
Russell and Teddy Agree:

Letter to the Editor of *The American Socialist*, May 20, 1916.

by Alfred Wagenknecht

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Although it grieves us to state, yet we are in duty bound to register the fact that Charles Edward Russell and Teddy the Terrible agree. Both claim that eventually and ultimately we must come to a system of universal military service patterned after the Swiss and Australian plans. Both claim, and so does Victor Berger, that these plans of compulsory service further true democracy.

We take it, the idea is that instead of only corrupting a couple of hundred thousand regulars with the military spirit, it would be far more democratic to corrupt the entire nation. If there is one measly saving point which could be detected with a microscope, in the idea that something pernicious and rotten can be made less so if it is spread around a bit, show it to us.

And again. Although it grieves us so to state, we are duty bound to call your attention to a little slip of the pen in an article prepared for our consumption by Charles Edward Russell. After telling us how the Australian “democratic” military system was first jeered, but how it afterwards made good, we find this gem:

When the war burst upon England, thousands of Australia’s trained troops sailed away to capture the German strongholds in the Pacific, and save Egypt.

Are you on? Let’s have a “democratic” citizen soldiery in this country, so that when war is declared, thousands of them, yes millions, all mentally perverted by military training, can sail away to capture strongholds of other countries!! But for whom?

Reminds us of an article in a recent *Call* by joshing Wanhope, where in he makes us painfully aware of the fact that when people become converted to Socialism they invariably bring with them into the movement some baggage which they have been toting around before their conversion; mental baggage which most of them think positively necessary for the success of Socialism. Comrade Wanhope forgets to tell us that the comrade who studies and develops eventually drops this luggage of another life which retards mental progress. Charles Edward Russell may be excused upon this score, being very new in the movement and not having as yet had opportunity to drop his bundle of “military democracy” by the wayside. But how about veteran Berger? Shall we excuse him on the assumption that his brain still contains vestigial impressions of the savage state of society?

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