

Welcome — Soldiers and Sailors!

By Eadmonn MacAlpine

WHEN the United States entered the war the problem of withdrawing two million men from industry was one of the vital topics of the day. Many suggestions of more or less value were offered whereby this huge depletion of industry could be effected without throwing the whole industrial machinery out of gear. The army of unemployed, which is one of the concomitants of Capitalism, and the influx of women into industry, however, solved the problem without the aid of the experts. Nevertheless much ink was spilled and great anxiety for the welfare of the country was manifested.

But now that we are faced with the much greater problem of turning two million men back into industry the experts, for the most part, are silent and the newspapers and magazines are apparently ignorant of the entire subject. The soldier, who during the war was a hero, the idol of the crowd, the darling of the nation, has now become a disagreeable problem. He is no longer mentioned in polite society. After he has been brought back, paraded through the streets and showered with the verbal laurels, he is expected to return to the obscurity from which he sprang and to take his place in the ranks of the jobless, not as a returned soldier, wearing a uniform with service chevrons and would stripes on the sleeves, but as an ordinary member of the proletariat, who through hard luck is out of a job, to whom society owes nothing and who must expect nothing from society.

When he insists on looking for work in his uniform he is covertly reproached for his lack of taste, and when he very naturally replies that he is in uniform because he has no civilian clothes, society assumes an air of injured dignity and says "something must be done." The "something" usually takes the form of a charity bazaar or concert, and when it is found that the soldier cannot be comfortably disposed of in the same way as our industrial cripples—by relegation to an institution—society becomes very annoyed indeed and leaves him to his own resources.

It must not be assumed, however, that the returned soldier is not welcomed. On the contrary, he is very welcome. All the newspapers say so, electric signs blazon forth the fact to the world by night, while appropriately colored posters herald it by day. Every railroad in the country announces the fact; aldermanic resolutions inscribe it on city records; triumphal arches, monuments of the contractor's art, (and the bills for same, monuments to his imagination), establish it beyond dispute. There is no lack of the external symbols of welcome. And every succeeding troopship that reaches port is a signal for new parades. But after being welcomed the soldier is supposed to gracefully disappear.

When he sailed away to France, service flags were flung to the breeze. Every employer hung out a banner, the number of whose stars told the immensity of the sacrifice made by the firm in allowing its employes to march off to war, hired new employes and forgot about the matter until the casualty list caused the substitution of a gold star for one of the blue ones. Now the service flags have disappeared, and the suggestion that it should be replaced by a flag showing the number of returned soldiers reinstated in their old jobs is quietly ignored. The truth of the matter is that the employer, being first and last a business

man, does not want men who have developed the independence and self-reliance that comes to those who have stared death in the face.

The master dearly loves a willing slave, and the employe whose slave training is unbroken by adventure in foreign fields invariably proves the better servant. The man who has daily brushed shoulders with death is not likely to cower before a foreman's glance. And so the returned soldier's welcome ceases when he returns to civilian life and offers himself for sale in the labor market. He has been welcomed and feted and he must step down to make room for the next batch who will be welcomed and feted in its turn.

But the returned soldier must live, he must find employment, and what better occupation could he get than assisting in the welcome to his brothers in arms? A new industry is created by the spirit of welcome, flags and buttons proclaiming the welcome are manufactured and offered for sale. And who can refuse to buy from a soldier, especially if he has been wounded in the country's service? Here is the solution of the problem! Let the soldier sell the welcome buttons—the soldier is kept busy, the public is ashamed to refuse the salesman, and the manufacturer makes money.

Thus the streets of our cities are swarming with soldiers in uniform, offering gaudy buttons and bunting for sale. Fine up-standing fellows are reduced to street hawking, and street hawking is a hard job. The returns are small, the hours of work are long and the experience is humiliating. After a spell of this work the spirit is broken and the slave psychology again gains the ascendancy. Any job, where the begging element is absent, is welcome and the foreman's glance regains its old power.

It is only fair to give honor where honor is due, and some cities have attempted to make provision for the returned soldiers. New York is a notable example. The city fathers have decided that soldiers shall have precedence in the matter of licences for newstands, street corner stores, etc. The intensity of the scramble for a living is depended upon to render the soldier blind to the fact that in this manner old men and women will be deprived of their livelihood and the city fathers know that it is easier to deal with starving hawkers than with out-of-work soldiers.

The provisions made by a grateful country for its returned soldiers have not yet been exhausted. The sweep of revolution across the world has not left America unmoved. Labor is everywhere manifesting the spirit of unrest and strikes are a daily occurrence, so the soldier is offered the job of strike breaking. Himself suffering under the rule of the industrial barons the soldier is expected to jump at the offer of earning a few dollars by scabbing on his brother in industry who is in revolt against intolerable conditions. Being hardened in the fire of war the soldier is thought to be impervious to the plea of the women and children out of whose mouths he is to snatch the bread! This is the final insult heaped on the soldier by the professional patriots.

But the soldier has a better opinion of himself than

have his eulogizers. In almost every case he has refused to scab. A case in point is furnished in Holyoke, Massachusetts: In one of the shops 200 boiler-makers went on strike against a cut in wages. About thirty soldiers were sent to the plant from Springfield, a distance of about ten miles. When they arrived the strikers' pickets informed them that the shop was on strike, whereupon the soldiers unanimously refused to enter the premises, some of them, it is said, walking back to Springfield because they were unable to afford the carfare. Incidents of this kind are numerous and the evidence obtainable overwhelmingly proves that not only is the soldier unwilling to become a strike-breaker but he actively sympathizes with the strikers, going out on the picket lines with his former fellow workers, as in Butte, Seattle, Lawrence, Paterson, and Newark. In fact, the presence of soldiers in uniform on the picket lines has caused an order to be issued which amounts to prohibiting the soldier from striking or taking part in a strike in his capacity as a returned soldier.

So long, however, as the soldier acts as an individual, so long he will be subjected to these indignities; no matter how much he sympathizes with his brother in the shop he will be powerless to help him, no matter how pitiful is his own plight he will be powerless to help himself. The only solution is organization. But the organization must be along industrial lines, along the lines of his class. Societies similar to those formed by the veterans of other wars are worse than useless as they use the soldier against himself. Mutual admiration societies, however much they may pander to the vanity of the individual soldier, are a danger to his interests and invariably degenerate into a machine for utilizing his vote in the interests of a particular group of politicians.

The soldier and sailor must organize, not as heroes but as men. They must unite with the workers in industry. They must organize without any "letters patent" and they must themselves control the organization. They must recognize their citizenship, their basic unity of interest with their brothers in industry and they must unite their organization with that of the workers through Soldiers', Sailors' and Workers' Councils.

The bourgeois statesmen of the world have proved their inability to face the real problems arising out of the war, they have demonstrated their bankruptcy alike in power and ability. If the world is to be saved from future misery and chaos the proletariat must decide, and the soldiers and sailors are by no means the least important sections of the proletariat. Organization along the proper lines is the solution of the immediate problems facing the soldiers and sailors. If those who have already returned will form and perfect such organization they can assure their brothers in arms, who are yet across the seas, a real Welcome Home, a welcome in which the men and women in the workshops, factories, fields and mines—the men and women who want to welcome Jack and Bill and Tom—can join without the reservation caused by fear of unemployment in their hearts.

Lenin or Wilson — the Bourgeoisie Scents Danger

By Nicholas I. Hourwich

IF one could, for a moment, take himself to the skies and secure a bird's-eye view of the stormy, bloody struggle, the sufferings and tears that are agonizing our world, it would appear clearly as a struggle between Bolshevism and Capitalism—a deadly clash between the new, glorious proletarian-communist society towards which humanity is advancing, and the old rotting capitalist system which is desperately trying to save itself from destruction.

The ultimate result of this clash—which the bourgeois press, accustomed to think in terms of "great men," calls a struggle "between Lenin and Wilson"—is easily foretold. At this moment, the forces of the two opponents are almost equal; but the forces of one, the revolutionary proletariat, grow and multiply, while the forces of the other, Capitalism, are rapidly on the wane.

It is quite natural, accordingly, that a view of this great spectacle of struggle and revolution provokes a feeling of sadness in the bourgeois press.

Precisely this spirit is wafted from an editorial recently appearing in the big bourgeois paper, the *New York American*:

"The fate of the world is being decided not in Paris, but in Berlin." This is the tragic announcement, at the very beginning of the editorial. But as you may gain from a further reading of the editorial, and

particularly, if you are capable of reading between the lines—the real situation which evokes this spirit of resignation is that the "fate of the world" is being decided, not in Berlin, but in—Moscow. . . . Berlin, in this case, plays the part of a "dam" which holds back the Bolshevik revolutionary stream that threatens to flood the whole of Europe.

It is not surprising that the thought of the writer of the editorial runs ahead of events, and paints a lurid picture, full of horrors, of what may happen when "this last defense of Europe against anarchy" will be destroyed and "Prussia fall into the hands of the Reds."

And the picture, indeed, is a terrible one! . . . "The other governments of Europe will tumble in swift ruins. . . . It is impossible that either the French or Italian Governments can retain power over their proletariats if the resources and population of Germany and Austria are added to the vast territory and the millions of people over which the Red Flag now waves."

And, for the information of those who doubt that France and Italy might become "victims" of Bolshevism, the *American* says:

"Every well informed man knows that the Reds in

France and Italy and in England, too, are eagerly waiting to strike great blows for the International, and that the signal for these blows would be the Red Flag waving over Berlin and the message that the Red Armies of Russia, Prussia, Bavaria, Austria and Hungary were marching to the help of their comrades in Paris and in Rome."

"Red Flag and the Hymn of the International are neither one new to France or to Italy. And there are millions of Frenchmen and Italians ready to be led to march under the blood colored banner, singing the songs of revolution. . . ."

In horror at this picture painted by his imagination, the writer of the *American* editorial turns to the statesmen sitting at the Peace Conference in Paris with the appeal to lessen their bellicose spirit and spare "democratic Germany," and not to throw it into the embrace of the "reds" by too exacting and humiliating demands.

"Remember,"—the *American* cautions severely, but at the same time softly—"remember, if Berlin falls beneath the blows of Bolshevism, the Peace Conference will be lucky if it can find ships to carry its members away from Europe."

Have not these "words of caution" something to do with events at Murmansk among the American troops, and our own situation in this country?