

of wheat or of wholesale flour from the corn millers had advanced. Canadian exporters professed their solidarity with the Empire, declaring the Overseas Dominions prepared to give their last man and their last shilling "to aid the mother country"; yet when war conditions removed the competition of European supplies, they seized the opportunity to raise the price of their wheat to British consumers. It was vainly hoped that prices might fall when the expected record crop from the United States should appear, to compete with that of these fine Canadian loyalists. The lust of gain which swayed world markets, bringing starvation to millions, displayed itself in small matters and in great. The Shop-Assistants Union complained that certain London shops had put their employees on half pay and were working them full time "on account of the war," which had enabled the shopkeepers to raise their prices.

Lady Frances Balfour wrote to the *Daily Mail*:

"Let there be no complaining in our streets. . . . Women can save the situation by accepting it. We have heard of women giving tongue over the counter because the full tale of their goods could not be delivered at the usual price. Such people are as deserving of being treated as deserters as ever any soldier is who runs from the rifle fire of the entrenched position he has to take."

A callous saying this to mothers whose children were crying for food.

Though gambling in food prices continued apace, martial law was applied towards refractory workers. If dockers unloading the ships quibbled over their task, they were dismissed and soldiers were ordered to take their places.

CHAPTER III

MEETING THE GREAT EMERGENCY

INTERNATIONALISM seemed vanquished; its most prominent sponsors turned war-mongers: Green, of the Peace and Arbitration Society, whom my father called "peace and arbitration Green"; Hervé the French Anti-Patriot; Norman Angel, who named war "the great illusion"; H. G. Wells and a host of others; my mother, though I did not know it yet, one of the fiercest jingoes; even the sage, Peter Kropotkin, not untouched by the hypnotism of the great conflict.

During those brief days I had spent in Ireland the last vain, desperate efforts had been made to avert the impending tragedy. Lloyd George had deserted the peace party. Morley, Burns and Trevelyan had resigned from the Government rather than soil their conscience by participation in the War.

On July 29th the International Socialist Bureau, hastily convened in Brussels, had resolved on a special conference in Paris, on August 9th; a conference which never met; for war had sealed the frontiers, and the international Socialist movement had been rent in twain, its principles of fraternity vanquished by the trump of war. This debacle still unforeseen, on July 30th the Bureau participated in a great peace demonstration. Keir Hardie, Jaurés, Haase of Germany and the rest, marched under white banners, bearing the inscription: "Guerre à la Guerre!" "War on War!" Haase declared that Germany must not intervene even should Russia enter the conflict. He warned the Governments in the event of war:

"The peoples, tired out by such manifold misery and oppressions, may wake up and establish a Socialist society."

Jaurés, with his leonine head and impassioned oratory, in the last speech he was to make before his assassination, uttered a last prediction:

"... typhoid will finish the work of the shells; and as death and misery aid in striking men down, so the masses, sobered and come to their senses, will turn towards the directing Germans, French, Russians, Italians; and will ask what reasons they can give for all these corpses. Then revolution, freed from its chains, will say to them: 'Away and seek pardon from God and man!'"

On July 31st Keir Hardie as chairman, Arthur Henderson as secretary of the British section of the International Socialist Bureau, had issued

an appeal to the workers against the War. It is said to have been drafted by the long-standing jingo, H. M. Hyndman. How lightly men draft manifestos they scarcely mean!

"... Stand together for peace! Combine and conquer the militarist enemy and the self-seeking imperialists, to-day, once and for all. . . . Proclaim that for you the days of plunder and butchery have gone by. . . .

"Down with class rule! Down with brute force! Down with war! Up with the peaceful rule of the people!"

On August 2nd a Trafalgar Square anti-war demonstration was held by the Bureau, with as many speakers of prominence who could claim to speak for Labour and Socialism as the brief notice allowed. Keir Hardie was there and Arthur Henderson, H. M. Hyndman, Will Thorne, Ben Tillett and many others who presently were cheering for the War.

In every belligerent country such demonstrations were held, organised by the Socialists, responded to by the populace far beyond the Socialist ranks. The cry went forth: "War on War!" "Long live the International Brotherhood of the Peoples!" Greetings were sent from Britain to Germany; from Germany to France and Russia. Yet when the great conflict had actually been joined, only a small fraction of those who had cried for peace and brotherhood maintained their stand.

When Grey made known that Britain had declared war on Germany, Keir Hardie protested on behalf of the workers,

"Had they been consulted war would not have happened. Why were they not consulted?"

J. R. MacDonald said:

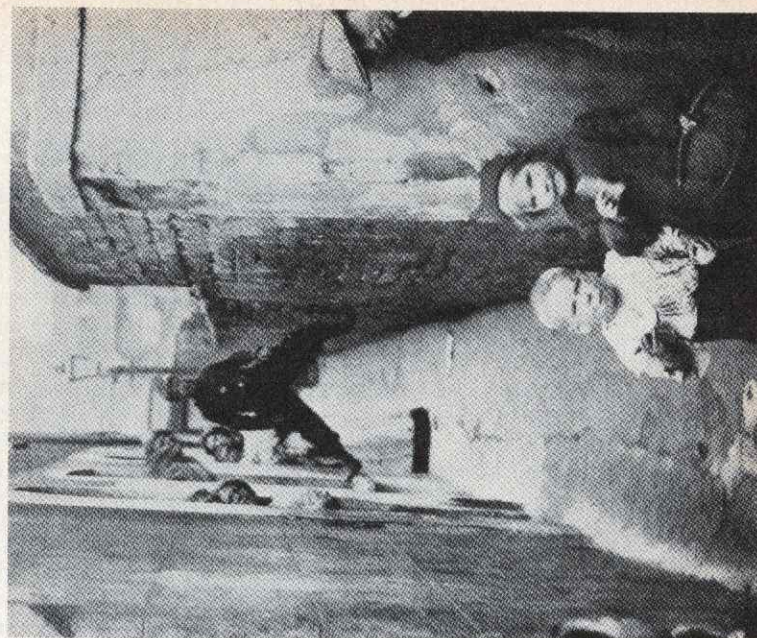
"I think Sir Edward Grey¹ is wrong. I think the Government which he represents, and for which he speaks, is wrong. I think the verdict of history will be that they are wrong. . . . Whatever may be said of us, whatever attacks may be made upon us, we will say this country ought to have remained neutral."

Keir Hardie being dead, those words of MacDonald assured him, when the conflict was over, the position of first Labour Prime Minister; when uttered they covered him with obloquy.

Hardie and MacDonald voiced their protest against the war to a House of bitter hostility, which in that hour amounted to a passionate hatred such as MacDonald had never faced. Even after that scene, the Labour Members of Parliament met and adopted a declaration:

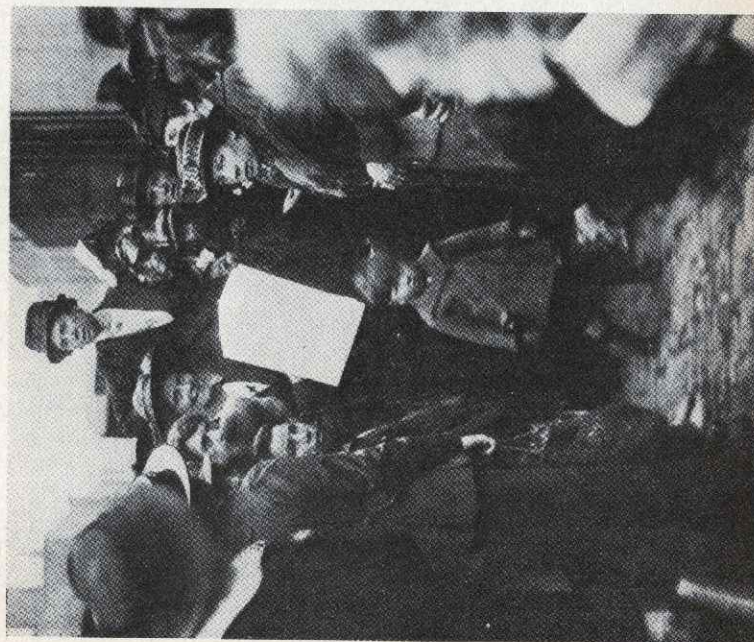
"That the conflict between the nations of Europe, in which this country is involved, is owing to foreign ministers pursuing diplomatic policies for the purpose of maintaining a balance of power; that our own policy of understanding with France and Russia only was bound

¹ Afterwards Viscount Grey of Fallodon.



Norah Smyth

HOUSES FOR HEROES



Norah Smyth

SELLING THE WORKERS' DREADNOUGHT AT AN EAST END MEETING

Mrs. Walker speaking.