SOCIAL-DEMONKRATEN (Swedish, Majority Socialist.
March 4th) publishes an editorial by M. Hjalmar Branting, the Socialist ex-Prime Minister of Sweden and chief of the Swedish delegation to the first Assembly of the League of Nations, that has created a stir in the Scandinavian press owing to the well-known moderation and Francophil views of its author. The editorial is headed "Before a New Cold Catastrophe!" and reads as follows: "The course of the negotiations at the London Conference dealing with Germany's payment of reparations is sweeping toward the abyss along the road laid down beforehand with a swiftness and consistency that inevitably remind one of the rôle of diplomacy during Europe's black week in July 1914. Then too events rolled along almost of themselves, once the criminal gamblers about the Imperial thrones of Central Europe had decided to take the risk of a world war rather than to give up their claims to chastise Serbia as they liked and alone to lay down the law in the Balkans.

"Now it is as though the group of men whom the khaki and horizon blue elections in Great Britain and France had chosen to press home the demands of a temporarily triumphant nationalism, oblivious to the fact of whether these demands were really possible to execute or not, had themselves been blinded to the consequences of their policy and to the utterly destructive results for the reconstruction of the world entailed by unreasonable stubbornness in a clearly practical-economic question.

"The Entente leaders in London seem entirely have lost sight of the view-sober matter of course though it be - that a debtor who is forced beyond his capacity becomes a worse payer than in a settlement to which he too agrees." [This does not mean that the German initial offer of 50 milliards was satisfactory, for it was an obvious underbid, and offered in a singularly tactless manner.]
"But one should have the right to demand that those who have the
decision in their hands should see beyond and around such first
impressions, and above all that they should understand thoroughly
what the 'And then' will be in case .... the German delegates
are perhaps on the way home by the time this is being read, with
a 48 hours ultimatum to agree to the Paris resolutions in toto.
on pain of the 'sanctions', the punitive measures, being applied.

"It has been made sufficiently plain since the Paris
Conference that the latter's conditions are not capable of being
fulfilled. These conditions come to grief on all kinds of
economic difficulties, but not least on the absolute refusal of
the international working class to let the workers of a great
people sink to the standard of living of a helot-class, underpaid
and with many hours of permanent over-time work beyond the
8 hours day.

"On this point the whole powerful British world of
labour stands as firm as Germany's own workers, and the deplorable
split in the French labour movement will not prevent unity on this
point. There is not the slightest doubt that when we are informed
by telegraph here that even LE PEUPLE, of Paris, the C.G.T.'s new
organ, finds the German proposal unacceptable, this does not mean
any underwriting of Briand's/Loucheur's claims. What is asked for
is simply what common sense and justice demand, namely that
Germany shall pay fully as far as she can for the barbarous de-
struction wrought by her former rulers. But there is no desire to
create out of justice itself a fresh injustice which would prevent
the world from beginning to recover from its sufferings. In
other words, Labour in all the three great countries demands
those negotiations for a reasonable and feasible, though certainly
onerous for the German people, settlement, that the London
Conference was to bring about but failed to produce." [Instead
the sanctions are about to be brought into play and the world
war in a measure to be resumed. Do those who are in authority for
the moment then seriously believe that the peoples concerned are
going to resign themselves to this protestation? The signs of the
times show nevertheless that a general election in England now
would give a radically different Parliament, and in a recent
bye-election the constituency that a year ago sent Millerand to
the Chamber of Deputies gave only 47,000 votes for the bloc
national as against 66,000 for the three Socialist parties.

"Is there then no understanding of the riskiness of the
gamble involved in trying now to order out new armies and
appeal to force as the executor of claims which there has not
even been an attempt to settle by agreement now, with all the
memories of the world war and all the unfulfilled promises of
an era of justice and peace as the background? Even if hired and
coloured troops, with all the evil this would entail, were sent
first, it would soon again be the citizen armies that would have
to fall in. And this it is believed would really happen as simply
as pressing a button, sated as the atmosphere of sick Europe is
with every kind of suffering and ferment. Not to mention the
absurdity of believing it possible to make colossal economic
gains out of such a fearfully expensive proceeding as the
military occupation of large, thickly populated territories even
if the population did not try to meet force with force.

"Hitherto the propaganda from Moscow has failed
completely in its incessant efforts to create the very condition
of life for both the spread and the maintenance of Bolshevism -
a really revolutionary situation within the victorious powers of
Western Europe. Do the leading statesmen of the Entente really
propose with careless frivolity to give their mortal enemies
the decisive advantage - surely unexpected even to them -
that they would gain by a renewed state of war between the fore-
most civilised peoples of Europe?

"The first world war brought the outbreak and triumph of the revolution among the conquered peoples. An attempt to continue the war now would be such a declaration of bankruptcy on the part of the wisdom now ruling the world that no power could restrain the will among overwhelming numbers of people to resort to the self-help of desperation and also to try the new possibilities a state of general chaos might reveal. The fiasco of the London congress - if it ends as it now seems to end - is not the triumph of the bullying creditors, but of Lenin."