

Mr. Wilson will probably neither veto nor sign the bill. If this should be the case the bill, after 10 days, automatically becomes a law. But since it is an Administration bill we are convinced that the President will finally affix his signature to a measure that is more drastic, more far reaching and more reactionary than any piece of war legislation that has been adopted anywhere by a belligerent or non-belligerent nation.

The new Section 3 not only concerns itself—as would be proper—with purely military movements and affairs, it not only includes Liberty Loans and all other financial government transactions that may be connected with the war; it actually deprives the people of the United States of every form of freedom of speech and opinion regarding the form of government, the constitution, the military or naval uniform, the flag or the fighting forces of the U. S. Compared with this holy sanctity of the American uniform the Gessler hat of the Swiss Burgvogt is the very superlative of republican radicalism. Twenty years in jail, a fine of \$10,000 or both may be the penalty for every infringement of these exceedingly elastic clauses.

But bad as these provisions are, they are by no means the worst. Section 4 is so incredibly reactionary and so far exceeds even the notorious practices and traditions of the Czarist "Black Cabinet," that even now it seems impossible that it should become a law. It reads:

"When the United States is at war the Postmaster-General may upon evidence satisfactory to him that any person or concern is using the mails in violation of any of the provisions of this act, instruct the Postmaster at any postoffice at which mail is received addressed to such person or concern to return to the postmaster at the office at which they were originally mailed all letters or other matter so addressed, with the words "mail to this address undeliverable under Espionage Act," plainly written or stamped upon the outside thereof, and all such letters or other matter so returned to such postmasters shall be by them returned to the senders thereof under such regulations as the Postmaster-General may prescribe."

According to this proposed section the Postmaster-General has the power to cut off any person, group of persons, organizations, corporations (newspaper, etc.) completely from all intercourse from the outside world. From his decision there is no appeal. Mr. Burleson becomes the absolute ruler; he will control the existence of persons and organizations, and no complaint, protest, proof or appeal can change the decision of the almighty censor.

It may be argued, of course, that the Administration desires the addition of these drastic provisions in order to be able more effectively to strike the real spies and tools of the enemy. But even this faint hope has been shattered by the Department of Justice.

When Senator France presented his well-known amendment which provided that Section 3, Title 1, shall not apply to those who utter "what is true, with good motives and for justifiable ends," the Administration Senators immediately declared their active opposition to the amendment, insisting that it would invalidate the whole law. Nevertheless it was adopted in a Senate reading. Two days later Senator Overman who was in charge of the bill presented a memorandum from the U. S. Attorney-General which opposed the France amendment and argued that just these "good motives and justifiable aims" constitute the greatest danger for the morale of the armies and of the population.

The memorandum says: "There is no more dangerous element in this country than that which conscientiously battles for unlimited individual freedom of action and speech at this time. These persons assume the highest ethical and philosophical grounds, but their influence is as paralyzing as that of the fanatics whose motives are so earnest that they will commit arson, murder or suicide to register their beliefs.

"The motives of the Bolsheviks in Russia were good, their ends justifiable in their eyes, and their criticisms of the administrations were true, but they overlooked the military dangers of such discussions, with the result that the soldiers shot nobody but their