
“Peace on Earth.”

by Eugene V. Debs

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There has never been “Peace on earth and goodwill toward men;” and we shall have to go forward and not backward to realize that ideal. Civilization is still in a primitive, rudimentary state. It has taken countless ages to bring us from the brute, the cave-man, and the savage to where we are today. The development has been painfully slow, but steady, and will continue to the farthest stretches of time.

“Thou shalt not kill” is now the law. But it applies only to individuals — not yet to nations. To slay your neighbor is murder — unless you are in uniform. But when the nation slays its neighbors and the killings mount into the thousands, it is not murder but patriotism to be proud of, glorify, and rejoice over.

When shall peace come to earth? When the brute and savage shall have died in us and we have become human. In a word, peace will come to earth when humanity has been humanized, civilization civilized, and Christianity christianized.

The war in Europe is a crime against civilization but it had to come. It did not come *<illeg. words>* wars are between rival nations for commercial supremacy.

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It is of little use to cry out against war while we tolerate a social system that breeds war.

Capitalism makes war inevitable. Capitalist nations not only exploit their workers but ruthlessly invade, plunder, and ravage one another. The profit system is responsible for it all. Abolish that, establish industrial democracy, produce for use, and the incentive to war vanishes. Until then men may talk about “Peace on earth” but it will be a myth — or sarcasm.

But there is no cause for despair. The world is awakening and we are approaching the sunrise.

We cannot stop the European war. We can and will intervene when the time comes and do all in our power to restore peace. To end the war prematurely, were that possible, would simply mean another and perhaps even a bloodier catastrophe.

Let us show the people the true cause of war. Let us arouse a sentiment against war. Let us teach the children to abhor war.

More than 40 years ago the socialists of Europe declared:

We are against all wars, and especially all dynastic wars. With sincerest regret do we accept the unavoidable evils of a defensive war, and we demand that the recurrence of such a social calamity be made impossible for all time to come by vesting in the people themselves the power to decide over war and peace.

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The proposition is here made to put an end to war by democratizing war. In all the history of the world THE PEOPLE have never declared a war.

A constitutional amendment providing that no war shall be declared except by a vote of the people and that, as Allan Benson has suggested, if war is declared they who voted for it shall be the first to go to the front would put an end to war forever in this country.

Woman, although the most vital factor in war and its most keenly suffering victim, has always been contemptuously ignored when war has been declared. Give woman the ballot on equal terms with man in every state of this union and a mighty advance will have been made toward driving the horrible scourge of war from the face of the earth.

The earth is filled with its bounties; there is light in every brain and good in every heart. Let us rejoice

that we live at a time when old wrongs are being uprooted and new rights being proclaimed; when the night is passing and the better day is dawning; when all shall join rapturously in the divine anthem —

“PEACE ON EARTH AND GOODWILL
TOWARD MEN.”

Edited by Tim Davenport.

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