

Levi Pennington

People

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### What Is America's Road to Peace?

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## What Is America's Road to Peace?

By Levi T. Pennington

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When the board of Pacific College was considering me for the presidency of the institution something over a quarter of a century ago, they enquired of Ira C. Johnson, who knew me well, as to what manner of man I was. He assured them that I had more energy than sense. I have since that time improved the ratio between energy and sense -- I have lost some of my energy.

When I speak without manuscript, I fear there is too high a ratio of words to ideas. Perhaps I can cut down that ratio by using manuscript -- I can eliminate some of the words.

"Let me sigh strite-a-wye" as the cockney would say, that I think we ought first of all to ask ourselves whether we really want peace or not. We all give lip-service to peace; we all say we want peace; we are all pacifists of a sort, especially during peace times. But the coming of a real test proves many of us to have been pacifists pro tem, pacifists more or less, pacifists if and when, lovers of peace, but -----.

We want peace, but we must maintain our national honor. We want peace, but we must not interfere with American business. We want peace, but we must preserve all the territory we now hold, not matter how we "got it or came by it." We want peace, but we must defend the status quo, in government and in territory, no matter by what iniquitous treaty or war settlement (or unsettlement) the status quo was established.

It seems strange that dollars and cents should outvalue human lives. It seems quaint to us now that a man should have supposed a hundred years ago that he could maintain his personal honor by fighting with another man and killing him with rapier or pistol. But some of us -- can it be some of those in this room?-- still feel that we must maintain national honor by killing millions of men, women and children in other lands with bombs and poison gas, and being responsible for the death of millions of our own people by similar hellish agencies. We should think it a strange thing if a man who had stolen his neighbor's farm should insist on his right to hold it against all the world; but we apparently hold that a nation should retain, if it can, all its territory, though it had stolen a continent. And if a man's property had been unjustly taken from him, by force or craft, and he sought to get it back, or if he wished to reorganize his methods, on his farm or in his business, we should think that he had a right to seek these changes; but in international affairs we must maintain the status quo, in government and in territory.

All these things are by many of us held to be paramount to peace. We want peace if and when; we want peace, but -----. At least some of us do.

But possibly there are some of us who want peace, and believe it is to be had. Some of us believe world peace is attainable. Others believe that at least the United States can keep out of the war

now raging in Europe and out of all wars. And that last is the field of our enquiry. What is America's road to peace?

There is a temptation to approach the question negatively. We have been directed to so many different paths. Those who can remember back a quarter of a century recall that America and Germany alike were assured that if in time of peace we prepare for war, by some strange legerdemain we shall get peace. And many another road has been pointed out as the road to peace. They have been followed -- and have led to war, not peace.

If America wants peace instead of profits, peace instead of national aggrandizement, peace instead of insistence on our form of government for other peoples, peace instead of involvement in European power politics, peace instead of insistence that territory taken from our enemies by the iniquitous treaty of Versailles shall not be retaken by them, there are two fields in which, in my judgment, we should exercise especial care. The first is in the matter of our own status as a nation; the second is in our relationship to other nations.

Extreme nationalism has been a development of relatively recent times, though of course the control of the individual by the group is as old as primitive man. "National sovereignty" has come to mean to many super-patriots that a nation recognizes no power above itself, no law but its own will that it is bound to obey, nothing except unsatisfactory consequences to keep it from doing anything which it wishes to do. This extreme nationalism has become not only a governmental theory but a religion. Even in America, the Supreme Court says that a man may not become a citizen who insists that he will not participate in a war which he believes to be contrary to the will of God.

This extreme nationalism has too often taken the form of the exploitation of weaker peoples. And this has led to wars many, and will if continued lead to many more.

Few Americans know how serious an obstacle to American national organization was this idea of the sovereignty of the state. Patrick Henry's "Give me liberty or give me death" is known to every boy and girl in America -- or at least it was before we began to "debunk" everything, including the Ten Commandments. But there are few who know that when the proposal came before the Virginia House of Burgesses for the adoption of the constitution of the United States, Patrick Henry fought it bitterly. He said, "This constitution, I hate it. This constitution, I do not believe in it!" And why? Because he knew that if Virginia entered the family of states, she must surrender some of that sovereignty which had heretofore left her, theoretically at least, irresponsible to any power below the blue sky -- or elsewhere.

If America is to find and follow the road to peace, she cannot hold to the unrestricted idea of national sovereignty. She cannot participate in the world scramble for the good things of earth, no matter by what

means obtained. In her thinking and her plans, she must have regard not only to what is good for America, but what is good for the rest of the world.

And this brings us to my second point, our relations with other nations.

A long time ago, God's chosen people were in a quandary. There was a great nation eager for wealth and territorial enlargement and military power; and there were two other nations seeking to bring the southern kingdom of Judah into the league of Syria and Israel against Assyria. The king was deeply disturbed. But the prophet of Jehovah gave him some very sage advice, in these words, as they are translated into our English tongue, "Take heed, and be quiet." Perhaps they might be further translated into our slang as "Watch your step, and don't get mixed up in this."

There seems to me to be a similar situation today. A great nation, eager for wealth and territory and military power, has taken the field. We could debate for weeks on the justice and injustice of the situation. There is enough injustice on each side so that neither side will run short. And two powers are in arms against this "aggressor", and ask us to join them -- ask us by propaganda quite as clever as that used nearly a quarter of a century ago. If we really desire peace, in my judgment we should heed the injunction, "Take heed, and be quiet." "Watch your step, and don't get mixed up in this."

And if we are to stay out, we shall need to stay out. No partial participation will do. There is as little doubt in my mind as in yours where the bulk of American sympathy lies in this European struggle. But if we are going to be neutral, let's be neutral.

Though I cannot agree with him, I can understand and appreciate the attitude of the man who says, "The European democracies are fighting our battles. We must give them all the help we can. We must help them with food and other supplies; we must help them with shipping; we must help them with arms and munitions; and if need be we must help with our man power." If they are truly fighting our battles for us, the battles of democracy and liberty, and if the way to fight dictatorship is to become a dictatorship, and use the dictator's methods, then let us join these two powers, France, already a dictatorship long ago, and Britain, well on her way to dictatorship in fact if not in name. If we can really advance the kingdom of heaven by the methods of hell, if the end will justify the means, if we can save democracy by surrendering it, and liberty by throwing it away, if we can put down dictatorship by becoming ourselves a dictatorship, why not? We once went into a war which cost tens of millions of lives and more treasure than the total pre-war wealth of the United States, the richest nation on earth, to save democracy. We didn't save it then; so let's use the same methods this time, confident that the means that failed then will surely succeed now. We fought one war to end war, and it has left us a quarter of a century of other wars. Let's fight another war to end war -- continue the war system in order to end it.

Judas Maccabeus before the Battle of Emmaus was wiser than this. When he was in a war to save the Jewish religion and the law, he did

not set aside the law to save it. He sent back home all his soldiers who were recently married, those who were building houses in which they had not yet lived, those who had planted vineyards and not yet gathered grapes from them -- all who were exempted by the law he sent back. He did not set aside the law to save the law.

But however logical it is to follow the method of whole-hearted help to those democracies which are fighting our battles for us, nobody advocates this method, or practically nobody, though a plan has been adopted which in the judgment of many of us leads toward the same outcome. We have abolished the arms embargo, and have adopted "cash and carry" or "credit and carry" which actions are supposed to aid the "democracies" and at the same time observe a technical, a pretended, a definitely bogus neutrality.

That it is bogus, false, counterfeit, most of those who advocate it will confess by their answer to a single question, "Would you have favored this free sale of arms and munitions to anyone who could come and get them if Germany rather than England and France had had command of the seas?" There are some munition makes, ready to sell to anybody, and to coin the blood of their own countrymen into money, who could answer in the affirmative. And there are some who would favor it just because "It is good for business." The rest would say for the most part, "Of course not. Our sympathies are all with the 'democracies'." It is a bogus neutrality.

Nobody knows that better than does Germany. And nobody appreciates more than does the Reich what a position this has put us in. The situation shifts so from day to day that we find it hard to know exactly whom we are "for." One day we are of course on the side of Russia, the super-democracy; then Russia is tied up with Germany in a non-aggression pact, and we are against her. Then she is neutral-- in much the same way we are at present, and we are more friendly. One day we are on the side of "the unspeakable Turk", because Turkey sides with the democracies; the next day Turkey talks with Russia, and the fat is in the fire. Then we are with her again for she has refused Russian advances. Mussolini is our enemy, our friend, our enemy, depending on the day of the week -- and the weather. What a mess we shall be in if we do go fully, as we have already gone partially, into this war of power politics in Europe.

But practically nobody wants to go into this war. We want to preserve our neutrality. No, we do not want to go into this war; we only want to go part way into it. But after you have jumped off the springboard, it is not easy to stop before you hit the water. You are likely to get wet.

Suppose we follow the course which seems to many of us inevitable in view of this "cash and carry" plan. England and France will buy from us till their funds give out. Then we shall be compelled either to quit selling to them, abandoning them when their business is no longer immediately profitable to us, and probably when they need these supplies worst -- and does anybody really believe we shall do that? -- or we shall have to extend credit. And if we extend credit, as we almost surely will, is it not practically inevitable that we shall presently make loans, as we did in the World War? And then is it not practically certain that we shall seek to protect our investments

by seeing to it that our creditors win the war? We are sending our arms and munitions across on a "cash and carry" plan. Unless we fight wisely and earnestly against it, the flag and the soldiers of America will follow them -- there will be no escape.

And anyway, what sort of abominable plan is this "cash and carry" scheme? If these countries across the water are really fighting our battles, what a dastardly thing to say to them, "Go to it! You do all the fighting, all the suffering, all the dying; we'll take none of the risks, and reap all the profits." They called us "Uncle Shylock" after the World War. They have ten times more ground for it under this "cash and carry" scheme of bogus neutrality and "modified participation."

And that this "modified participation" is leading toward full participation seems so obvious that all but "the intelligencia" can see it. Already we are transferring our ships to other countries, that oil and other supplies may reach the "democracies" that refused to pay their debts to us from the other war, in order that they might spend the money in rearmament, in violation of their promises to disarm. If America would follow the way of peace, she must be genuinely neutral. She must not pretend to be, with a pretence so thin that even "the wayfaring man" can see through it.

Thus far I am an isolationist. I believe that America should have stayed completely out of the present war in Europe, and out of the sale of arms and munitions which threaten presently to get us into that war.

But it is difficult to live in the presence of disease and not become diseased. And America should not only stay out of the present European war, but out of all wars. And if she is to do this, it must be in cooperation with other nations.

Let me try to illustrate what I mean here by a single example. We shall probably all agree that Japan has acted very terribly in Asia, conquering Korea, setting up the puppet kingdom of Manchukuo, carrying on her undeclared war in China and killing Chinese by methods quite as terrible as those which the "Christian" nations of the west (including America) used in the World War. (They should have been similar, for we taught them to Japan.) I have not one word of excuse to offer for Japan, Japanese atrocities, Japanese land grabbing, or anything of the sort, any more than I have for the similar methods of England and France in Asia and Africa and elsewhere, or for the United States in taking vast territory from Mexico because we were able to do it, *or for America in furnishing Japan with the means for killing Chinese in a war which is not a war because it was not "declared."* But when did the other nations ever seek seriously to help Japan solve her very real problems? If you could put the entire population of the United States into a single state, with only half of that state arable or even habitable, you would not have so serious a problem of congestion of population as that which Japan faces. If we had really wished to seek the way of peace (which we had done our best to close by Japanese Exclusion with which we struck a then friendly nation in the face) we might well have sought cooperative international action which would have provided a place for the overflow

of Japanese population, or opened to Japan ready access to raw materials that she might live as an industrial people, or both. Instead we did nothing, or less, to ease the tension growing out of this congestion of population and the increasing knowledge on the part of the Japanese people that other peoples were far more prosperous than they. The expansion of her authority by Japanese military advances had other causes also, but one of them was the lack of international cooperation in an effort to help Japan solve some of her pressing problems.

It is true enough that we did not have the machinery at hand ready to do this thing. But this machinery could have been created if there had been sufficient desire for real cooperation.

Machinery is needed, and we must look to some form of world organization, on a different basis from anything that has yet been achieved in the large, though it has been successfully accomplished along the longest international boundary line in the world. Without a fort or a battleship along their entire border, Canada and the United States settle differences that in many other places and times would have resulted in war; settle them without any thought of international complications; settle them without the man in the street even knowing that the problems have existed.

And this is possible, for one reason, because we have the machinery with which to do it. The proper commission takes up these differences, and they are settled promptly -- and satisfactorily.

But the real reason why this can be done is because, so far as Canada is concerned, we have a real "will to peace", and so far as we are concerned, their will is for peace, too.

And that is our real task, in America first, and then world-wide. We must make men know the truth about peace and war; we must make them feel that love for peace and that love for their fellow men which "takes away the occasion of all wars"; we must convince them that peace is attainable; that it is to be had by those who truly desire it; and we must develop a great "will to peace" on the part of the great mass of our people.

We prevented a war with Mexico once, a war which might have resulted as seriously as the shooting of a prince in Sarajevo. We prevented that war because our people by the million said to their representatives in Washington, "No war! You must find some other way." If America would follow the path of peace, we must take that attitude, today, and tomorrow, and all the tomorrows. "No war! We must find some other way."