

World War I: ‘The War to End All Wars’

Believe it or not, Nov. 11 was not made a holiday in order to celebrate war, support troops, or cheer the 11th year of occupying Afghanistan. This day was made a holiday in order to celebrate an armistice that ended what was up until that point, in 1918, one of the worst things our species had thus far done to itself, namely World War I.

World War I, then known simply as the world war or the great war, had been marketed as a war to end war. Celebrating its end was also understood as celebrating the end of all wars. A ten-year campaign was launched in 1918 that in 1928 created the Kellogg-Briand Pact, legally banning all wars. That treaty is still on the books, which is why war making is a criminal act and how Nazis came to be prosecuted for it.

“[O]n November 11, 1918 s of Americans who had supported World War I came, during the years following its completion on November 11, 1918, to reject the idea that anything could ever be gained through warfare.

Sherwood Eddy, who coauthored “The Abolition of War” in 1924, wrote that he had been an early and enthusiastic supporter of

OUTLAW WAR

David Swanson

U.S. entry into World War I and had abhorred pacifism. He had viewed the war as a religious crusade and had been reassured by the fact that the United States entered the war on a Good Friday. At the war front, as the battles raged, Eddy writes, “we told the soldiers that if they would win we would give them a new world.” Eddy seems, in a typical manner,

to say, of wanting to legally outlaw all war. By 1924 Eddy believed that the campaign for Outlawry amounted, for him, to a noble and glorious cause worthy of sacrifice, or what U.S. philosopher William James had called “the moral equivalent of war.” Eddy now argued that war was “unchristian.” Many came to share that view who a decade earlier had believed Christianity required war. A major factor in this shift was direct experience with the hell of modern warfare.

The propaganda machinery

If in some smothering dreams you too could pace
Behind the wagon that we flung him in,
And watch the white eyes writhing in his face,
His hanging face, like a devil’s sick of sin;
If you could hear, at every jolt, the blood
Come gargling from the froth-corrupted lungs,
Obscene as cancer, bitter as the cud
Of vile, incurable sores on innocent tongues,
My friend, you would not tell with such high zest
To children ardent for some desperate glory,
The old Lie; Dulce et Decorum est
Pro patria mori*.

— Wilfred Owen

** It is sweet and fitting to die for one's country*

The extent of the casualties was hidden from the public as much as possible during the course of the war, but by the time it was over many had learned something of war’s reality

to have come to believe his own propaganda and to have resolved to make good on the promise. “But I can remember,” he writes, “that even during the war I began to be troubled by grave doubts and misgivings of conscience.” It took him 10 years to arrive at the position of complete Outlawry, that is

invented by President Woodrow Wilson and his Committee on Public Information had drawn Americans into the war with exaggerated and fictional tales of German atrocities in Belgium, posters depicting Jesus Christ in khaki sighting down a gun barrel,

and promises of selfless devotion to making the world safe for democracy. The extent of the casualties was hidden from the public as much as possible during the course of the war, but by the time it was over many had learned something of war’s reality. And many had come to resent the manipulation of noble emotions that had pulled an independent nation into overseas barbarity.

However, the propaganda that motivated the fighting was not immediately erased from people’s minds. A war to end wars and make the world safe for democracy cannot end without some lingering demand for peace and jus-

tice, or at least for something more valuable than the flu and prohibition. Even those rejecting the idea that the war could in any way help advance the cause of peace aligned with all those wanting to avoid all future wars — a group that probably encompassed most of the U.S. population.

Let us try to revive some memory of that foreign world on the occasion of the latest “veterans day” this Friday in this brave new era of searching for more war.

David Swanson is the author of “When the World Outlawed War” from which this is adapted.

Big Business and the Myth That it’s ‘Good for America’

Writing at Fareed Zakaria’s GPS blog at CNN.com, the Peterson Institute’s Gary Hufbauer and Martin Veirol undertake to defend big business as “good for America,” contending that the recent backlash against it is “based on three common misconceptions about major U.S. corporations.”

Hufbauer and Veirol argue that Americans misunderstand the importance of big business in innovation, that Americans’ ideas about “small places with big ideas” are a bit too sentimental.

Their case, a fairly standard and oft-repeated one among apologists for neoliberalism (i.e., neocolonialism) and corporate globalization, maintains that innovation and technological advancement require huge amalgamations of capital and worldwide scale. As the story goes, big business — ostensibly “better placed to capture economies of scale and scope” — are more capable of efficiently integrating all of the moving parts necessary to compete in the global economy.

According to this account, “the Bigs” achieved their size and ascendancy through the sacrosanct traditions of free enterprise, serving consumers in ways that the old mom-and-pop simply cannot. But as physicist Brian Greene recently remarked in a radio interview, “Our explanations have to meet our observations.” The narrative related by these champions of big business would be compelling enough but for a fact completely disregarded in their column - that the “competitiveness” they recount is nowhere to be found among big business.

Though you wouldn’t know it from reading Hufbauer and Veirol’s ode to the giant multina-

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tional, big business benefits from myriad forms of anti-competitive, state-granted privileges that screen it from the “small places” the authors play down. From regulatory barriers to the “informal economy” of the home, to direct and indirect subsidies and suffocating intellectual property laws, big business doesn’t have to compete.

Partly to blame for the authors’ misconception, is historical accident; as various incarnations of state socialism and communism took root around the world in the 20th century, popular discourse took the form of a false dichotomy comprised of capitalism on the one hand and state socialism on the other, with all of those pesky nuances rendered inconvenient to the rhetoric divide.

The apostles of the former half of that dichotomy, capitalism, exalted “American free enterprise” as the apparent concretization of libertarian principles. The latter half, socialism, was reduced to describing complete management of economic affairs by the state, abandoning earlier and subtler notions of the idea that were quite consonant with free market ideas.

One such earlier conception, that of individualist anarchist Benjamin Tucker, saw socialism as emerging as a matter of course from “the principle laid down by Adam Smith ... namely, that labor is the true measure of price.” Neither dictates nor regulations were necessary, Tucker argued, to secure for labor its due, provided, that is, that no dictates or regula-

tions were erected to favor powerful business interests.

In the capitalism of his day, Tucker saw a political economy quite apart from the laissez faire we have been conditioned to attribute to his era. So too is the version of “global free enterprise” we’re looking at today very thor-

oughly suffused with the weighty intrusions of coercive authority, giving us the overgrown deformities that Hufbauer and Veirol praise.

Corporations’ giant “economies of scale” would be hard pressed to remain intact and viable without constant viands provided by the

unwitting taxpayer. Instead of “smother[ing] [big business] with honey,” as Hufbauer and Veirol recommend, we would do well to see what happens if all of that “honey” — special privileges shaped in Washington - were withdrawn and replaced with a real free market.

Week on the Web

‘Shoulder to Shoulder’ Highlights Success, Failures in **Foster Care** System...*Northwest News*

Supporters Want Occupy Movement to Address **Racial Issues**...*Northwest News*

Kal Penn: The ‘A Very Harold & Kumar 3-D Christmas’



Interview...in *Entertainment/Movie Reviews*

Communities of Color Report Finds Native Americans Are Still **Losing Ground** ...*Northwest News*

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People....in *US News*

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