



## Max M. Kampelman Papers

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Speech delivered by Max M. Kampelman on April 25, 1945 as part of the arguments for the negative in a debate "Is Peacetime Conscription Conducive For Peace" sponsored by the Postwar Conference at the University of Minnesota.

## IS PEACETIME CONSCRIPTION CONDUCTIVE FOR PEACE

Some years ago, Dr. Nicholas Murray Butler 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 U.S., 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.

Our limited imaginations cannot comprehend the cost yet of this new war and the wastes in terms of what we could have actually done for human well being. Suffice it to say that in this country alone, we have already spent about 8 times more than we did last time - and who is to measure the cost in terms of the destruction of cities like Cologne, Berlin, Warsaw, Stalingrad.

In a recent article, Maj. Alexander de Tversky, who described himself as an aeronautical engineer now devoted to the science of destruction, warns desperately that the nations of the world hold in their hands scientific forces capable of blowing all civilization to bits. "Every layman takes it for granted", he wrote, "that the next war will be more terrible than this one." 11

through history that has been true...but now there are new dimensions of horror...I dare predict that the next war will not merely bring more destruction than this one, but destruction of a new kind, applied on an unprecedented scale against every living thing on earth".

He concludes by expressing the fervent desires of all people that our actions beguiled by the determination that the world never sees war again.

It becomes clear, therefore, that if civilization is to survive, the major purpose toward which all our energies should be directed is to create a society conducive to peace and which knows no war.

It must be made clear, however, that such a definition of peace does not mean an uncertain period of armistice during which nations prepare for war. Peace means lasting security for all peoples. It does not rest upon "might makes right". Its guiding principle is "justice makes right".

The topic of our discussion this afternoon, therefore, is an important one only insofar as it sticks to the major purpose of the question it raises: "Is Peacetime Conducive to Peace".

Now, what conditions are conducive to peace? What general prerequisites are there for peace?

The first point which we must appreciate, one we

cannot reiterate too often, is that we must renounce the "bad man" or "bad people" theory of war if we're to get anywhere. Wars come into being not because some people are more warlike than others, but because of deep political, social and economic roots in our body politic.

Wars come into being because of economic rivalries based on economic maladjustments and inequities; because of artificial social and racial prejudices fostered by nationalism and the like.

Elements conducive to peace, therefore, if they're to be effective are those that deal with removing those basic causes of war, and substitute for them conditions which cultivate peace.

To the extent that our acts tend to reduce national rivalries, eliminate attitudes of national supremacy, tend toward the reduction of armaments and the elimination of war as a technique of solving international problems, encourage economic cooperation and reciprocity, instill a spirit of internationalism and create an attitude among peoples encouraging a desire for peace- to that extent are those acts conducive to peace.

"ith that perspective, let us again bring to mind the topic of the discussion "Is Peactime Conscription Conducive to Peace?" and it becomes evident that the answer

is "NO". Conscription is conducive to war.

Conscription instills a discipline of obedience to the state, which is the very essence of nationalism; it serves notice on the other nations of the world that our trust is in our might and not in attempts at internationalism; conscription teaches the youth of a nation, those upon whom the future depends, that war and militarism is the way to deal with international differences; it creates a tinder box which the slightest match can make explode; it says "might makes right" and takes our minds off the real problems that must be met to establish justice and preserve peace.

For the thing to appreciate is that America is not alone; what we do affects the policies of the rest of the world; for the U.S. to adopt conscription means that every country in the world will have conscription as part of its national policy.

Conscription by us will not, as some imagine, mean we will avoid war by scaring other countries, for we will only scare them into being as warlike as we become and perhaps a little more so as not to be at a disadvantage. We should then be like 2 gunmen who say they don't want any trouble with each other but are ready for it. When that happens, the shooting happens too!

Conscription too will seriously affect the steps we've already taken toward establishing peace in this hemisphere through our good neighbor policy. Latin and South America would not be likely to regard conscription as an evidence of our good neighborliness, rather it will be an additional reason for them to fear us.

It is well for us to realize that military conscription has never stopped war. "e've had some recent lessons on that score. We have had 2 World Wars. In the first war, 3 great peacetime conscription countries, Germany, Austria and Russia, were so defeated that they burst into revolution. Conscription didn't stop the Kaiser from attacking Russia and France in 1914 though both had large conscript armies; and that didn't stop Hitler from attacking France and Russia again this time, though both had conscription.

In fact, it is interesting to note that of all the countries involved in both World Wars, the only 2 nations not defeated were the only ones without peacetime conscription—the U.S. and Britain. This may not absolutely prove anything, but it is worth thinking about.

The result of conscription goes further, however, than we've as yet seen. It has insidious effects on us domestically, as a democracy, and to that extent too stands as a threat to the cause of peace.



I mean no disrespect when I call your attention to the fact that every businessman thinks that everybody ought to learn more about business; and every dancing teacher thinks that everybody should learn how to dance; etc.

It is not strange, therefore, to see our military career men in the "War Dep't leading the fight to make all American youth military minded. We see this from the fact that the major impetus for the conscription legislation is coming from the "War Dep't and the American Legion.

Their pressure has been so insistent, in fact, that, in spite of Mr. Wishart's presence here this afternoon, it is well for us to note that spokesmen for the American ~~XXXXXXXXXXXX~~ Labor Movement, led by Philip Murray and William Green have, in expressing their opposition to conscription legislation, accused the "War Dep't of a master plan to control our civilian economy and national life.

Such accusations, I fear to, are not to be lightly glossed over. Traditionally, democracy and militarism have been considered poor partners. That's why our 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 whenever we find the growth of totalitarianism in the world, we find that militarism is in the partnership too together with its handmaiden conscription - for practically and psychologically, militarism, war, and conscription are tied up with totalitarianism.

The adoption of conscription as peacetime policy, I further maintain, would create a clearcut definite caste system with the permanent officer class in the upper crust of the caste. Under this class, would pass annually the cream of American youth, the bricks out of which a democratic and peaceful tomorrow, if there is to be one, is to be built. Within that year, American youth, its rights and liberties as civilians withdrawn, would be subject to the training of an undemocratic class system, to habits of unquestioning obedience, to absolute fuehrer-like discipline and military indoctrination for war - all of which, I submit, make very poor building material for the understanding, voluntary cooperation and free thought so necessary for democracy and peace.

In his very thought provoking book, THE REST OF YOUR LIFE, Leo Herne, writes: "...The stamp of the Army will never

be completely removed. Soldiers live in a dictatorship and whether they like it or not, they get accustomed to its ways. Objectives are made simple. "A minimum of decisions is left open to the men. Uniformity, right down to the lacing of their boots, is made an inherent part of their beings".

Yet, in spite of this picture, we find those who favor the legislation, led again by the War Department and American Legion, trying to rush the legislation through without giving the American people an opportunity to consider this most serious of all questions. They refuse to wait for America to give it the necessary consideration and they refuse to wait until the millions of Americans who are serving abroad return and express their opinions, because they fear that with due consideration and full democratic discussion conscription legislation would never pass.

There is still another reason too for their insistence that the legislation pass now. If they can impose conscription on the American people, they can avoid the necessary changes in our economy, the democratization which is necessary to create the 60 million jobs which will eliminate joblessness and poverty.

By keeping hundreds of thousands of men off the labor market each year in our armed forces, by keeping portions of our industrial machinery in the economically wasteful state of a semi-permanent war economy, they see a way of avoiding the dilemma they will face as soon as it comes time for us to reconvert to a civilian economy and find jobs in a peaceful society for our citizens.

Their answer to the problem is to keep America's eyes away from the necessity of solving the economic problems of want in the midst of plenty. It is the fascist and totalitarian theory of economics.

"We now stand at a crisis. The decision is ours to make - yours and mine. We can take the way out that appears to be the easy way, the road to power politics, national rivalries, growing militarism, a permanent war economy, conscription - all of which <sup>are conducive to war</sup> ~~leads to war after another short interval~~ - - or we can take the way of mutual cooperation, trust ~~between nations, development of internationalism and the abandon-~~

ment of national sovereignty, the extension of economic democracy - all of which are conducive to peace.

The leading nations of the world are meeting this week and will meet again to discuss and create the world of tomorrow. As the most powerful country in the world, America is in a position to take the lead in speaking for the masses of the world who are sick of war and demand real peace. Our example can well set the pattern of tomorrow.

Let us propose to the world a society of nations which will permanently renounce war and armaments as instruments of policy. As a first step, knowing that modern total war cannot be fought without conscription, let us propose the universal abolition of conscription. We can do it, for as the wealthiest and strongest nation of the world, materially and idealitically, we are looked upon by the peoples of the world as their Messiah.

Let the abolition of conscription be the standard by which to determine "peace loving nations"; for the Abolition of Conscription is Conducive to Peace!

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