ships were all right. But

\$635,000,000 worth of them were made of wood and wouldn't float! The seams opened up

-- and they sank. We paid for them, though. And somebody pocketed the profits.

It has been estimated by statisticians and economists and researchers that the war cost your

Uncle Sam \$52,000,000,000. Of this sum, \$39,000,000,000 was expended in the actual war

itself. This expenditure yielded \$16,000,000,000 in profits. That is how the 21,000

billionaires and millionaires got that way. This \$16,000,000,000 profits is not to be sneezed

at. It is quite a tidy sum. And it went to a very few.

The Senate (Nye) committee probe of the munitions industry and its wartime profits, despite

its sensational disclosures, hardly has scratched the surface.

Even so, it has had some effect. The State Department has been studying "for some time"

methods of keeping out of war. The War Department suddenly decides it has a wonderful

plan to spring. The Administration names a committee -- with the War and Navy

Departments ably represented under the chairmanship of a Wall Street speculator -- to limit

profits in war time. To what extent isn't suggested. Hmmm. Possibly the profits of 300 and

600 and 1,600 per cent of those who turned blood into gold in the World War would be

limited to some smaller figure.

Apparently, however, the plan does not call for any limitation of losses -- that is, the losses

of those who fight the war. As far as I have been able to ascertain there is nothing in the

scheme to limit a soldier to the loss of but one eye, or one arm, or to limit his wounds to one

or two or three. Or to limit the loss of life.

There is nothing in this scheme, apparently, that says not more than 12 per cent of a regiment

shall be wounded in battle, or that not more than 7 per cent in a division shall be killed.

Of course, the committee cannot be bothered with such trifling matters.

CHAPTER THREE

Who Pays The Bills?

Who provides the profits -- these nice little profits of 20, 100, 300, 1,500 and 1,800 per cent?

We all pay them -- in taxation. We paid the bankers their profits when we bought Liberty

Bonds at \$100.00 and sold them back at \$84 or \$86 to the bankers. These bankers collected

\$100 plus. It was a simple manipulation. The bankers control the security marts. It was easy

for them to depress the price of these bonds. Then all of us -- the people -- got frightened and

sold the bonds at \$84 or \$86. The bankers bought them. Then these same bankers stimulated

a boom and government bonds went to par -- and above. Then the bankers collected their

profits.

But the soldier pays the biggest part of the bill.

If you don't believe this, visit the American cemeteries on the battlefields abroad. Or visit

any of the veteran's hospitals in the United States. On a tour of the country, in the midst of

which I am at the time of this writing, I have visited eighteen government hospitals for

veterans. In them are a total of about 50,000 destroyed men -- men who were the pick of the

nation eighteen years ago. The very able chief surgeon at the government hospital; at

Milwaukee, where there are 3,800 of the living dead, told me that mortality among veterans

is three times as great as among those who stayed at home.

Boys with a normal viewpoint were taken out of the fields and offices and factories and

classrooms and put into the ranks. There they were remolded; they were made over; they

were made to "about face"; to regard murder as the order of the day. They were put shoulder

to shoulder and, through mass psychology, they were entirely changed. We used them for a

couple of years and trained them to think nothing at all of killing or of being killed.

Then, suddenly, we discharged them and told them to make another "about face" !
This time

they had to do their own readjustment, sans [without] mass psychology, sans
officers' aid

and advice and sans nation-wide propaganda. We didn't need them any more. So
we

scattered them about without any "three-minute" or "Liberty Loan" speeches or
parades.

Many, too many, of these fine young boys are eventually destroyed, mentally,
because they

could not make that final "about face" alone.

In the government hospital in Marion, Indiana, 1,800 of these boys are in pens! Five
hundred

of them in a barracks with steel bars and wires all around outside the buildings and
on the

porches. These already have been mentally destroyed. These boys don't even look
like

human beings. Oh, the looks on their faces! Physically, they are in good shape;
mentally,

they are gone.

There are thousands and thousands of these cases, and more and more are coming in
all the

time. The tremendous excitement of the war, the sudden cutting off of that
excitement -- the

young boys couldn't stand it.

That's a part of the bill. So much for the dead -- they have paid their part of the war
profits.

So much for the mentally and physically wounded -- they are paying now their
share of the

war profits. But the others paid, too -- they paid with heartbreaks when they tore
themselves

away from their firesides and their families to don the uniform of Uncle Sam -- on which a

profit had been made. They paid another part in the training camps where they were regimented and drilled while others took their jobs and their places in the lives of their

communities. They paid for it in the trenches where they shot and were shot; where they were

hungry for days at a time; where they slept in the mud and the cold and in the rain -- with the

moans and shrieks of the dying for a horrible lullaby.

But don't forget -- the soldier paid part of the dollars and cents bill too.

Up to and including the Spanish-American War, we had a prize system, and soldiers and

sailors fought for money. During the Civil War they were paid bonuses, in many instances,

before they went into service. The government, or states, paid as high as \$1,200 for an

enlistment. In the Spanish-American War they gave prize money. When we captured any

vessels, the soldiers all got their share -- at least, they were supposed to. Then it was found

that we could reduce the cost of wars by taking all the prize money and keeping it, but

conscripting [drafting] the soldier anyway. Then soldiers couldn't bargain for their labor,

Everyone else could bargain, but the soldier couldn't.

Napoleon once said,

"All men are enamored of decorations . . . they positively hunger for them."

So by developing the Napoleonic system -- the medal business -- the government learned it

could get soldiers for less money, because the boys liked to be decorated. Until the Civil War

there were no medals. Then the Congressional Medal of Honor was handed out. It made

enlistments easier. After the Civil War no new medals were issued until the Spanish-American War.

In the World War, we used propaganda to make the boys accept conscription. They were

made to feel ashamed if they didn't join the army.

So vicious was this war propaganda that even God was brought into it. With few exceptions

our clergymen joined in the clamor to kill, kill, kill. To kill the Germans. God is on our side .

. . it is His will that the Germans be killed.

And in Germany, the good pastors called upon the Germans to kill the allies . . . to please the

same God. That was a part of the general propaganda, built up to make people war conscious

and murder conscious.

Beautiful ideals were painted for our boys who were sent out to die. This was the "war to end

all wars." This was the "war to make the world safe for democracy." No one mentioned to

them, as they marched away, that their going and their dying would mean huge war profits.

No one told these American soldiers that they might be shot down by bullets made by their

own brothers here. No one told them that the ships on which they were going to cross might

be torpedoed by submarines built with United States patents. They were just told it was to be

a "glorious adventure."

Thus, having stuffed patriotism down their throats, it was decided to make them help pay for

the war, too. So, we gave them the large salary of \$30 a month.

All they had to do for this munificent sum was to leave their dear ones behind, give up their

jobs, lie in swampy trenches, eat canned willy (when they could get it) and kill and kill and

kill . . . and be killed.

But wait!

Half of that wage (just a little more than a riveter in a shipyard or a laborer in a munitions

factory safe at home made in a day) was promptly taken from him to support his dependents,

so that they would not become a charge upon his community. Then we made him pay what

amounted to accident insurance -- something the employer pays for in an enlightened state --

and that cost him \$6 a month. He had less than \$9 a month left.

Then, the most crowning insolence of all -- he was virtually blackjacked into paying for his

own ammunition, clothing, and food by being made to buy Liberty Bonds. Most soldiers got

no money at all on pay days.

We made them buy Liberty Bonds at \$100 and then we bought them back -- when they came

back from the war and couldn't find work -- at \$84 and \$86. And the soldiers bought about

\$2,000,000,000 worth of these bonds!

Yes, the soldier pays the greater part of the bill. His family pays too. They pay it in the same

heart-break that he does. As he suffers, they suffer. At nights, as he lay in the trenches and

watched shrapnel burst about him, they lay home in their beds and tossed sleeplessly -- his

father, his mother, his wife, his sisters, his brothers, his sons, and his daughters.

When he returned home minus an eye, or minus a leg or with his mind broken, they suffered

too -- as much as and even sometimes more than he. Yes, and they, too, contributed their

dollars to the profits of the munitions makers and bankers and shipbuilders and the

manufacturers and the speculators made. They, too, bought Liberty Bonds and contributed to

the profit of the bankers after the Armistice in the hocus-pocus of manipulated Liberty Bond

prices.

And even now the families of the wounded men and of the mentally broken and those who

never were able to readjust themselves are still suffering and still paying.

CHAPTER FOUR

How To Smash This Racket!

WELL, it's a racket, all right.

A few profit -- and the many pay. But there is a way to stop it. You can't end it by disarmament conferences. You can't eliminate it by peace parleys at Geneva. Well-meaning

but impractical groups can't wipe it out by resolutions. It can be smashed effectively only by

taking the profit out of war.

The only way to smash this racket is to conscript capital and industry and labor before the

nations manhood can be conscripted. One month before the Government can conscript the

young men of the nation -- it must conscript capital and industry and labor. Let the officers

and the directors and the high-powered executives of our armament factories and our

munitions makers and our shipbuilders and our airplane builders and the manufacturers of all

the other things that provide profit in war time as well as the bankers and the speculators, be

conscripted -- to get \$30 a month, the same wage as the lads in the trenches get.

Let the workers in these plants get the same wages -- all the workers, all presidents, all

executives, all directors, all managers, all bankers -- yes, and all generals and all admirals

and all officers and all politicians and all government office holders -- everyone in the nation

be restricted to a total monthly income not to exceed that paid to the soldier in the trenches!

Let all these kings and tycoons and masters of business and all those workers in industry and

all our senators and governors and majors pay half of their monthly \$30 wage to their

families and pay war risk insurance and buy Liberty Bonds.

Why shouldn't they?

They aren't running any risk of being killed or of having their bodies mangled or their minds

shattered. They aren't sleeping in muddy trenches. They aren't hungry. The soldiers are!

Give capital and industry and labor thirty days to think it over and you will find, by that time,

there will be no war. That will smash the war racket -- that and nothing else.

Maybe I am a little too optimistic. Capital still has some say. So capital won't permit the

taking of the profit out of war until the people -- those who do the suffering and still pay the

price -- make up their minds that those they elect to office shall do their bidding, and not that

of the profiteers.

Another step necessary in this fight to smash the war racket is the limited plebiscite to

determine whether a war should be declared. A plebiscite not of all the voters but merely of

those who would be called upon to do the fighting and dying. There wouldn't be very much

sense in having a 76-year-old president of a munitions factory or the flat-footed head of an

international banking firm or the cross-eyed manager of a uniform manufacturing plant -- all

of whom see visions of tremendous profits in the event of war -- voting on whether the

nation should go to war or not. They never would be called upon to shoulder arms -- to sleep

in a trench and to be shot. Only those who would be called upon to risk their lives for their

country should have the privilege of voting to determine whether the nation should go to

war.

There is ample precedent for restricting the voting to those affected. Many of our states have

restrictions on those permitted to vote. In most, it is necessary to be able to read and write

before you may vote. In some, you must own property. It would be a simple matter each year

for the men coming of military age to register in their communities as they did in the draft

during the World War and be examined physically. Those who could pass and who would

therefore be called upon to bear arms in the event of war would be eligible to vote in a

limited plebiscite. They should be the ones to have the power to decide -- and not a Congress

few of whose members are within the age limit and fewer still of whom are in physical

condition to bear arms. Only those who must suffer should have the right to vote.

A third step in this business of smashing the war racket is to make certain that our military

forces are truly forces for defense only.

At each session of Congress the question of further naval appropriations comes up. The

swivel-chair admirals of Washington (and there are always a lot of them) are very adroit

lobbyists. And they are smart. They don't shout that "We need a lot of battleships to war on

this nation or that nation." Oh no. First of all, they let it be known that America is menaced

by a great naval power. Almost any day, these admirals will tell you, the great fleet of this

supposed enemy will strike suddenly and annihilate 125,000,000 people. Just like that. Then

they begin to cry for a larger navy. For what? To fight the enemy? Oh my, no. Oh, no. For

defense purposes only.

Then, incidentally, they announce maneuvers in the Pacific. For defense. Uh, huh.

The Pacific is a great big ocean. We have a tremendous coastline on the Pacific. Will the

maneuvers be off the coast, two or three hundred miles? Oh, no. The maneuvers will be two

thousand, yes, perhaps even thirty-five hundred miles, off the coast.

The Japanese, a proud people, of course will be pleased beyond expression to see the united

States fleet so close to Nippon's shores. Even as pleased as would be the residents of

California were they to dimly discern through the morning mist, the Japanese fleet playing at

war games off Los Angeles.

The ships of our navy, it can be seen, should be specifically limited, by law, to within 200

miles of our coastline. Had that been the law in 1898 the Maine would never have gone to

Havana Harbor. She never would have been blown up. There would have been no war with

Spain with its attendant loss of life. Two hundred miles is ample, in the opinion of experts,

for defense purposes. Our nation cannot start an offensive war if its ships can't go further

than 200 miles from the coastline. Planes might be permitted to go as far as 500 miles from

the coast for purposes of reconnaissance. And the army should never leave the territorial

limits of our nation.

To summarize: Three steps must be taken to smash the war racket.

1. We must take the profit out of war.

2. We must permit the youth of the land who would bear arms to decide whether or not

there should be war.

3. We must limit our military forces to home defense purposes.

CHAPTER FIVE

To Hell With War!

I am not a fool as to believe that war is a thing of the past. I know the people do not want

war, but there is no use in saying we cannot be pushed into another war.

Looking back, Woodrow Wilson was re-elected president in 1916 on a platform that he had

"kept us out of war" and on the implied promise that he would "keep us out of war." Yet,

five months later he asked Congress to declare war on Germany.

In that five-month interval the people had not been asked whether they had changed their

minds. The 4,000,000 young men who put on uniforms and marched or sailed away were not

asked whether they wanted to go forth to suffer and die.

Then what caused our government to change its mind so suddenly?

Money.

An allied commission, it may be recalled, came over shortly before the war declaration and

called on the President. The President summoned a group of advisers. The head of the

commission spoke. Stripped of its diplomatic language, this is what he told the President and

his group:

"There is no use kidding ourselves any longer. The cause of the allies is lost. We now owe you

(American bankers, American munitions makers, American manufacturers, American

speculators, American exporters) five or six billion dollars.

If we lose (and without the help of the United States we must lose) we, England, France and

Italy, cannot pay back this money . . . and Germany won't.

So . . . "

Had secrecy been outlawed as far as war negotiations were concerned, and had the press

been invited to be present at that conference, or had radio been available to broadcast the

proceedings, America never would have entered the World War. But this conference, like all

war discussions, was shrouded in utmost secrecy. When our boys were sent off to war they

were told it was a "war to make the world safe for democracy" and a "war to end all wars."

Well, eighteen years after, the world has less of democracy than it had then. Besides, what

business is it of ours whether Russia or Germany or England or France or Italy or Austria

live under democracies or monarchies? Whether they are Fascists or Communists? Our

problem is to preserve our own democracy.

And very little, if anything, has been accomplished to assure us that the World War was

really the war to end all wars.

Yes, we have had disarmament conferences and limitations of arms conferences. They don't

mean a thing. One has just failed; the results of another have been nullified. We send our

professional soldiers and our sailors and our politicians and our diplomats to these conferences. And what happens?

The professional soldiers and sailors don't want to disarm. No admiral wants to be without a

ship. No general wants to be without a command. Both mean men without jobs. They are not

for disarmament. They cannot be for limitations of arms. And at all these conferences,

lurking in the background but all-powerful, just the same, are the sinister agents of those who

profit by war. They see to it that these conferences do not disarm or seriously limit armaments.

The chief aim of any power at any of these conferences has not been to achieve disarmament

to prevent war but rather to get more armament for itself and less for any potential foe.

There is only one way to disarm with any semblance of practicability. That is for all nations

to get together and scrap every ship, every gun, every rifle, every tank, every war plane.

Even this, if it were possible, would not be enough.

The next war, according to experts, will be fought not with battleships, not by artillery, not

with rifles and not with machine guns. It will be fought with deadly chemicals and gases.

Secretly each nation is studying and perfecting newer and ghastlier means of annihilating its

foes wholesale. Yes, ships will continue to be built, for the shipbuilders must make their

profits. And guns still will be manufactured and powder and rifles will be made, for the

munitions makers must make their huge profits. And the soldiers, of course, must wear

uniforms, for the manufacturer must make their war profits too.

But victory or defeat will be determined by the skill and ingenuity of our scientists.

If we put them to work making poison gas and more and more fiendish mechanical and

explosive instruments of destruction, they will have no time for the constructive job of

building greater prosperity for all peoples. By putting them to this useful job, we can all

make more money out of peace than we can out of war -- even the munitions makers.

So...I say,

TO HELL WITH WAR!

<http://www.ratical.org/ratville/CAH/warisaracket.html>