



Max M. Kampelman Papers

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SPEECH BY MAX M. KAMPELMAN BEFORE UPHOLSTERERS
UNION, LOCAL 1189, MINNEAPOLIS, ON OCTOBER 3, 1945.

Some years ago, Dr. Nicholas Murray Butler, President of Columbia University, estimated that the first World War cost 30 million lives and 400 billion dollars. With that amount, he figured, we could have placed a home worth \$2500 together with furniture worth \$1000 on 5 acres of land for every family in the US, Canada, Australia, England, Wales, Ireland, Scotland, France, Belgium, Germany and Russia - with enough left over to give every city of 20,000 inhabitants or more in each of those countries a million dollar library and a 10 million dollar university. *I need not go into the details of the cost of this war, we know our civilization and life itself. Our losses are still too much in your words.*

But even that, so recent, is outdated since the release of atomic energy. It's no longer necessary to point out that the next war will be more terrible than the one we've just gone through.

It is instead more pertinent for us to point out that there must not be a next war lest we commit suicide thereby.

It is now clear to all of us that if our civilization is to survive, all of our energies - as citizens, as workers, as labor union organizations - must be directed toward building a society conducive to peace and which knows no war.

Any man argues peace No longer can we leave such matters to the experts. Issues of war and peace are matters which we must all keep a careful check upon, for, after all, it is the workers who do the fighting and the dying, whose homes are bombed, who starve, who suffer. For too long now, we've put our faith in the "experts" and look where they've brought us.

A leading historian once said that one of the little thought about and yet most significant tragedies of war is that those who make the war also make the peace.

And the kind of a peace they make is not the kind of a peace we want. We don't ~~mean~~ an uncertain period of armistice during which nations prepare for war...The peace we demand, the peace we must have is one which means lasting security for all people; one based on "justice" not on might; for might does not make right and until things are right there can be no peace.

Yet at this very time, there is a powerful wealthy lobby at work preparing the nation and working for a policy which will take us away from the road to peace and which can only inevitably lead to the perpetuation of militarism and war. I refer to the drive for peacetime military conscription.

With your permission, let us get down to fundamentals for a minute.

Before we go any further, we must make clear that we don't believe in this "bad man" or "bad people" theory of war. Wars don't come into being because some people are bad and some good, or because some people are more warlike than others who are "peaceloving".

No. Wars come into being because of deep political, social and economic roots in our body politic.

Prof. Quincy Wright of the University of Chicago in a recent 2 volume study went to the trouble of finding out just how many wars the different nations have fought in their history. You'll be interested in his findings.

He found that since 1480, the nation that has fought the most wars is ...Great Britain, with 78 wars. Next...France with 71. After that, Spain with 64 and Russia with 61.

Do you recognize the names of 3 of our "peaceloving" nations in that array.

Now I suppose you want to know where Germany is....
Down near the bottom with 23. Do you know the country down at the bottom of the list? Yes, Japan, with 9 wars. (*in 500 years*)

So the theory of "bad" people against "good" people; or "warlike" people agisnt "peaceloving" people is ridiculous and is but a sham to make us forget ~~that~~ wars really come into being because of economic rivalries based on economic injustices and inequalities in the distribution of wealth; and because of artificial social and racial prejudices among people.

Getting rid of war, therefore, requires us to get rid of the causes of war. *not to get rid of people* We can do that by working against armaments and rivalries among nations, by working for international cooperation, economic justice and democratic principles. .

Now, in that perspective, where does peacetime conscription stand in our desire to achieve peace?

It doesn't!

Conscription on our part would serve notice to the other nations of the world that we don't trust internationalism; that we don't trust them; that we expect another war - Why else prepare for another war?

And, we might now also ask: against whom are we preparing to fight? Who is our enemy? Certainly not Japan or Germany whose defeat and unconditional surrender make them impotent.

Certainly not our Allies with whom we are now fervently working to establish an international organization to preserve peace.

Who? Mexico? Argentina? Is it England or Russia that the War Dep't and its supporting lobby want us to fight against? Is that what we went through a war for?

Such an attitude, such a program does not lead to peace. It leads to war! For one thing we have learned is that America is not alone. What we do affects the policies of the rest of the world. If we adopt conscription, every country in the world will adopt conscription as part of its national policy. Rather than frighten others and thus avoid war, a warlike policy on our part will lead others to become as warlike as we become and then a little more so, so as not to be at a disadvantage....Then watch the shooting begin.

Military conscription has never stopped war!

Russia and France had large conscript armies in 1914. But that didn't stop the Kaiser from attacking them both.

In fact, during the first war, Germany, Austria and Russia, with the largest conscript armies, were so defeated that they burst into revolution.

Again in 1939, France had more trained conscripts than Germany. But Hitler, putting his faith in modern weapons and industrial strength, attacked nevertheless.

No. Conscription doesn't prevent war. Nor does it make you strong enough to win wars.

It is interesting that of all the countries involved in both World Wars, the only two nations not defeated were those without peacetime conscription - US and Britain.

The fact that large conscript armies can't win wars becomes all the more true since the Atomic bomb which made armies insignificant cannon fodder in the face of the machine.

Yet the drive for peacetime conscription continues.

It's something like the man who was sprinkling powder all around his lawn and house. When his friend asked him what he was doing, he said he was sprinkling tiger powder to keep tigers away. "But",

his friend said, "there are no tigers here. There's nothing to be afraid of". "That's good", he answered, "because this powder doesn't work either".

No, friends. We must go deeper than the surface for a real analysis of what conscription would mean for us, for peace and for our democratic way of life.

Your International President was one of a unanimous group of American labor leaders who, in expressing their opposition to conscription, accused the War Dep't of a Master Plan to control our civilian economy and national life.

There is a good reason for the fact that traditionally democracy and militarism have been considered poor partners.

That's why our Constitution and form of gov't is so strict and jealous in defining the authority and boundaries of military rule, making it clear that the job of the military is to wage wars and run military affairs, but keep the determinations of national policy in the hands of civilian representatives.

That's why it isn't strange too that wherever we find the growth of totalitarianism in the world, we found that militarism and conscription were in partnership too. For practically and psychologically, militarism, war and conscription are tied up with totalitarianism.

The accusation by American labor, therefore, that the War Dep't is attempting to step into and control our civilian affairs and economy is not to be taken lightly.

Nor is the real reason for the support given this plan by many powerful and wealthy elements to be ignored.

Passing peacetime military conscription is the best way to make a worker into a strikebreaker. Under the plan, American workers either while they're conscripted or while on reserve

after service, could be called upon to break strikes; strikers could be ordered into the Reserve and then sent back in uniform to their jobs.

This happened in France. It could happen here, for the military mind of our officer class, trained in giving orders, blind obedience, rigid discipline, is not trained in democratic principles and cannot be expected to be sympathetic to a free labor movement.

Furthermore, if conscription can be imposed on the American people, they can then escape the responsibility of providing the jobs which will eliminate inequality and poverty. Because they know that those jobs cannot be provided without making fundamental changes in our economic structure, making it democratic. And doing that threatens their favored positions.

So by keeping thousands off the labor market and in the Army and by keeping wasteful war production going, they hope to avoid the solution of the problem of want in the midst of plenty.
The Fascist solution to unemployment.

We stand now at a crisis, you and I. The world of tomorrow is being shaped today. The war-weary masses of the world look to us for hope and leadership. We can set the pattern of tomorrow.

Let us, therefore, accept the challenge and our responsibility. Let us propose to the world a society of nations which will permanently renounce war and armaments. As a first step knowing that wars cannot be fought today without conscription, let us propose the universal abolition of conscription.
LET US PROPOSE TO THE WORLD THAT CONSCRIPTION BE OUTLAWED INTERNATIONALLY

Rep. Martin of Mass. has already introduced a resolution to that effect in Congress. We owe it to ourselves, to our civilization, to our children, to get behind that legislation with all of our energies and letter writing ^{and resolution passing} abilities..

Let the abolition of conscription universally be the standard by which we judge "peaceloving nations"....Unless we do....

LET US PROPOSE TO THE NATIONS OF THE WORLD WHO WISH TO JOIN WITH US IN AN INTERNATIONAL WAG. THAT AS A FIRST STEP THEY SHOW THEIR PEACELOVING INTENTIONS BY ABOLISHING CONSCRIPTION.