In the United States, there is a widespread hope that, when the war is over, capitalism will again be free, and planned economics will be avoided. (Quote H.W. Prentis Jr.) This view is not confined to rich industrialists; by clever propaganda they have persuaded large sections of the population that they cannot be curbed except by fascism. This is a view with which I radically disagree. But for the moment I wish to consider, not what is desirable, but what is probable when the war ends. By that time the whole of the labour, the agriculture, and the industrial resources, of the nation will be organized for war, i.e. for production of munitions and food and for the army, navy, and air force. This will involve cutting down to a minimum all production that is not immediately necessary. When the war stops, the munitions and the greater part of the armed forces will be no longer needed, but there will be, instead, an immense need of new houses, new clothes, repair of roads and railways, greater variety in food, and so on. Although there will be a need of these things, there will be little effective demand for them if the matter is left to private enterprise, because people will not have the money to pay for them. If the government does not step in, the demobilized will be out of work, and therefore unable to buy anything; the industrial plant
will require expensive readjustment to adapt it to peace-time production; the farmers will find a sudden drop in demand for their crops, both because of impoverishment at home, and because the Government will not be paying for lease-lend food to England; and so on. The result will be that at least half the population will suffer cold and hunger.

All this, of course, will not be allowed to happen, because the Government will see the necessity of continuing a planned economy. But there are almost sure to be very serious difficulties. The capitalists will be indignant if war-time controls are continued, but if they were not, the demobilized and destitute soldiers and defence workers would resort to civil war. The whole business of the transition from a war economy to a peace economy is totally beyond the capacity of private capitalism, and must be deliberately and carefully planned by the Federal Government. It seems hardly likely that, when once the nation has grown used to the benefits of planning, when vested interests have grown up in connection with it, and when it has enlisted the best brains available, it will ever seem wise to abandon it for the haphazard scramble that the capitalists advocate. I should expect a first-class political fight, in which the capitalists would not remain within the bounds of legality, but I should be surprised if they were victorious, unless the war ends much sooner than seems at all probable. A considerable degree of central planning, in the U.S. as elsewhere, seems likely to be a fairly permanent feature of the post-war world.

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