

# Mobilizing America for War

*What the War Department is planning for you  
civilians smacks unpleasantly of true fascism*

By H. C. Engelbrecht

ALL eyes on the War Department and on the Sheppard-Hill bill! The notorious Industrial Mobilization Plan, unearthed by the Nye munitions inquiry last year, has reached a stage where there is grave risk that it will be embodied in our laws. Through clever maneuvering, it is to be tacked on to pending neutrality legislation to assure its passage. A five-cent pamphlet on the subject, *A Blue-Print for Fascism*, by Frank B. Blumenfeld, just published by the American League Against War and Fascism, clearly shows that the plan embodied in the Sheppard-Hill bill is a thinly disguised "blue-print for fascism."

An earlier edition of this war plan, produced in 1933, contained some interesting features which have been omitted in the revised edition of 1936. Most important of these were a Public Relations Administration and a Selective Service Administration. In plain language, these provided for a press gag and for a labor draft. But there is no reason to think that publicity and labor control have been omitted from the revised mobilization plan of the War Department. It is simply a matter of avoiding antagonism for the time being. Aside from that, there is presented a complete plan for running the next war under the dictatorship of the military and the great industrialists.

The public-relations section is a perfect marvel of cold-blooded impudence. Hardly have the people realized (through the writings of Lasswell, Ponsonby, Creel, and others) what the official lie factories of the last war did to make the war palatable, how they spread atrocity stories, faked pictures, fanned hatred, suppressed important news, and bullied them with four-minute men—hardly have these things become clear, when the War Department tells them that in the next war this propaganda business is going to be even bigger and better. Not a single avenue of public information is left uncovered. There is to be a division for domestic and foreign news, another will take care of films, posters, cartoons, photographs, and scenarios, still another will provide for speakers, women's organizations, and war expositions, and finally, there is a section for radio, newspapers, magazines, billboards, and bulletins.

A publicity director for the utilities once described his job as "learning them there dumb-bells how to do the *vox populi* . . . and do the dear public fall for it!" The militarists evidently have the same low opinion of the public. But where, one is tempted to ask, have our press lords been since this plan for gag-

ging and censoring the press was revealed? They tore the heavens with their clamor about the freedom of the press when they tried to prevent the unionization of their reporters, when they persisted in using child labor, when they were ordered to erect fire-escapes. But now, when this mobilization plan reveals a real threat to the freedom of the press, not a sound has come from them. No expensive lawyers are hurried off to Washington to protest, no injunctions are asked, no violation of the constitution is alleged. Is it possible that freedom of the press does not really interest them?

The other highly important features of the plan concern industry and labor. And thereby hangs a most significant tale. During the World War, there developed a situation the recurrence of which the War Department and its allies among the great industrialists are trying to prevent. Millions of able-bodied workers were drafted out of their factories and offices into combat service. Enormous demands were being made on industry for the production of all kinds of war materials. Immigration had come to a standstill. The result was an acute shortage of labor.

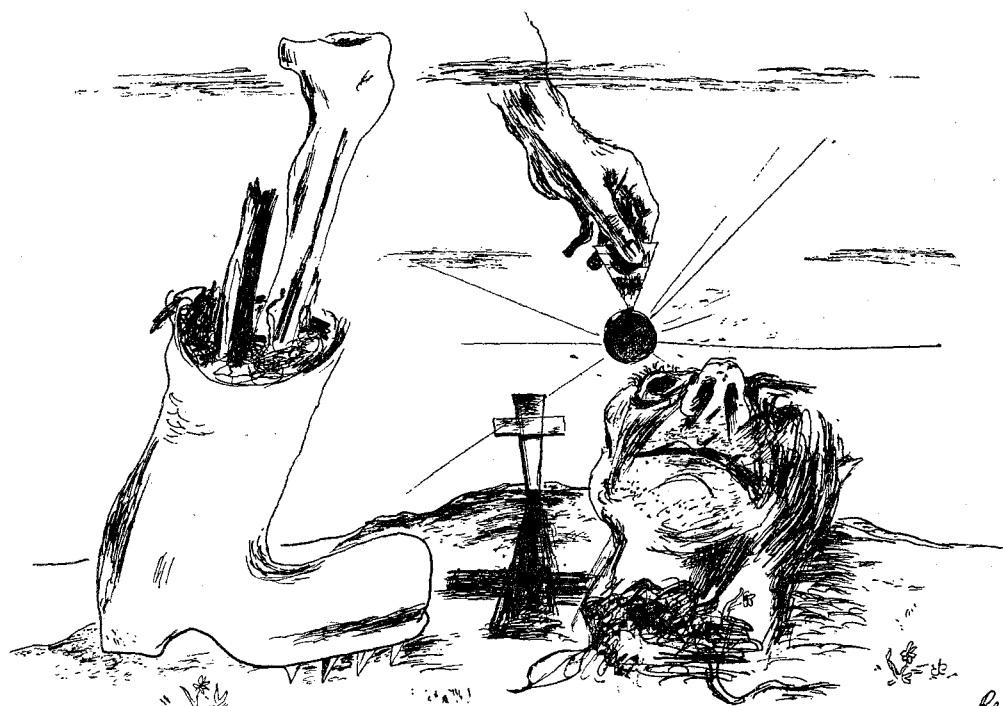
This was an ideal situation for the workingman. He was everywhere in demand, and he was able to bargain successfully for higher wages. The competition for workers was so keen that one factory would steal or entice away men from another factory to itself with

the promise of more money. In the shipyards, men earned \$15, \$18, and more daily. To this day it is remembered that these workers wore silk shirts and came to work in swanky cars. Industry had fat government contracts on a cost-plus basis, which meant the higher its charges, the greater its percentage. So it did not worry about high wages; the government paid for it all.

That does not mean that real wages went up during the war. On the contrary, prices, as usual, led the parade, and most wages never caught up. In seven years the price of food went up 105 percent. Very few wages reached that peak.

Now it happened rather frequently that workers who were lured from one job to another found that as soon as a certain contract was completed, their wages would be cut sharply. This caused much discontent and many strikes. The entire labor situation, then, was characterized by a rapid turn-over and by serious and endless strikes.

The government was worried, and it decided to bring some order into this chaos. Various labor boards and conciliation committees were established which succeeded in stabilizing the situation. Most of these boards were under the control, at least in part, of the great industrialists and of the war cabinet. Various rules were worked out prescribing what labor might do and what it might not do; there was wage fixing of various kinds,



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and in that way a measure of labor peace was established.

In a report made in the war years, the secretary of labor made the following revealing statement:

With the exception of the sacrifices of the men in the armed service, the greatest sacrifices have come from those at the lower rung of the industrial ladder. Wage increases respond last to the needs of this class of labor, and their meager returns are hardly adequate, in view of the increased cost of living to maintain even their meager standard of life. It is upon them the war pressure has borne most severely. . . .

Too often there is a glaring inconsistency between our democratic purposes in this war abroad and the autocratic conduct of those guiding industry at home.

But those planning for the next war remember only the silk shirts of the workers and the numerous strikes. Therefore the next war will see none of that nonsense. There is to be a universal draft of all over eighteen years old. Millions of these will be soldiers in the army, other millions will be soldiers in factories. That seems to be the intention of the secretary of war, who has declared that "the War Department will prepare a labor draft." The millions who will receive a "deferred rating" in the draft will be assigned to industry. There they will take orders, or else starve or fight. This is the completion of the plan placed before the War Policies Commission in 1931 by Colonel Robbins, who advocated a general civilian registration alongside of the military draft. Its purpose was: "So that we know where a man is and what he is doing; so that we can put him to work."

The various labor boards and mediation committees are also to be revived. Again they will be largely in the hands of the great industrialists. Next time there will be less patience with labor than in the World War.

And what is going to be done about the great industrialists, the war contractors, the munitions makers? Will they, too, be drafted together with their factories and their capital? Silly question! Why, that would clearly be unconstitutional. The Supreme Court has approved of the conscription of man-power, but when you get to property and wealth, there's "due process" and "no confiscation" and a dozen other provisions which stand like a mighty fortress protecting economic privilege.

There is not a little irony in the fact that this entire mobilization plan arose out of the agitation carried on by the American Legion and others to "take the profits out of war." The Legion forced the appointment of the War Policies Commission in 1930, which was instructed to inquire into "methods of equalizing the burdens and to remove the profits of war, together with a study of policies to be pursued in event of war." The commission was specifically forbidden to consider the "conscription of labor."

This commission heard chiefly military men and big business men. Some labor leaders and peace workers also had a hearing. But when the commission reported, it declared that the idea of "drafting capital" was "impractical and impossible." But the drafting of men for



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*"And then again, we could join the Communists—if they weren't such misfits."*

military service and for the war industries is apparently not. True, the War Policies Commission said nothing about labor, and it heard strong opposition to the idea of a labor draft. The War Department, however, picked up where this earlier commission left off. Not only is it going to conscript labor, but it is going to wipe out all labor legislation that may stand in its way. The manner in which it scorns the hard-won protection of women in industry is significant:

For economic reasons, the statutes of the various states prescribe certain restrictions in the hours and conditions of employment of women in industry. . . . Many of these regulations and restrictions are expedient rather than necessary to the well-being of either the nation or the workers. In a national emergency much of this expediency is lost and the operation of some of these regulations and restrictions should be suspended.

What, then, can you expect in the next war if this mobilization plan is approved? Millions of young men will be drafted and sent overseas; other millions will be conscripted as workers and assigned to the war industries; gradually women and minors will also appear in the factories; freedom of press, freedom of

speech, and civil liberties generally will be suspended. The country will be ruled by a military dictatorship which will enforce economic tyranny. Meanwhile, the financial and industrial arrangements will be in the hands of "prominent industrialists." Nothing is contemplated that will prevent the outrageous profiteering of the last war—and of every war. When a War Department representative before the Nye Committee was asked his opinion about conscripting industry and the industrialists together with the soldier and the worker, he was so stunned that he asked for further time to think it over.

Needless to say, what the War Department is planning is a serious threat to freedom and democracy. It is true that imperialist wars breed dictatorship. All the more reason, then, for fighting war vigorously and relentlessly. The Nye Committee was right in issuing the following warning:

In view of the growth of dictatorships in the world using labor under military control, it is very important that the people weigh the grave dangers to our democracy involved in the draft of man-power and labor under the conditions proposed. The price of a war may be actual operating dictatorship.



# Whose Sun Is Rising in Japan?

*A study of the internal political scene reveals contradictions as yet unresolved*

By Albert Brown

**J**APANESE politics, however obscure and enigmatic to those nurtured in western democracies, has no less of an internal logic and intelligible development. The overthrow of the Hirota cabinet, the dramatic thwarting of General Ukagi's attempts at cabinet formation, and the current installation of General Hayashi as head of the government are stages in a single process. The present parliamentary crisis, marked by embarrassing interpellations in the Diet on army policies and budgetary expansion, is but part of that larger crisis which continues and deepens as Japan approaches her "great war."

The swing from Hirota to Hayashi represents a bloodless version of that other crisis of little more than a year ago when, on February 26, 1936, the extremist army clique staged a premature but not unpremeditated "rebellion." Three venerable "moderate" political leaders were assassinated, one was gravely wounded, and some others but narrowly escaped with their skins whole. The then prime minister, Okada, was forced to resign, together with the surviving remnants of his cabinet, after a sensational escape from the assassins. This Okada cabinet would have been characterized as reactionary by ordinary western standards. In Japan, however, it was considered "moderate," partly because it put up resistance to the mounting expenditures and the reckless adventures of the army. The principal opponent of the army demands was the aged, but extremely able, minister of finance, Takahashi, who paid for his opposition with his life.

THE HIROTA CABINET was formed immediately after the February 26 "revolt." It was installed under conditions of martial law after much haggling and bargaining. The army assumed the upper hand in the cabinet; Hirota's minister of war was General Terauchi, a belligerent saber-rattler. The army clique did not, however, get complete control.

The present Diet, whose dissolution the army demanded, to a large extent symbolizes popular opposition to the army program. It was elected on February 20 of last year in a striking victory of the anti-military and anti-fascist groups and parties. The proletarian representation alone rose from four to twenty-four. The reactionary Seyukai Party, which at the time was friendly to the military, lost its majority in the Diet. It is significant that the young officers staged their "rebellion" six days after the election.

In this January's sessions of the Diet a definite anti-army spirit prevailed. The scathing criticism of the army by the more moderate



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leader of this same Seyukai Party, strangely enough, was the pretext used by the army to demand the dissolution of the Diet. Mr. Hamada, the spokesman of Seyukai Party, accused the army leaders of dominating the cabinet and planning to install fascism. This would be an ordinary and routine criticism by an opposition party in any ordinary parliament, but in Japan this criticism precipitated a major political crisis. The army demanded the dissolution of the Diet. The emperor met them halfway, and adjourned the Diet. The army then demanded the resignation of the Hirota cabinet. The emperor agreed and commissioned the "moderate" General Ugaki (a choice some degrees to the right of Hirota) to form a new cabinet. The army rejected the emperor's choice. Japan was stunned; the will of its "sacred" and "omnipotent" ruler was defied. Such open defiance of the emperor by the army recalled the February 26 episode. Once again, the deep fissures in the much-lauded state structure of Japan stood out sharply.

To solve this dangerous stalemate, General Hayashi, representing a further concession to the army, was selected as prime minister. The army reluctantly agreed, and the new cabinet was pieced together. This cabinet, despite its "moderate" face, is under army domination to a greater degree than was the Hirota cabinet. For example, it does not have a single official representative of the political parties, whereas the Hirota cabinet had four. The Hayashi cabinet, however, cannot be characterized as an army cabinet, for the "moderate" groups around the emperor still hold the most important posts. The crisis among the ruling classes has not been solved. The new cabinet is at best a temporary stop-gap; its life will be short and stormy and dangerous.

The political parties in the Diet were silent during the entire battle over the cabinet. It seemed as if they were stunned speechless by the avalanche unloosed after a single speech of criticism. Even the legal and recognized social democratic party (Shakai Taishuto) failed to record its position despite its twenty-odd members of parliament. The battle for control of the government was confined to the army and its supporters against the "moderates," grouped around the emperor. The bourgeois political parties, never the sole expression of the ruling classes, are now playing a significantly lesser role in the internal conflicts of the ruling groups in Japan. More and more they are becoming the spokesmen of the middle classes and the small independent capitalists. The decisive sections of the ruling class are gravitating around the real sources of power, the army on