

New Mexico Quarterly

Volume 11 | Issue 4

Article 6

1941

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Recommended Citation

Zimmerman, James Fulton. "Our International Ideals." *New Mexico Quarterly* 11, 4 (1941). <https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/nmq/vol11/iss4/6>

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OUR INTERNATIONAL IDEALS IN 1941

James Fulton Zimmerman

THE HIGH idealism of the United States in the two years preceding our entry into the first World War was manifested through the creation of a nation-wide organization called The League to Enforce Peace. This organization, established in 1915, had a former chief executive of the United States, William H. Taft, as its president, and counted among its outstanding members President Wilson, Henry Cabot Lodge, Newton D. Baker, President Lowell of Harvard, and hundreds of other prominent American leaders in all walks of life. The principles upon which the League to Enforce Peace was based were contained in four brief articles, which committed its signatories to the submission of all justicial questions to a judicial tribunal, and of all other questions to a council of conciliation; and called for an association of nations which would use economic and military power against any nation which went to war without complying with its provisions for the peaceful settlement of international disputes.

The League to Enforce Peace held a great national assembly in Washington on May 26, 1916. Leaders of American thought of all parties, creeds and classes gave addresses advocating world peace and international order when the war should end. The national enthusiasm of this program, spread by means of the press, permeated every city, town, and rural precinct in the United States. We are indebted to this organization for the Covenant of the League of Nations approved at the Paris Peace Conference. Let us bear in mind, also, that most of its important work was carried on in the midst of war preparation and war psychology during the two years previous to our nation's entrance into that struggle.

I shall refer later to the tragic failure of our nation to support the League of Nations, a failure which does not, however, detract from those inestimable values of national inspiration and national unity which the League to Enforce Peace gave to America in the years 1915 and 1916, and throughout the war years.

In contrast with this nation-wide expression of the desire for world reconstruction in the years immediately preceding the first World War, we find no similar movement today enlisting the thought and the devotion of the people of the United States. It is true that, before the last election, reports were circulated stating that President Roosevelt had a great world peace plan. His plan was said to consist of a world bill of rights, a program for European federalism, universal disarmament, and freedom of religion, but in more recent months nothing further has been heard about this plan. In this connection may I mention briefly some of the efforts which have been made to arouse greater interest in long-term peace objectives.

I shall mention first the Eighth Fortune Round Table, meeting in February, 1941, which proposed the organization of a democratic bloc of nations which should dominate the world after Hitler's defeat.

There was also set forth in a recent report of Dr. Shotwell's Commission to Study the Organization of Peace the need of an international court and legislative body, a world police force, and other international machinery. But this report also expressed the tragic conviction that world conditions now render such international machinery impossible. This Commission is doing some valuable work, but very few citizens seem to be informed of or interested in its findings.

The Quakers, who have made a general declaration in favor of international peace and brotherhood, should be mentioned. This declaration was given a few inches of space on the front page at the time it was issued about two months ago.

Within the past month a meeting at Ann Arbor, Michigan, of the New Education Fellowship, led by an anti-Nazi German, passed resolutions proposing a new democratic youth movement for the world. Perhaps the most idealistic note, however, was sounded by the Norman Waite Harris Memorial Institute, which met at the University of Chicago, June 25 to July 2, 1940. The report of this Institute contains an excellent summary of the reasons for the failure of the peace of 1919; urges a dynamic peace policy based on democratic traditions; analyzes

the new forces and factors which will condition any future world peace plan; and warns us that an allied victory alone will not insure greater stability than the last twenty years have brought unless fundamental changes are made in the domestic and foreign policies of the victorious democratic states. This expression of idealism also finds a parallel in the closing paragraph of the resolutions of the new Education Fellowship, which reads as follows: "We assume that Hitlerism cannot be permanently defeated on the field of battle alone, but only in the hearts and minds of men, and especially youth. To develop, men need action; to act, men need faith; to keep faith, men need reason; to direct all three, men need a vision of excellence."

There has been from time to time an expression of faith in the possibility of reviving the League of Nations such as that made recently by Dr. Shotwell in his annual report of March 17, 1941: "For a brief but unforgettable moment the peace movement played a dominant part in world affairs. It failed, but to regard its failure as the last chapter of the story will be a conclusion of the utmost levity, for it is from failures like these that ultimate success is born. The events of the last five years have clearly shown that if civilization is to survive, somehow or other the peace machinery must be brought back into operation."

On July 22, after almost two years of this second World War, Sumner Welles, Acting Secretary of State, declared in an address delivered on the occasion of laying the cornerstone of a new wing of the Norwegian Legation that a post-war association of nations strong enough to guarantee disarmament and equal economic opportunities was the ideal for which peoples of good will should strive as a foundation of permanent peace. The causes which Welles gave for the failure of the League of Nations are especially significant: first, the blind selfishness of men in the United States; second, its use by certain powers to advance their own political and commercial ambitions; and third, and chiefly, because it was forced to operate by those who dominated its councils as a means of maintaining the status quo. "It was never enabled to operate as its chief spokesman had intended, as an elastic and impartial instrument in bringing about peaceful and equitable adjustments between nations as time and circumstances proved necessary. Some instrumentality must unquestionably be found to achieve

such adjustments when the nations of the earth again undertake the task of restoring law and order to a disastrously shaken world."

Here we have for the first time in the two years which have elapsed since the declaration of war from a high official of our government an indication that American leadership is contemplating a post-war objective that will embody the faith of our nation in a plan for world reconstruction, comparable to that of the older League to Enforce Peace.

Many are hoping that these preliminary suggestions will soon become the basis for the revival of our faith in world peace, and, in addition, the basis for a more unified public opinion in this country, supplanting the conflict and confusion of American thought in the present national emergency.

At this point I wish to offer some explanations, as I see them, for our present lack of responsiveness to the high hopes and ideals for world peace which we entertained two decades ago.

First, the great disappointment and disillusionment which came to many of us following the first World War. The democracies won that war but failed to organize a successful peace based on political and economic justice. Our own country refused to join the League of Nations, which we had sponsored. The League of Nations no longer functions, and we are now spending billions in the greatest defense program ever known in history. The League of Nations, planned according to, and nurtured by, democratic ideals for the express purpose of guiding mankind into ways of peaceful international life which war had destroyed, was deserted by the democracies which fostered it and permitted to die by those who gave it life. For this tragic failure no dictator can be blamed.

In the second place, our nation, in this period of great crisis, has seemed to me to waver at times in its devotion to established international law and order. We hear, for example, that it is old-fashioned to declare war; that a neutrality law on the books is not a binding obligation to observe neutrality; that we must fight fire with fire; and that ethics and morality have no place in this struggle against totalitarian aggression. In our determined opposition to aggressor nations we seem at times almost to have forgotten that law and order are the great bulwark of our own democratic government. It is unthinkable to me that we should ever accept the philosophy of totalitarianism, and neither

should we countenance the methods which are evolved from its philosophy. Democracy, seeking, as Mr. Welles has so clearly stated, "to restore law and order to a disastrously shaken world" should not, in my judgment, surrender the principles of law and order in international relations, no matter how great the provocation.

In the third place, it appears that our internal controversy about the relation of this country to the war has revealed unnecessary and dangerous manifestations of the spirit of hatred. We began with a hatred of Hitler, but we continue with a hatred of Roosevelt, of Lindbergh, of the Jews, and of capital or labor, according to our way of thinking on current economic issues. This outburst of internal hatred is threatening to poison our minds with intolerance as we listen day after day to the harsh and bitter language which this controversy has evoked. In many of these current debates words are being used to conceal rather than to reveal the truth. While I do not question the motives of any group or individual involved in these discussions, and while I recognize that all of them say some good things, nevertheless the controversy has reached a danger point that is somewhere near the limit of healthy human relations, and, I will add also, of human endurance.

Our past disillusionment, our unhealthy fears developed by the emergency and accentuated by prophecies of Hitler's economic, political and military plans against us, and our yielding to hatred in the midst of temporary controversies, have all contributed their share to the submergence of our more normal ideals for eventual world reconstruction and world peace.

For a brief moment let us try to review the world peace situation realistically. We read of the objectives of Great Britain and the Allies in the war as expressed by Chamberlain—that they plan to defeat Hitlerism and set up a new Europe in which the nations will approach their difficulties with good will and mutual tolerance, and that they will in the future settle all boundary disputes at a conference between equals. On the other hand, Hitler says that the peace aims of the Axis embody the earnest hope of the coming of the day when the leading nations of Europe will come together and draw up a plan that will insure them all a sense of security.

But the unflinching experience of mankind teaches us that after a war there is no such thing as equality between victor and vanquished,

that neither good will nor mutual tolerance prevails, and that what brings a feeling of security to one side does not satisfy the demands for security of the other. We have seen that the only justified objective from the point of view of one who has any hope for the future peace of the world is that, following the war, a reconstructed world can be established in which peace and justice will be maintained. There is, therefore, little justification for hope in the attainment of this objective in the statement of either Chamberlain or Hitler.

Certain practical considerations based on the first World War experiences may help our thinking in regard to the possible attitude of the people of the United States toward the final settlement of this crisis. We recall that Woodrow Wilson wanted to make the Monroe Doctrine, as he interpreted it, the doctrine of the world. As we had been the guarantor of peace on this continent, he desired all nations to join in a great world league to guarantee the peace of the world. But when the war was over he was faced by the Lodge Resolution, which contained language as follows: "The United States will not submit to arbitration nor to inquiry by the assembly or by the council of the League of Nations provided for in the said treaty of peace, any questions which in the judgment of the United States depend upon or relate to its long established policy commonly known as the Monroe Doctrine. Said doctrine is to be interpreted by the United States alone and is hereby declared to be wholly outside the jurisdiction of the League of Nations and entirely unaffected by any provision contained in the said treaty of peace with Germany."

The independence of this nation in the political sphere from the older nations of Europe unquestionably has been a keystone of our foreign policy from the beginning. It has been strained—indeed, it has been broken—but it has always recurred following periods of great emotional stress, not as a policy of complete isolation, but as a policy of independence which has involved limited isolation from the affairs of Europe. In this connection we should not forget that in 1919, only two short decades ago, not all the enthusiasm for a league to enforce peace, nor all the fervor and devotion to the plans of the League of Nations could prevent our country from returning to its earlier and more normal concept of independence from Europe, embodied in the traditional policy known as the Monroe Doctrine.

We can only speculate, of course, as to the future attitude of our

nation on this important question. Should Hitler's plan for Europe succeed, then we might see the revival of the traditional determination of this nation to keep its own ideals of social and political life free and distinct from the concept of a Europe controlled by Hitler and his allies. It is not impossible that a Lodge resolution may be just around the corner today, and we may be reasonably certain that before any final settlement of the present issues has been reached, the spirit of 1823, the spirit of the Monroe Doctrine, will again be revived in the hearts and minds of American citizens.

On the other hand, it may be helpful in our thinking to consider the possible implications of our present defense movements, which are predicated on the idea that Hitler will not win, and which are now looking toward hemisphere control and toward bases outside of this hemisphere in order to protect this control. We hear rumors occasionally also of their possible extension in the direction of some sort of inter-continental control. Furthermore, there has been the suggestion of the possibility of our stepping into Britain's shoes in order to maintain a world balance of power. This trend of our defense movement, if it should continue, offers to the United States the possibility of a great future imperialism, accompanied perhaps by long, drawn-out wars, of which we cannot possibly now see the end.

In this connection it is well to bear in mind that we are aroused emotionally, now, by the idea of helping the democracies win over the dictators; again, by the challenge of guarding the world's lifeline; by the appeal to safeguard our heritage of freedom of thought and action; and even, at times, by the dream of guaranteeing the four freedoms to all mankind.

But, as we consider the possibility of our country's entering on such a course of action and following it to its logical conclusion, we may well expect that before we get too far on that road the voice of Monroe will again be heard and his concept of our relation to Europe and to the world will be pondered once again by the American people.

This concludes my brief and somewhat ambitious effort to be realistic. I trust that we may all be able to follow out later the lines of thought which I have only suggested, when our minds are released from some of the difficulties and confusions of the present emergency, and when we can perhaps think more clearly about our own objectives and about the larger objective of world reconstruction.

In conclusion, may I say that I pray for a revival of American idealism in the field of international relations. Such a revival should bring us back again to ponder the principles of the Hague Conventions. It should bring us to a clearer recognition of the truth that the defeat of Hitlerism by arms alone will not save our own nation and the world. It should bring our nation to a clear confession of its own share in the failure of the first League of Nations and to a consideration of the possibility of the re-establishment of some similar organization, including all the great powers and modified so as to avoid the weaknesses of the first League. It should cause us to reconsider the prophetic warning of Woodrow Wilson: "If we do not establish a federated free world order now when there is a great tide running in the hearts of men, we shall break the heart of the world."

It should enable us to realize that if democracy wishes to re-capture the kind of world leadership consistent with the democratic hopes of mankind, it must present a plan for the peaceful solution of the affairs of this world. It should recall to our minds sharply a fact which we seem in the present emergency to have forgotten—that after this great struggle of war and bloodshed is ended there will still be millions of men and women in the world who will still long for truth, and justice, and peace. However dark the present days may be for those of us who believe in and long for a peaceful, well-ordered world, there still lingers in the minds of many of us the strong conviction that American idealism will be re-born, and will continue to struggle for world peace. Through the "winter of our discontent" let us cling to this simple conviction—a world without peace is a world that must be re-made.