

Mr. Ford's Page



A YEAR ago the statesmen of the world, or such of them as knew the hopes of the people, were wholly engaged with international problems. Their every utterance and plan had international bearing. An American President was touring Europe and people whose tongue he could not speak and who could not speak his tongue, thronged him with plaudits because they knew that his intentions were international, his good-will was world-wide, his vision was inclusive of all humanity.

No statesmen seemed to be thinking of himself, no nation seemed to be seeking its own separate interest. Everyone desired that affairs be so arranged that the common equal benefit might be secured, and world interests established as a commonwealth of all humanity.

There is no doubt at all that during that interval the plain people of the world had a very clear vision of internationalism as the best guarantee and the highest fruition of nationalism, and there was a general willingness to make those compromises of special interest which might be necessary to secure it.

That was a year ago.

What has happened since? We have only to look about upon the political and industrial worlds to see what has happened.

In the political world there has been a settled slump back into the old ruts; in the industrial world there has been a costly failure to grasp the opportunities which international outlooks and plans would have given us.

LOOK at the political world first of all. Scarcely had the statesmen settled to their task of internationalizing the higher and common interests of humanity, when the call of national and selfish interests began to distract them.

The first distraction came from politics—politics in its lower, ward-heeler sense.

The work at Paris took first-class statesmen away from their home centers. The work could not be done by mail, by proxy or any other long-distance device, and this necessitated the absence of leaders.

This gave the opportunity for little men, malcontents and office-seekers at home, to strike from behind and to make political capital out of the leaders' absence. The Italian premier was a victim; the British premier was a victim; as was also the American President.

Each had to turn to lesser, petty matters from the high and solemn task of bringing the world together in unity.

The very ground on which they stood as representatives of their respective nations was threatened to be cut from under their feet; the "outs" at home were laying plans to deprive them of their representative character altogether. Partisanship actually took issue against humanity; local politics of the most selfish and shortsighted stripe became an obstruction to internationalism. Never in human experience has the great and the little, the noble and the ignoble been in such clear-cut alignment of opposition.

Well, for the most part the insincere negotiators of an international understanding have returned to their little two-by-four local politics, and what meets them there?

Internationalism meets them at every turn! President Wilson's political foes made good their vow to humiliate this country by preventing it taking its leading part in the very League it proposed. Very well. They vowed and they achieved. But what is the result? Why, the League of internationalism meets them at every turn. They discover that, like nemesis, it turns up where they least expected it. It surprises them at every corner. It has proved a boomerang to every enemy.

We cannot escape internationalism even if we would, for it is upon us in one form or another. We are just learning that if we will not have internationalism in its higher and better forms, we will have it in its lower and more dangerous forms.

What is the unrest that disturbs us today? Nothing else than an international disease which economic boundaries have not been

strong enough to keep out. What is this grasping power that would subdue all production and commerce to its greed? Nothing else than an international capitalism which will come to rule if we refuse persistently to establish international co-operation.

You see, it is not any longer a choice between nationalism and internationalism.

It is a choice between good and helpful internationalism, and bad internationalism.

No nation any longer lives to itself alone. And certainly our nation does not and cannot, especially since our part in the war and our principal rôle in the new era of international obligation and good-will. The very fates seem to be bringing about a poetic revenge for the enemies of internationalism. It is internationalism that they must choose: there is no alternative. If they choose a bad form, they are the enemies of their country. If they choose the good form, then they surrender to the very principle they hoped to destroy.

INDUSTRIALLY, we see very much the same condition of affairs. Internationalism is being thrust upon us whether we will or not. And in this field also we must decide whether the good or the bad form will come to us. To be strictly national is impossible. Countries outside of us serve as our customers or our

sources of supply. The view we take of our relations with them will decide whether we shall all enter again upon an era of wasteful competition, or whether by international suggestion and understanding we shall enter upon the safe and serviceable plan of looking to each other for the things we can best do.

The industries of the world are being held back simply because the nationalism of a past time keeps its dead hand upon the present.

What do the desolate countries of Europe want? Some say they want food, and we have been sending food for years in magnificent quantities. But food only keeps people alive; it does not start them toward self-sustaining industry.

What these countries need more than our charity is our business. They need that the doors be flung down so that we may buy from them the natural materials they have to sell, materials whose labor content is elementary. This will start their own industrial lives going again, by giving them a job, giving them trade, giving them the opportunity to ac-

cumulate capital and resume their former activities. But a foolish nationalistic arrangement prevents this just now. Tariffs that were reared as protective devices are now acting as hindrances. Each nation huddles behind its own barriers which exclude beneficial relations, and the world hobbles along under an unnatural restraint.

Tariffs are imperfect things unless they are made to respond automatically to the need of the time. They should be made to turn on and off as the people's welfare require. Certainly these are times when the laws which govern in normal conditions should be made adaptable to abnormal world conditions. There was no law against large quantities of raw material flowing out of this country to other lands as soon as the war stopped; why should there be laws preventing the flow into our country of the materials we need to keep our wheels turning?—the traffic in which would be the much needed industrial starter of many suffering foreign lands.

Internationalism in some form or other challenges us on every hand. It is part of every phase of nationalism. We find that we cannot be even national without international relations, as an individual cannot be fully human without social relations and responsibilities. How soon the politicians will be able to see this, is a speculative question. But the people readily see it, and even where they do not clearly see it, they sense it and are waiting for it.

A partnership of peoples makes for peace, progress, production of the necessary materials of life, and consequently a prosperity which can be shared by large nations and small nations alike, according to their willingness to work.

THEY thought they had cast it out, but it met them again wherever they turned. Everything is International whether little "nationalists" want it so or not. The world cannot go back to the old ways, and the New Way is opposed because it threatens the old game of "all profit and no work." Internationalism affects more than war and peace. It checks the game of playing nation against nation for financial profit. That is why the old-line gamblers are against it.