

6.26 Opposition to War

Background: Prior to the start of World War I, European socialist parties opposed threats of war because workers would die while capitalist would profit. However, once the war was declared, most socialist groups and trade unions backed their governments and supported the war. In July 1914, the executive committee of the German Social Democratic Party (SPD) called for protests against a potential war. By August it had shifted its position. Similarly, the French Socialist Party and its affiliated labor unions organized mass rallies opposing war, but once the war began they supported the war effort. In the United States socialist and some labor groups refused to change their anti-war position and some of their leaders went to jail for organizing resistance to a military draft.

Instructions: Examine these political cartoons by opponents of U.S. entry into the war. What are the main themes in the cartoons? Create your own political cartoon either supporting or opposing U.S. entry into World War I.



BIG BUSINESS (to Labor, generously): "My good fellow, you'll be well paid for your patriotic action in 'tending this glorious plant; you shall have all the fruit above the ground—I'll take ONLY the roots!"