

"I don't agree," Lansbury said to me, "with the way the I.L.P. is doing—attacking the foreign policy of the Government; I think they are spoiling the movement."

Constant struggle with the miseries of the great conflagration often made the causes which led to it seem tragically remote to me, in those days; but I considered Lansbury conceded too much to the War Party.

A little later when Keir Hardie bitterly complained of the *Daily Citizen*, the Labour Party organ, calling it a "jingo rag" he was "ashamed" to open, I asked him: "Why don't you get Lansbury to make the *Daily Herald* a Pacifist paper and join forces with him?"

He made no answer, only an impatient movement. A minute later I wondered that I could have thought it possible to combine, in a closely-knit venture, two men so different—the one tenacious as a rock, stirred by swift fire and passion, yet reserved, according to the old adage that still waters run deep; the other volatile, voluble, changeable as the winds, working up to the popular thrills of the moment, and riding the storm of them with delighted zest. Yet though I saw their huge incompatibility, I could not wholly abandon the idea which would give Keir Hardie a voice in a daily paper. I mentioned it to Lansbury: "Why don't you make the *Herald* an out and out Pacifist paper and throw in your lot with Keir Hardie and the I.L.P.?"

Lansbury stared at me. "I don't think you read the *Herald*. It is a Pacifist paper," he said reproachfully.

Alas, folk do not know their inconsistencies!

Bernard Shaw's *Common Sense about the War*¹ was published that autumn. It was the naughtiest agglomeration of contradictions the great jester had ever perpetrated. In provocative mood he flung out:

"No doubt the heroic remedy for this tragic misunderstanding is that both armies should shoot their officers and go home to gather in their harvests in the villages and make a revolution in the towns."

And:

"There are only two flags in the world henceforth: the Red flag of democratic Socialism and the Black flag of Capitalism."

He insisted that British militarists, and not German, had begun the propaganda of an Anglo-German war; that the Kaiser's assumption of God-given right to rule was outdone by that of the British ruling classes, and quoted Lord Roberts on "the will to conquer which has never failed us," and "the great task committed to us by Providence." He argued that the war guilt amounted to six of one and half a dozen of the other, so far as the rival groups of belligerent Powers were concerned; and the Franco-Russian alliance just as much a menace to peace as the Austro-German one.

¹ Supplement to the *New Statesman*, November 14th, 1914.

Then he blew all this case to the winds, and announced that Britain "was compelled to enter the War" as "the responsible policeman of the West."

"Had the Foreign Office been the International Socialist Bureau . . . the result would still have been the same." "We are supporting the War as a war on war." "We must have the best army in Europe." "We in England are fighting to show the Prussians they shall not trample on us or our neighbours if we can help it, and that if they are fools enough to make fighting efficiency the test of civilisation we can play that game as destructively as they. That is the simple truth, and the jolliest and most inspiring ground to recruit on. It stirs the blood and stiffens the back."

Though this was his conclusion, and all his spicily-phrased "common sense" thus negated, an avalanche of condemnation descended upon him; for a moment no man was more vilified by the jingoes, and notably by the Labour organ the *Daily Citizen*.

Keir Hardie, who in his work-driven existence had not time to wade through much verbiage, however witty, read Shaw's bold opening passages and wrote to him in an expansive moment, concluding:

"It is the expression of a heart which now throbs towards you with feelings almost of devotion."

After Keir Hardie's death Shaw disclosed the existence of the letter, and the fact that he had never answered it!

The War and its measures proceeded, monstrous and ruthless. Only the rush of work and activity shaded our vision from its horror. I was reading, writing and speaking about diplomatic history and the international politics of war in the light of the great suffering I had seen arise from it. Morel's *Ten Years of Secret Diplomacy*, of which a second edition came out in December 1914, and a third in October 1915, Brailsford's *War of Steel and Gold*, Morel's *Truth and the War*, which was published later, provided masses of scathing facts. They were read by hundreds of people who would have laid them aside as too heavy and difficult at ordinary times. I had these and many more. Herbert Dunnico lent me books from the library of the Peace Society. The writings of Karl Marx, Kropotkin, William Godwin, William Morris—all those who attacked the ethics of present society at its base took on a deeper meaning.

The main facts of the dark history of fear, duplicity and greed which had led the belligerent nations to the brink of war were already known before the conflict. New details have since been supplied by those who wielded power and responsibility in making the tortuous mosaic of intrigue. In their own defence they have been unable to gloss over its