

The World Task Of Pacifism

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It is a common thing to hear people of practically all schools of thought say that what is going on today is not a war in the ordinary sense of the term but a revolution. One of the leaders of the younger generation of pacifists said to me recently that for the most part our pacifist movement is not aware how profound and sweeping are the changes that are coming and that, as a consequence, we pacifists are still approaching our tasks with a narrow and provincial vision and on a petty scale.

On the other hand, Gerald Heard has said that the pacifist movement alone can qualify as the “receiver” for the bankrupt western world, which faces extinction unless pacifists are prepared to “take over” presently. I believe this to be a sober statement of fact. I shall try to explain why and how it is so.

A World Is Breaking Up

The order of life to which we have been accustomed in the western world is very evidently breaking up. This is true of its spiritual and cultural and also of its economic and political aspects. In life these are never really separated, but for convenience we may deal with each for a moment.

Out of Renaissance and Reformation grew a great impulse for the liberation of the human spirit and its various cultural expressions — a movement largely justified in its efforts, one example of which was the freeing of economic,

political and intellectual life from ecclesiastical fetters. From this point, however, there was a tendency to set man at the center of the universe — despite fervent protestations that the anthropomorphic must be given up in favor of the scientific or of some other outlook — a tendency to conceive of man as really the highest form of moral being and to put any thought of God, of moral Being beyond man, out of the picture. Whenever man is thus cut off from the living source and end of his being, which is deep within and yet infinitely beyond himself, disaster overtakes him and his societies, as is now again the case. Man whose spirit was to have been freed at last from ancient restraint and superstition has not for centuries found himself less free than he is today: a cog in a machine in our own industrialism; a pawn in the hands of a totalitarian state under Fascism; or the tool of a totalitarian party under Communism. Men who think it childish to bow the knee before God and to be humble followers of the gentle Jesus, do bow the knee by millions before Hitler, Mussolini, Stalin, a favorite movie idol, an impersonal trade union, a political or a business boss. Many of the most sophisticated and sensitive spirits in our day who cannot degrade themselves to that level, fall into disillusionment or cynicism, the mood of being able to “see through” everything and everybody but no longer able to “see anything in” anything or anybody.

This is the result of inexorable spiritual law. “If there is no God,” exclaims one of Dostoevsky’s characters, “then I am God.” And when men come to believe that, when they really believe there is no objective Good for which they can live; no law of reality to which high and low are truly subject; no One in all the universe more honest, more dependable, more capable of living in and building up a free society than they are themselves; then they cannot respect and trust themselves or one another. The bond of community is broken and life flies apart.

Equally in a political and economic sense our world is falling in pieces. We have productive machines to furnish the material means for the good life in abundance; but we fail or refuse to devise ways for distributing these goods in equitable or brotherly fashion, and so the machine is periodically clogged by its own output. There are just two ways to meet such a situation. One is to take the brakes off the machine and distribute the goods. We have everywhere rejected that course; therefore we have to put brakes on so that the machine will not be completely buried under its own products. That means an end to any form of "free enterprise," individual or cooperative. The State is the only agency available to put on the brakes, so everywhere we get rapidly increasing state intervention in the economic process, in order to limit production by crude methods such as plowing under cotton, burning coffee and leaving fruit to rot beneath trees; or by more subtle methods such as tariffs and production quotas.

But the supposed remedy aggravates the disease and causes a further contraction of the economy. For nations to try to be self-sufficient, grow all their raw materials and manufacture all their goods is as uneconomic as it would be for Texas to try to have its own steel industry and for Pittsburgh to insist on raising its own wheat. Rivalries between sorely pressed nations become intense and all devote increasing capital and energy to unproductive war expenditures. This "puts the unemployed to work" on producing war implements which no one can eat, wear, or live in, resulting eventually in still further contraction of production and more complete collapse.

Not a single country in the western world has broken away from this circle. In one nation after another, therefore, the point has been reached at which the pressure on the masses is so severe that no organ of criticism or opposition can be permitted to exist. A wartime "communism" must be

instituted to ration out the few goods that remain and to prepare for a death-struggle with some other national unit. That means dictatorship, totalitarianism — deadly uniform throughout except for the color of shirt it wears! If the unemployed, whom we in the United States are now “putting to work” in arms plants and military camps, presently walk the streets again, it seems certain that nothing on earth will prevent the emergence of an American dictatorship.

War Cannot Halt Disintegration

War will not stop this process of disintegration; it is fatuous to hope that it can even momentarily, given a victory by the “right side,” halt the process so that a new beginning may be made. This is true whether we look at the matter from the ethical and spiritual or from the politico-economic viewpoint. In the former case war is itself an extreme expression of our disintegration, our inability to meet difficulties except by increasingly brutal strife; and, as recent experience has demonstrated, neither the poverty, exhaustion, disillusionment and humiliation of defeat, nor the nationalistic exultation and the moral letdown of victory contribute to the healing of the nations. Similarly in the economic and political realm, war is the inevitable expression of our failure and refusal to face our real problems and to institute sane solutions. War can only serve, as World War I and its aftermath have made clear for all who do not close their eyes, to accelerate fearfully the process of impoverishment and breaking up.

The best chance, in fact the only chance we have left, to stop the movement of disintegration and to begin building on sounder foundations without first passing through a period marked by chaos and incalculable woe, is an early peace. Such a peace is, however, conceivable only if nations were to recognize that war offered no way out of any real

problem and if they were to turn their attention seriously to dealing with those economic and cultural conditions which we have described and which constitute the roots of war. Obviously that would mean that the present rulers would be converted to what might be called a realistic pacifism or that other leaders who did take that position would come to the front. And this in turn clearly implies that a great responsibility such as we alluded to in the beginning would be placed on the pacifist forces.

Unfortunately, the chances that events will take this turn are not bright. If the war continues, an appalling situation will obtain at its close. This will be true, as I have elsewhere tried to set forth at some length, whether it ends in a nominal British victory or a nominal German victory or in a stalemate of complete exhaustion in which neither side pretends to have won a victory. An increasing number of non-pacifist observers accept in private conversation if not in public utterances this analysis of the future.

Men Turn To Opponents Of War

Assuming that Europe is not reduced to utter anarchy, we are bound to be confronted with a revolutionary situation. We recall that this was the case at the close of the last war. At that time there was in the defeated countries a revolt against those who had been in command during the war. They were held responsible for the distress that had overtaken the masses and were considered unworthy of the trust of leadership. To whom then did men turn? They turned to the Communists and Social Democrats who had in one degree or other been opposed to the war, who had pointed out its danger and futility even while war was going on and who had been the first to agitate for peace.

Nor was this phenomenon confined to the defeated countries. In France and Great Britain also the Socialists,

Communists and Labor Party people, including such pacifists or near-pacifists as Ramsay MacDonald and Philip Snowden, were given the trust of the people and rose to positions of responsibility. A moment's reflection will indicate that it was bound to be so. People experiencing disillusionment with war, finding that its fruits turn to ashes in their mouths, inevitably reject the leaders who were instrumental in leading them into war and whose prophecies of its blessed results have been disproved; and by the same token they must turn to those who were on the other side and who were clear sighted enough to see the outcome and brave and honest enough to tell what they foresaw.

In its essentials the situation after the present war will present the same characteristics. There will, however, be two important differences. (1) In Europe the revulsion against war and against those who are thought of as war-makers will be practically as great in countries that are nominally victorious as in the others. It seems in-conceivable that anywhere the regimes that were in control at the opening of the war should survive its end. Even apart from the factor of distrust and resentment felt against the leaders who took them into the war, the conditions will differ so vastly from those to which people have been accustomed that they will only fumble in their efforts to deal with them. Witness how these same regimes even in the democratic countries fumbled the ball after the last war!

But (2) there will be an even more important difference. The Communists and Socialists of various hues, to whom the masses turned at the close of World War I, rejected imperialist wars but in varying degrees they accepted violence and war, offensive or defensive, if waged on behalf of the proletariat. War between nations could achieve no good; but war between classes and the setting up of a temporary proletarian dictatorship based on force were seen as instruments of liberation. But the events of the post-war

period in Russia and elsewhere have, to put it mildly, thrown grave doubts on this thesis. I doubt whether anyone who comes to the masses, fed up with the horrors of war, with the gospel that they can now turn to civil war in order to set up an iron dictatorship which will give them a Utopia on the Russian model, will actually be regarded as a savior and liberator. It is indeed not impossible that Stalin might become the "receiver" of a bankrupt Europe — much more likely perhaps than that it should be Churchill or Roosevelt or even Hitler — but that will be an indication, not that new hope has inspired the masses of Europe, but that they despairingly accept a debased Bolshevism as preferable to utter chaos.

The movement to which alone men might turn with hope, in the conviction that the journey into a new day had indeed begun, would need to have certain characteristics. (1) It must be a movement which renounced war and organized violence of all kinds and which had made it clear beforehand that this was its stand. (2) It must be a movement which renounced dictatorship, which summoned men to a life organized around the principle of cooperation and not of coercion and individualism. (3) It must be a profoundly religious movement. For men will no longer be able to believe in the too simple and mechanical notion that if you will only set up a new system, all our problems will be solved. They will not really be able to believe that a new world is possible unless they can believe that new men can be created, that they themselves can be delivered from imprisonment in the self and become conscious of unity with the whole, united with God, with moral reality beyond themselves. They will need a faith that transforms and saves them, gives them eternal resources to live by and values to live for.

But this simply means what Gerald Heard has said in effect, namely, that only the Christianity of Jesus, only religious pacifism, can build a movement which goes to the

root of evil in man and in society, which men will trust and which can take over when the war is ended or has run its course.

Non-Violence And Social Change

A searching question immediately arises. Should the religious pacifist movement think of itself in these large terms as a mass movement for achieving social change by non-violence? It seems to me increasingly clear that we can no longer evade the responsibility and the challenge. If we do seek to evade it, we shall no longer be able to believe in or respect ourselves. Either we believe our own words when we say that love, non-violence, community form the basis on which all human association must be founded — and in that case we must do our utmost to achieve such an order, especially when the multitudes will be asking, “To whom else shall we go?” Or we do not really believe what we say. In that case we ought, of course, to stop saying it. Furthermore, we would be forced to admit that our pacifism is indeed the escape from social and political realities which our critics charge. Those of us whose roots go down into the Jewish-Christian prophetic tradition cannot evade the call to pray and work for the realization of the Kingdom of God on earth.

To put it in another way, either we ought to resign from the world and abandon political activity altogether — quit voting, quit working against conscription laws or for provisions for conscientious objectors in draft laws, and the like — or else we must resolutely carry out the political task to its end, the organization of all life on true foundations and for worthy ends. We cannot keep on saying, in effect, to the disinherited and oppressed: “We suffer with you; we hope that your wrongs may be redressed; we share your dream of a world in which men shall live together as brothers. But

we are opposed to violence. If, therefore, you resort to violence, we shall have to stand aside." We must indeed resolutely refuse to be tempted to violence: that is the short cut which invariably turns out to be the blind-alley. But if we leave it at that, then in effect, as our critics have pointed out, the disinherited are condemned to the choice between acquiescence in tyranny or resort to violence. We pacifists must go on to show that evil can be overcome and a new order built in the spirit by the method of non-violence.

The Future Of Pacifist Relief Work

Or we may look at our dilemma from still another angle. Obviously there will be, during the war perhaps, and at its close certainly, a vastly increased need and demand for the pacifist work of relief and reconstruction in which the Society of Friends has pioneered and which has so profoundly won the confidence of all peoples. It is unthinkable that this work should be abandoned, and failure enormously to extend it, whether through existing or new agencies, would be pretty nearly equivalent to abandonment. But how separate relief and reconstruction under the conditions which will then prevail in Europe and elsewhere? Will relief which is not reconstruction be anything but a mockery, a business of trying to stop the tide with a board fence? Will not the reconstruction require to be general in scope, including housing, transportation, and all the rest? And how will it be possible for Service Committee workers to draw a line between rebuilding houses and helping to build an order of life which will make houses something more than shelters for driven cattle or ravaging wolves?

Have we not always said that it was not material goods we were bringing men except in a secondary sense, but a demonstration, or at least a symbol of a new way of life? What are we to give men when they have despaired of other

ways of life and hold out their hands in hope? I see only two choices: to retire from the field and shamefacedly to admit that we have been only playing at building life on truth and love, or humbly to undertake leadership of the new world, and seek to build our vision into economic and political reality, as, for example, did William Penn.

Are We Adequate?

But is not all this a fantastic kind of daydreaming? Is it even remotely possible that the religious pacifist forces, the Christian forces, should measure up to such a challenge? It is of course possible that we may fail through our own fault, that for lack of faith and discipline the salt will lose its savor, the light be hidden under a bushel or extinguished. To that problem we must return in a moment. But before the western world can or does begin to rebuild, it may break up as utterly as did the western Roman Empire; in this event small groups of pacifists might serve as little islands of safety and sanity and faith in a black sea of barbarism, as did the monasteries in the beginning of the Dark Ages. For this also we must be prepared, if it should come; but we have not yet arrived at that point.

Assuming then that in the post-war period we might be given the chance to provide leadership in building a new order and that we ourselves are prepared to undergo the severe disciplines, physical, intellectual, and spiritual, which that would entail, is there any possibility that the forces of non-violence may in some degree meet the situation?

Several observations may be made in answer to that question. In the first place, the fact that we are now few and that the self-styled realists do not think that they need to take us into political consideration is not at all decisive. In the nature of the case, the revolutionary element remains small, little noticed unless it be to visit persecution upon it, so long as men still hope that the world can go on much as

it has done or that they can wake up presently as from a nightmare and find themselves safe in the old bed. For the majority of people, to turn to those who say boldly that the old order must go and that men must build on new and divine foundations, would mean to admit utter inadequacy and to accept blame for apostasy and in-sensitiveness. They may not come to that until the bankruptcy of the forces of the old order can no longer be hid.

Secondly, we are appreciably stronger than a score of years ago not only in numbers but in intellectual comprehension and spiritual development. When we consider that in theological writing and discussion it is the non-pacifists rather than the pacifists who are on the defensive; when we note the advance in dealing with the problem of the conscientious objector both in the church and in the nation and observe the widespread interest in activities of the American Friends Service Committee, we need not despair.

In the third place, every period of upheaval in history has revealed that there are men and women of great technical, organizing, administrative ability who cannot adjust themselves to a new order and who in one way or another sabotage it. There are, however, not a few such experts and technicians who have long known that the old order was thwarting them and stultifying them in the exercise of their abilities, and multitudes who have no objection to placing their technical and other talents at the disposal of the forces of the new day. There have always been even military leaders who have readily transferred their services to the regime which has overthrown that for which they had fought for a lifetime. Our own best scientific, engineering, and organizing minds often devote themselves now to forging diabolically effective instruments of slaughter and destruction. Many such brains will continue to do so as long as men believe that war is a possible solution for social

problems. Let men once come out from under the spell of that delusion, and we shall be surprised at the resources both in ordinary human beings and in the intellectual leaders which will be released for the work of building a new world, resources which men will joyously put at the service of those who have been the prophets and pioneers of the new order. Indeed not a few people who are not themselves pacifists already ask for the opportunity of putting their talents at the disposal of the work of Friends.

Fourthly, the Gandhi movement in India is giving the world an example of the use of non-violence on a mass scale. Not only may we pacifists learn much from Gandhi and his followers in building a mass non-violence movement in this and other western countries but we may hope that people generally in the western world will be impressed by this oriental example, as the futility and waste of violence becomes more obvious. Furthermore, cooperation between eastern and western nonviolence movements may well come to have a decisive influence on world events.

The Gandhi Movement

It may be fruitful to observe in passing those fundamental characteristics of the Gandhi movement which must also, I believe, mark the growing pacifist movement in the United States. First of all, it is a religious movement. It is based upon convictions about the very nature of life and the universe, convictions held not merely by the mind but by a moral commitment of the whole being to the practice of them. Pacifism with Gandhi, and if not with all his followers certainly with those who constitute the inner core of his movement, is not a tool that you pick up or lay down, use today but not tomorrow, use in this relationship and not in some other. It is a way of life. You cannot really practice pacifism unless you are a pacifist and likewise in the measure

that you are a pacifist it becomes unthinkable ever to practice violence whether physical or spiritual. Hence also the program of personal training and discipline as an indispensable part of the movement.

It is an economic and social movement. These elements are symbolized by spinning in Gandhi's program. About some aspects of Gandhi's economic program I am dubious — for instance I am not convinced that it is necessary or desirable to go back to a pre-machine economy — but such questions may for our present purpose be put to one side. Three elements implied or suggested by Gandhi's emphasis on spinning are, as I see it, essential to an adequate non-violence movement.

First, any movement which undertakes to give leadership or help in building a better world must give much attention to the ordering of the economic life. It must clarify its thinking as to the kind of economic order to strive for. It must decide how much socialization is possible without the creation of either a totalitarian state or a political machine which, besides crushing the liberty of the individual, may fail in the narrow economic sense because of its bureaucratic administration and attendant red tape, deadening of initiative and temptation to evade responsibility. It must not only invent but it must experiment with schemes for a more decentralized human and cooperative way of living.

The second essential symbolized by Gandhi's spinning plan is the expression of our basic philosophy of life in the economic sphere now rather than some day in the future when a new system is established. To postpone action has been the prevailing tendency among socialists and communists: "The day will come when socialism will be established and then we'll be socialists. Meanwhile there is not much that can be done to alleviate the evils of the present order and you personally must go on living and doing business much as any capitalist might." One difficulty with

this approach is that workers are hungry and cold now and they cannot wait until the revolution to do some thing about it.

But there is a deeper and more subtle difficulty, which may be put this way: If you say that men cannot live as socialists until socialism has been established — or as Christians until a Christian world has been achieved — then you are saying in effect that non-socialists can build socialism and that people who are not Christians except in a theoretical sense can build a Christian order of life. That has an implication which the social-democrats never faced squarely, but which the communists saw clearly and accepted, namely, that if the new system does not represent the general conviction of the people, it has to be set up in the first instance by violence and that human beings must be regimented in the new environment until they are psychologically reconditioned and adapted to the new system.

But the Russian experience has reminded us that in this realm also violence and coercion are self-defeating and that the product of regimentation is not a finer man, but a degraded human being. We are driven to the conviction that men who are autocrats and lovers of power in their own souls will not build a democratic world; men who are essentially self-seekers will not build a cooperative commonwealth. It equally follows that men who have entered into the spirit of community will inevitably be driven to seek to give expression at once to their inner spirit in economic relationships. As the early Christians, the Franciscans, the early Friends illustrate, there is always creative experimentation in the economic life where there is genuine and fresh religious experience.

Gandhi's spinning program has a third important element for those who seriously desire to build a non-violence movement. It shows that manual work has important effects on the individual spirit and that corporate manual activity

is a powerful agent for unifying pacifist groups within and also for unifying them with their non-pacifist neighbors, especially workers and farmers.

Gandhi's movement, finally, is a political movement. It expresses the determination of the masses of India to free themselves from the yoke of British imperialism without violence and without hatred for the oppressor. For our present purpose it is not necessary to elaborate this point except to observe that in addition to developing mass resistance to war, a western non-violence movement must make effective contacts with oppressed and minority groups such as Negroes, share-croppers, industrial workers, and help them to develop a nonviolent technique, as Gandhi has done in the India National Congress.

Pacifist Strategy In War Time

Our conception of the ultimate major task of the religious pacifist movement will necessarily have an important influence on our ideas about the strategy of the movement in the immediate war crisis. Discussion of the attitudes and activities of pacifists in time of conscription and war indicates that there are some who incline toward an activist and militant and others to a more quietist pacifism. The latter would discourage direct opposition to the war activities of the nation, urging concentration on works of mercy and reconstruction. This reconstruction must be such that it will not antagonize people, but that it will illustrate the underlying spirit of love which animates us, and enable us to survive without being subjected to fruitless suffering until such time as the masses recover from their war-mania and are able to weigh calmly our counsels about national and international policy.

It seems clear to me that we must indeed do our utmost to remain in fellowship with our own countrymen and fellow-

churchmen. We must seek to identify ourselves with their need and suffering. If community is to be temporarily broken, it must be they and not we who do the cutting off, and even then we must harbor no ill will and be on the look-out for opportunities to be helpful to them in simple human ways. It is also clear that we cannot engage in sabotaging the activities of our fellow citizens who feel called to fight. We seek to wean our fellows from the desire to make war, not to interfere from without with their war efforts or to destroy their property. Our non-cooperation with the war-effort of the nation, if enough were moved to participate in it, might of course at some stage have a decisive effect upon that war effort; but this would not be the result of a positive and deliberate destructive act on our part but simply the result of our inability to cooperate with what seems to us an evil and ruinous course. Besides it would not be an act of disloyalty to our own country but of obedience to a higher law and to a sovereign "not of this world."

Furthermore, the negative act of refusal to support war is only one part of pacifism, of the way of love and non-violence. Never can we abate our efforts to give positive expression to pacifism in cooperative living and brotherly service.

I am, however, equally clear in feeling that in time of conscription and war, we cannot retire for practical purposes from political activity, from attempting to influence the nation's course, especially when there are still certain democratic channels available for doing so.

The movement as a whole should not, it seems to me, become quietist and non-political. That might be merely an expression of an isolationist or escapist attitude, neither of which expresses the true spirit of community with our fellows.

For one thing, there will always be concrete issues on

which we must speak or run the risk of being traitors to the truth. Civil liberties will be abridged; minorities may be persecuted; labor may be denied its rights and the masses may be made to bear an inordinate share of the costs of war. Certainly the fact that one may not be able to speak out on such matters without having to suffer for it, or without offending many, would hardly be sufficient to excuse silence. Periodically in a war situation the question comes up as to whether an effort should be made to negotiate a peace or whether the war shall go on until our own nation is in a position to dictate a peace. Periodically the question of war aims or peace terms will or should be raised.

We have already pointed out a more fundamental reason why the pacifist movement cannot, save at peril to itself and mankind, retire from the arena of political discussion. In that arena the process of education and miseducation is going on all the time. Silence may contribute to it as well as speech. The extent to which the masses will have confidence in us and turn to our leadership after the war will depend upon whether we have given practical demonstrations of love and of our ability to build and organize.

But it will also depend on whether by our analysis and interpretation of events we have demonstrated our intellectual capacity for leadership, our ability to see that war was futile before that became common knowledge, and our courage to speak the truth when it is unpleasant and dangerous to do so. It is impossible to read, for example, the early history of the Quakers without realizing that it was precisely because they could not be silenced, because they continued to bear witness to their faith and to oppose personal and social sin even when multitudes were offended, that those multitudes at last said in effect: "Obviously these Quakers are serious. We have come upon a strange species of human being who refuses to compromise the truth or to be clubbed into silence. Consequently, we shall have to adapt

ourselves to this strange phenomenon. With this man who refused to try to buy immunity, we shall have to compromise, give him special exemptions and a peculiar confidence!"

This may indeed be a good time to recall George Fox's words written in 1667: "the cry is now amongst them that are without, 'where is there a Quaker for such and such a trade?' — Oh! therefore, Friends who have purchased this through great sufferings, lose not this great favor which God hath given unto you, but that ye may answer the witness of God in every man which witnesseth to your faithfulness, that they may glorify your Father on your behalf."

Here I think we have put our fingers on what must be foremost and basic in our shaping of pacifist policy in time of crisis. Probably we are not all called upon to bear our witness in the same way. Some will be led to a more militant course, others to a quieter form of witness. The former must take especial pains to make sure their only motive is love; the latter that they are not unwittingly influenced by fear or a tendency to avoid difficult and complicated issues. All who have committed themselves to the way of love and non-violence must remain in fellowship and unity with each other, not thinking of themselves as more orthodox or honest or useful pacifists than those who put the emphasis in a different place. The fact that this spirit of unity and mutual confidence has obtained between non-registrants and registrants has been very heartening. But most important is it that all of us should be deeply and unreservedly committed to that life "which taketh away the occasion of all war." We should realize that that life is the hope of the world, the one means of salvation. Our task is always the positive one of witnessing to that life and of practicing it.

The problem which confronts us at any moment is never: To what extent can we compromise with existing economic and political institutions, adapt ourselves to the demands of the world? Our problem always is to bring the

state and other Institutions of the world to adjust themselves to the demands of the Christ spirit, to the way of life which His truest followers incarnate, though in order to accomplish this we have no weapons but those of reason, love, humility, prayer, and willingness to die for our faith. In outward appearance the point at which we arrive by these contrasting processes of the world adapting itself to us or of our adapting ourselves to the world may at a given moment be much the same; but the direction in which we are going as we pass through that point will be the decisive matter. If we are doing the compromising, there will be no end until our power is gone. If the state is being made to adapt itself to the demands of the spirit, then, to mix the metaphor, it is clear that the yeast has not lost its fermenting power and the lump will yet be transformed into wholesome bread.

The Problem Of Alternative Service

All this has, finally, an important bearing upon the question of alternative service under the conscription act. One of our best loved leaders who earned his right to speak and be listened to by his sufferings as a conscientious objector in the last war, has said: "There is of course no absolutely consistent and final position in this complicated world; but there are only two approximately consistent positions under conscription. Either you accept conscription and then you may as well do what the government forces you to do. Or else you refuse to be ordered and put it up to the government to leave you alone or put you in jail." With what is aimed at in this drastic saying, I am in thorough accord. If our readiness to render what is called alternative service arises out of an intellectual blurring of the issue between totalitarianism and democracy, between conscription by the state and voluntary service to society; if it arises from a desire to make it easy for the government to carry forward

war which we profess to regard as evil and suicidal; or from an unconfessed and unfaced impulse to avoid unpleasantness and persecution for ourselves, a desire to have our fellow-citizens say with a sigh of relief, "These pacifists are harmless and jolly good fellows after all"; or from a desire to hold our young people organizationally in the membership of some denomination or sect — then there would in my opinion be no important difference of principle between such alternative service on the one hand and non-combatant or even combatant service on the other hand. In that case a handful of absolutists going to jail or to their death as did the uncompromising pioneers of Quakerism would do more for religious pacifism and for the salvation of mankind from the curse of war than thousands of so-called pacifists in alternative service camps.

But I do not believe we are confined to the choice among (1) submitting to conscription, (2) a form of alternative service which amounts to submitting to conscription because in effect it is a device to smooth the way for the war-machine and its fascist trends, or (3) going to jail. There are those who will not be true to the Inner Light unless they follow a course such as that of the non-registrants, which leaves the government no alternative except at once radically to alter its own course or send these men to jail. From the beginning it has been my conviction that these men rendered a great service to the cause of pacifism and democracy and prophetic religion. Our movement would have been poorer and would, I think, have won less regard even from those who oppose us if we had not produced such "absolutists."

Fidelity to conscience at cost to the individual in the face of general opposition and disapproval still has power to win the respect of men who also have "that of God" in them. Every man has in his own conduct a line beyond which he will not go no matter how absurd it may seem to others to draw the line at just that point, the point at which he must

stand with Athanasius or Luther against the world, and say, "So help me God, I can do no other." There are known to be C.O.'s who registered but also consider themselves "absolutists" and who will refuse to accept anything but that complete exemption from compulsory or assigned service which is available to British "absolutists" under the law in that country. If such men take this course as a result of mature reflection and an unreserved commitment to the leading of the Spirit, I believe they will do a great service. Personally I should wish to be morally identified with them.

This does not mean, however, that acceptance of alternative service necessarily and under all conditions represents a compromise with evil, "making the best of a bad business," taking shelter and keeping still until the storm blows over. The issue is sufficiently fundamental to warrant consideration.

From one standpoint, it is impossible to exaggerate the importance of war-resistance, of total refusal to have any part in war. Some of our critics, referring to this phase of pacifism, speak of it disparagingly or with violent condemnation as "merely negative"; and sometimes we are a bit intimidated by them. These critics, in most instances, do not mean that they want us to abstain from war and in addition do something else. They themselves are not ready to do this "merely negative" thing and sometimes just because this "merely negative" thing is so hard and would have such decisive and positive repercussions! In a sense the nations cannot solve, they will not even face their real problems, so long as they think resort to an armament boom and presently war constitutes a "way out." To say that refusal to participate in war and so to help remove this tumor from the body politic is "merely negative" is the same as applying that description to removal of a tumor from the body physical. Of course it is negative and in itself not sufficient, but in the first place, unless this is done the patient will die

and in the second place, if it is done the life-forces in the organism can flow unimpeded and can do the positive job of making that organism vital and effective again.

Nevertheless there is a sense in which war resistance is only incidental in the pacifist way of life, in the life of love and non-violence. To break out of the hard shell of the Self, which is all the time seeking to defend itself against its brothers and therefore commits aggression against them; to know in one's inmost being the unity of all men in God; to express love at every moment and in every relationship, to be channels of this quiet, unobtrusive, persistent force which is always there, which ever goes on after "the tumult and the shouting dies; the captains and the kings depart"; — this is the meaning of pacifism. This is the love which binds man and maid together; which all through the ages has held the primary social unit, the family, together; which underlies the patient and beautiful labor of the multitudes who year after year plow the ground, sow the seed, reap the harvest, bake the bread, make the clothing, construct the buildings; which leads the dying soldier to give his last cup of water to his dying comrade, even to his dying foe. This it is that must always find expression even where on certain issues we must stand against our brothers and accept the bitter fact that Christ came to bring "not peace but division," even sometimes between mother and child, lover and beloved.

On this account, in a world which in a sense is always committed to misunderstanding and division, under the dominion of an evil spirit, we have all the time got to be insisting on our right to "alternative service." Even if we were all thrown into jail or concentration camp, we should have to devise ways of rendering "alternative service" there and proclaim our right to give food and drink to our "enemies." And even when we accept complete separation from our fellows, pursue the "negative" way of refusal to

participate in evil to the point where men slay us, from our point of view it means nothing unless that also is an expression of love for and unity with “that of God” in them. “If I give my body to be burned and have not love, it is worthless.”

Thus the individual pacifist is at every moment, and especially in every crisis, confronted with the twofold need of resisting human customs and institutions — coming “out from among them” and being “separate” — because he must “obey God rather than men,” and at the same time creatively and at whatever cost serving his fellows. The pacifist movement must of necessity, I think, help the individual at both points. If it fails to provide channels for the positive and sacrificial service of human need, it will fail its youth as truly as if it became slack in its resistance to war. Looking at the matter from the standpoint of the movement itself, it must deal vigorously and imaginatively with the problem of “alternative service” since its responsibility is to say to the world in Christ’s name not only “War is not the way,” but “This is the way; walk ye in it.”

From such an analysis of the problem, certain conclusions as to the character of constructive pacifist service inevitably flow. In the first place, it must be civilian service, for we have to exemplify a way of life which excludes war, “takes away the occasion of all wars.” In the second place, it is important — personally I am prepared to say essential — that the service be under private auspices and control and not under a civilian department of the government. The basic reason for this is that the service projects must grow out of and must express the spirit of religious pacifism; otherwise we are making no distinctive contribution. If this requirement is to be met, the religious pacifist bodies will have to be in charge of the life of the camps. This will apply to the organization of the actual work program of the camps which can express or deny the basic

pacifist attitudes, make or break the pacifist purpose of the enterprise. It will apply also to the educational program of the camps, which also will inevitably tend to produce either more convinced and disciplined pacifists or less convinced and disciplined pacifists.

Another reason why it is important that camps be under private auspices rather than civilian departmental merits of the government is that in an age when the tendency toward totalitarian state control is so powerful and prevalent, and when conscript service is inevitably tied up to regimentation for war purposes, no greater service can be rendered to society than keeping alive the spirit of voluntarism, the principle of free association thus providing a demonstration of how morale can be developed and society served by non-state or non-governmental bodies and without resorting to conscription.

The third characteristic of the work-projects must inevitably — so it seems to me — be that they cost the individual C.O. and the pacifist movement something substantial; they must represent a sacrifice rendered to our fellows, an identification with them in self-denial and suffering, a sacrifice on behalf of our principles and faith. The longer I reflect upon it the more convinced I become that unless the Public Service Camps do quite clearly represent a sacrificial contribution on our part, they will not only bring no positive results, but will throw discredit upon the whole religious pacifist movement in the eyes of the masses. Not only must we not ask for government funds for maintenance of C.O.'s, administration, and education in the camps; we must, it seems to me, refuse them.

“Alternative service” government financed and controlled would not be a genuine pacifist alternative at all. It would represent an almost complete absorption into the program and machinery of a government engaged in war preparation and probably war and tending increasingly

toward dictatorship. We are well aware that large numbers of our C.O.'s would be unable to accept such service, and would go to jail instead. So far as the religious pacifist movement is concerned, we could not cooperate with such a program without greatly weakening and obscuring our witness. It would mean that in effect the National Service Board for Religious Objectors, for example, and the various Service Committees, would become government agencies instead of agencies of the pacifist movement. Grave issues in the realm of church-state relationships, in addition to all the other considerations we have named, would obviously be raised. Certainly the religious pacifist forces should not themselves initiate a movement in this direction.

On the other hand, work-camps in which, because we are willing to pay for the opportunity, we can hold before men the vision of the world-task of pacifism, challenge them to voluntary discipline and weld them into a joyous fellowship, may make a great contribution to the achievement of that world-task which it has been the aim of this paper to suggest.