

# L'ACTION DE LA PRESSE ET LA PAIX

October, 24th 1916.

Editor Le Devoir,

Dear Sir.

For two years previous to the war an influential daily paper, perhaps the most influential in Canada, in double column editorials preached the "German Peril". Our militia bill was then about \$4,000,000.00 : it rapidly increased to \$7,000,000.00 and when war broke out it had reached \$14,000,000.00. The idea of contributing \$35,000,000.00 to the Empire's alleged military needs germinated, though nothing definite was done : and this daily paper stated that Canada had brought peace to the world : because Germany would now see that she could not hope to keep up the pace our Empire was setting and would give up the struggle. Within a month of that declaration, Germany announced an increase of \$250,000,000.00 in military estimate. France followed with \$150,000,000.00, Italy ditto \$150,000,000.00, Austria the same, other smaller nations relatively the same : then, England followed with fully the same, to \$350,000,000.00. No one could tell what Russia was doing, but the whole thing exploded (naturally) in August 1914. If the daily paper claimed the glory for bringing peace to the world through its "German Peril" editorials, should it not take the blame if the thing refused to work and blew up ? At any rate, it will be difficult for Canada to shift all responsibility for the war, on account of our little flier in European politics. A match can start a big conflagration and even a breath of a rumour, a war.

After reading each other's papers, Ontario and Quebec thought that they misunderstood each other as a result, and some good people found it necessary to arrange a visit to clear up these misunderstandings and get to know each other better.

Another result of reading each other's papers "When Baron Shi-busawa visited America last year (Harry Hugo Guy, October men and Mission) it was arranged for him to meet the leaders of organized labor, both state and national. At one of those meetings a prominent advocate of labor union principles said : The more I see of you people the less you look like Japs to me. Certain newspapers and politicians have been largely responsible for the misunderstanding between Japanese and Americans. I believe that if representative men from the two countries could sit down together and talk things over, this problem could be settled and settled right. These problems will be settled by the workers."

Newspapers claim to be newspapers : but in spite of themselves they are the master moulders of ideas. What with censorship, gentle pressure through patronage (state and industrial), and the captivity of personal convictions, it is no wonder that if the newspapers underleads to misunderstandings.

It is hard to believe that newspapers made the war : but who will deny that if the newspapers underlook to make peace, they would not be successful ? If they gathered the news from the people instead of from the governments and their satellites, each one speaking well of his neighbor's readers, the results would be astounding. The fires of rumour, suspicion, fear, hatred and war can be quenched easily with the forces (the word "forces" is used advisedly) of faith, hope, justice, truth — all embodied in the one idea, love.

When things go right, newspapers say : "I did it" ; when wrong : "I'm only reporting it." Get a true estimate of yourself : then answer the question : "Who is my neighbor ?" and your readers can safely leave the rest to you. We are nervous about you now.

—Charles P. RICE.

P.S.—Do you remember how careful you were to avoid arousing racial and national hatred ? Why ? Is the spirit that prompted you a few years ago gone ?