I Refuse!

By LOUIS C. FRAINA.

I refuse to compromise my ideals of liberty and fraternity. I refuse to drag these ideals in the mud and blood of brutal slaughter.

I refuse my moral and physical support to the great enemy of progress and the destroyer of the race.

In a day when all the forces of rapacity and tyranny are organized to crush the ideals and conscience of the individual, I shall not allow myself to be crushed.

I refuse to fight for a ruling class that oppresses and kills us in the days of peace, and now insists that we fight and die to protect its interests.

I recognize no loyalty but the loyalty to my class—no war but the international war against Capitalism—no ideals but the ideals of revolutionary Socialism—no duty but the duty to my conscience.

They are using the lives and aspirations, the courage and enthusiasm of our youth as fertilizer for the sinister business interests that promoted this war and which alone will profit by it.

I shall fight for life and love, beauty and freedom. But I shall not fight for death and profits, business and tyranny.

I refuse to acquiesce in the accomplished fact of war. I refuse to submit to the reaction, and to the extinction of freedom.

They shall not have my sanction for [illegible] and free-

my mind, my courage and enthusiasm.

I refuse to shoulder a gun, and tramp, tramp, tramp in the march of destruction.

I shall never use a gun to kill another man; a man whom I do not know and with whom I have no quarrel; a man whom if I did know I might love for his faults and ideals, and his joy in life.

I shall never stick the cold, sharp steel of the bayonet in the soft, unresisting guts of a human being, see him collapse in agony and the warm blood of life spurting out of his sagging body, hear the wail of the dying and the murmurs of farewell to dear ones who will never see him again.

I refuse to feed the guns that spurt out death, as if death were the all-absorbing business of life.

I refuse to shatter the body of a man that a mother agonized to bring forth for life and love.

I refuse to shatter the body of a man that has warmed a sweetheart, to cripple hands that have fondled a child, to smash the mouth that has kissed a mother.

I refuse to blind eyes that have gazed lovingly upon life, and hoped for happiness in spite of misery and death.

I refuse to make corpses that rot, cripples that suffer, and men and women that weep.

You say these things are necessary? That they are sacrifices for our ideals? You lie, gentlemen! Your ideals are to make money, to acquire power, to insure your financial supremacy. The ideals of democracy and civilization that you pretend to fight for are a fraud.

I refuse to fight for these ideals! I shall not tolerate compulsion! I shall not shed blood in your infamous cause!

You may punish me, you may break me physically. You cannot break my spirit and my conscience!

Others may palter, and acquiesce. I refuse!