

HEADING INTO TROUBLE WITH THE DRAFT.

Even if the situation be permitted to develop normally there is reason to fear disturbance over the draft. If advantage is taken of it by radical propagandists, anarchists, terrorists, and enemy agents the disturbance may look like a massacre.

The cloud the size of a man's hand is revealed now, and if it grows there will be trouble. The draft law will be applied whether the objector like it or not. Any one who increases the size of the objection and thereby the size of the trouble will have to be dealt with and will be dealt with.

We should advise people to sink their personal opinions on this subject just now. The law is in operation. It is a just law. The principle of universal military service is as sound as the principle of general taxation. For a person to declare his exemption from the one is as tolerable as for him to declare his exemption from the other.

Both are needed to maintain the state, and the state, having adopted them as principles, principles of equity and fairness, must maintain them. The ordinary processes of law are sufficient to enforce the payment of taxes. Extraordinary processes will be used to enforce the military obligation.

Opposition to the draft will be met by rifle fire. We are convinced that any preliminary gentleness in dealing with the situation will only make the results more costly. Men responsible for exciting foolish or selfish people to mob resistance of conscription ought to be shot. They not only ought to be, but we are quite sure they will be.

We do not wish to put too much emphasis on the possibilities of trouble, but there are many elements of disorder to be considered and it would be unwise for people to ignore them. In the civil war we had draft riots when the cause of war was plain and the war was at home.

The cause of war may now be confused in the minds of people and the war itself is far away. The people wanted it to stay far away and they find it is coming up to them. Our progress into it has lacked dramatic sequence. We take a step and nothing happens. We take another step and nothing happens. Thus war seems to be safe territory. When it is found not to be a revulsion of feeling may shake this placid nation and out of that revulsion spring very serious disorders.

Therefore the caution to agitators is a wise one and punitive measures will, wisely, be very prompt and very effective. Mildness will breed only madness.

We should advise even the socialists to consider more carefully the propaganda they say they will spread with a new earnestness. They say that they will not deal with the war except to do what may be done to bring it to an end. They call it a "capitalistic war." That cheap, false phrase is maddening to certain elements who think of themselves as constantly manipulated by an embodied something representing money they want.

To the extent that socialists promote this idea just now they are contributing to the troubles of the state. They are, to this extent, working with the anarchists whose principles they do not accept.

Socialists believe in the highly organized state. Anarchists in no state. Yet socialism may make nearly as much trouble for the state as anarchy.

The state will assert itself, and if the trouble comes citizens must reconcile themselves to measures which may be sentimentally distressing.

It may be unpleasant for an amiable American citizen to be told by a soldier at a street corner that he cannot go down a certain street and hear, down that street, a fusillade. We need not turn away from the unpleasant thought. It will serve as a warning now and it will prepare the mood for what certainly will occur if the warning be not accepted.

There are enough soldiers in the country to handle draft riots and the temper of the military will not be lenient. The law which is to be enforced is just. There would be a tolerance of great injustice if it were not the law. It would be a great injustice to permit opposition to it.

Universal service is an obligation of citizenship which leaves the citizen no power of selection. It is not his business to say what he shall do. The men elected to represent the citizens have said what the citizens shall do and, with the state in danger, the citizens must do it. The selective draft is the most effective fashion in which the nation can operate at present and the nation intends to operate.

Conscientious objectors had better examine their consciences and their objections more. Disturbers had better consider the prospects more carefully.

Trouble will be dealt with in a very unpleasant fashion, quickly, we hope.