

recognition of their services they received the congratulations of the Prime Minister.

The miners are determined to continue their strike in spite of their desertion. If their ranks hold firm, they will win the strike in the end, for many industries are already closing up throughout the country. But whether they win or lose, the Triple-Alliance will not survive this final treason of their leaders. Whatever happens, the Triple-Alliance is doomed.

The old-line reactionary leaders must go. They have shown once too often that their loyalty goes out to the master class. The correctness of the position of the Third International in demanding the exclusion of those leaders who have proven their unfitness to enter the ranks of the Communist International because of their open treason or because of their unreliability at a crisis, could not have been demonstrated more forcibly. Cast out the traitors in the ranks of labor! They are the most dangerous enemies of the working class.

### THE GREAT VIRTUE OF FRANKNESS

Whatever complaints may be brought against the Harding administration in years to come, that anybody will be able to accuse it of surrounding itself with a cloak of moral righteousness seems the least probable. The honorable gentlemen who, since the 4th of March, have been holding sway in Washington are refreshingly frank, and if in these sad and dreary times we can find nothing else to rejoice at, surely we should turn somersaults of joy to think that the days of unctuous Wilsonian rhetoric belong definitely to the past.

Harding's message to Congress and the first diplomatic notes of Secretary Hughes reassured us on this score. The President evidently doesn't believe in superfluous verbiage. Everybody knows what he thinks and what he is about. So why attempt philosophical dissertations or learned ethical essays? True, he is not, like his predecessor, so generously endowed with the gift of language, but the real reason for his abstinence is that he is wise enough not to consider the mass of the people as more stupid than himself. Hence he declares very simply and openly, without any superfluous idealistic camouflage, that the United States will conclude only such a peace with Germany as shall assure the essential and desired advantages to Uncle Sam. There will not be any separate peace, even though it was as good as promised to the German voters by Viereck & Co., who marshalled them into the Harding camp. The Versailles peace of coercion and violence will serve as a peace basis for America as well as for the rest of the conquering nations, even though, in their election campaign, the Republicans had—for the purpose of catching votes—gone out of their way to create the impression that a Republican administration would never pledge itself to such a thing. In short, as far as peace is concerned, it now appears that the present administration is bringing out the same old Wilsonian mare, only without the trappings of the great "peacemaker" himself.

As for the League of Nations, however, the United States shall have nothing to do with it. As it happens, in this case an election promise is actually being fulfilled. Only with the dissolution of the League can America be sure of occupying a position in accordance with her ideals. For the League is not an "instrument of peace," on the contrary, its purpose is oppression and the continuance of wars. Therefore, what the White House desires is an "Association of Powers." At this point the President withholds the real reason, which, however, is not hard to find. For if the League should continue to exist it would be particularly difficult to gather in again all the nice gifts with which the great Allied Powers—England, France, Italy and Japan—presented one another. Harding and his advisers want an "Association of Powers" instead of a "League of Nations," because the League through its various executive and other committees undertook a division of the spoils of war without consulting the United States. A redistribution of these "mandates," spheres of influence, colonies, territorial adjustments, and whatever other terms there may be to characterize the plunder and booty of imperialistic war, can be enforced only by means of an entirely new organization of forces. Hence the demand for the unceremonious burial of the League and its resurrection under another name and with aims and purposes very similar in character to those of the old concern, only nearer to "our" heart's desire.

But the Hughes notes are even franker if anything than the congressional message of the President. In these notes the Allies are told in the most candid and good-natured manner in the world that America as one of the conquerors expects her full share of the booty. A very significant fact about this diplomatic correspondence with the Allies is that it coincides with the visit of Monsieur Viviani, sent to the United States by France ostensibly for the purpose of laying at the feet of Mr. Harding and "ourselves" assurances of his country's unlimited admiration and respect. With this ostensible mission fulfilled, it is most probable that the courteous gentlemen soon got down to more tangible things, thus laying the foundations for a common understanding, which found expression in the note to Great Britain, France, Italy, and Japan. Just what is implied in this understanding can naturally be no more than a subject of conjecture in this age of "open covenants openly arrived at." Nevertheless we may not be beside the mark in assuming that France received assurances of a free hand in Germany, and that in return France agreed to a redistribution of the mandates, etc., in which the United States should be treated with due friendly regard.

No other construction can be placed upon the Hughes note directed ostensibly against Japan, or against the transference to the Mikado of the mandate over the erstwhile German colony of Yap. It means simply that the United States Government now serves notice on the governments of the Entente that it cannot and will not by any means be content with the situation as it stands today. This Government is letting them know that it means to

make good the idealistic bungling of the former administration, that it will sooner stand by Germany and thus deprive both France and Great Britain of the most valuable part of their booty, than allow itself even at this late date to be denied its place at the imperialistic swill-barrel. And France, who has but a single aim, a single real longing, namely to squeeze Germany against the wall until she howls, readily assented, since it appeared that the cost of the redistribution was to be borne by Japan. But Japan is naturally not nearly so eager to be sacrificed. And so she informs Washington that she regrets both deeply and sincerely that she is not in a position to comply with the wishes of America, since the Supreme Council—and not Japan—had made the division, so that it was not in her power to concede to Uncle Sam's desires. But that's another story.

Our point is just this: The United States are no longer in the business of bringing democracy or any other idealistic goods to Europe. America is going in for "sterner stuff," she is going to deal now in colonies, mandates, territories, spheres of influence, and other "negotiable papers." In other words, the Wilsonian period of hypocrisy and make-believe is at an end. Under the Harding administration business will be business, with a capital B, and we intend to be as frank and as brutal about it as will be necessary in order to make the entire world get the meaning of that.

America will have them all know that she intends henceforth to make an open show of her imperialistic predatory lusts, without shame, without false modesty. The big stick is to stand in a glass case no longer. The fleet, the army, our territory must be expanded. "Our" future, like that of Germany some time ago, lies upon the seas—out on the Pacific, and as for Japan—she knows just what to make of it.

But America's working class—does not. The more's the pity.

### PEONAGE

The John S. Williams case in Atlanta is a dramatic example of the beastly practices of peonage that have prevailed in the South for many generations. By peonage is meant the system of landlords and capitalists employing debtors as laborers through keeping them in practical servitude until they have worked out their debts. An example or two may make this clear.

In the fall of 1916, a negro farmer in Early County, Georgia, wished to go to "New Jersey." He figured that, according to his accounts, he owed his landlord something less than \$200 for provisions, clothing, etc., sold him on credit during the year. The boll weevil had that year destroyed his cotton crop, although he had some corn to help make up for the cotton loss, a horse (which had cost him some \$200), and some household effects. He desired that his landlord purchase these things from him after having given the half of his crop for rent. He thought the sale of his crop, horse, household goods, etc., after paying his debt of some

\$200, would net him at least \$250 to \$300. Instead, to his utter surprise, his landlord informed him, (after learning that he wished to go north), that his debt was not \$200, but \$700. He offered to take his horse, etc., as a \$300 payment towards the total debt and then threatened to prosecute the negro should he attempt to leave without paying the balance of \$400. Thus the landlords prey upon the ignorance and helplessness of the negro tenants.

A white lumber mill laborer in central South Carolina in 1914, after quite a long period of unemployment, wished to move from one county to another where he could get a job at from 30 to 35 cents per hour (\$20 to \$23 per week). In order to do so without being prosecuted and jailed, he first had to get the company for which he could work to "buy" his debt at the general store (commissary) of the company for which he had been working previously; and in addition he had to get the new concern to advance him sufficient money to pay it the charge for moving him to its plant. Having no funds, he was compelled to secure provisions, etc., at the commissary of the new concern on credit. All in all he started off with the new concern deeply in debt and under agreement to work it off. The debt was collected through the method of deducting the amount from his pay each week. The laborer could neither read nor write, could not keep accounts, and while conscious of being charged some 25 per cent more for the food and clothes, etc. he bought on credit as well as being charged at least 15 per cent additional on the amount of his debt, he was helpless and forced to accept the conditions of the company. This practice is the common experience of cotton mill hands, household servants, lumber jacks, and, in fact, of all common laborers. Sometimes it is practised openly and illegally as in the case of Williams, but usually it is done under the cloak of the law which the propertied classes have thrust upon the ignorant and non-voting tenants and laborers.

The practice of peonage is not, as some newspaper accounts would have us think, unusual and exceptional. It is quite a general custom, known to the business men, bankers, lawyers, doctors, preachers, editors, teachers, etc., of the South. It is practised by the white property owners against the propertyless whites as well as against the propertyless blacks. What is scarcely ever known or recognized is that there are many negro landlords and capitalists in the South practising peonage against members of their own race, and in many instances against members of the white race as well.

The practice of peonage is not purely nor even fundamentally racial. It is primarily economic. The existence of the white and black races, living side by side, in the South merely furnishes the opportunity for the propertied classes (both black and white) to cover over the real issue, confuse the minds of the white and black workers, and create dissension as far as possible, to their self-destruction; and meanwhile they, the landlords and capitalists, enrich themselves from the labor of both races.

The power to practice peonage and enslave the