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Headnote by Lawrence Rosenwald.

Letter from *Beyond Nationalism: The Social Thought of Emily Greene Balch* (1972).
Nobel speech from *Les Prix Nobel en 1947*. Both reprinted by permission of the
Emily Green Balch Papers, Swarthmore College Peace Collection.

EMILY GREENE BALCH

Toward Human Unity

Emily Greene Balch (1867–1961) went to Bryn Mawr, studied poverty in France, came back to Boston, and with some faculty members at Wellesley College founded Boston’s first settlement house, which led to her meeting Jane Addams. She began teaching at Wellesley in 1896, and by 1913 was chair of both economics and sociology. She joined with Addams and other women to oppose World War I; her opposition to the war led to her being refused reappointment by Wellesley in 1918. Afterwards, she joined the staff of *The Nation*, collaborated with Addams to help found the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom, and devoted much of the rest of her life to the work of that organization. Though she supported American involvement in World War II, her activity during the war focused on assisting refugees and defending the rights of conscientious objectors. She won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1946.

Her 1918 letter to Wellesley College president Ellen Pendleton is perhaps the most courteous and deferential statement of unbendable opposition to war ever written; her Nobel Prize speech is unusual in its spaciousness of vision, and is surely among the most scholarly speeches ever given by a Peace laureate, the only one ever to prophesy large-scale war tax resistance.

To the President of Wellesley College

110 Morningside Drive, N.Y.C.
April third, 1918

Dear Miss Pendleton,

I should like to state to you, as well as I am able, my fundamental position in these tragic and heroic days through which our country and all the world is passing.

In the first place I am entirely in sympathy with the purposes of our country in the war as expressed for us by the President. I rejoice in his international leadership and am thankful that such a leader has been raised up to us. I feel moreover that we

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can never adequately appreciate the heroism and self-sacrifice that are being poured out so unstintedly in the war day by day. I could desire nothing more than also to give myself wholly in trying to bring about a better world.

In such a time when love of country is conscious as never before, and when patriotism has such special claims upon us all, it is a very painful thing to be obliged to forego, in any degree, full inner cooperation with the methods by which the ends for which we all are working are being sought. Nevertheless I believe so deeply that the way of war is not the way of Christianity, I find it so impossible to reconcile war with the truth of Jesus' teachings, that even now I am obliged to give up the happiness of full and unquestioning cooperation where the choice is mine to make.

On the other hand any effort to obstruct the war, to work against enlistment or anything of the sort, would seem to me not only inexpedient and silly, as well as unlawful, but also morally wrong. It is, I suppose hardly necessary to add that Junkerism and militarism and all their manifestations, from faithlessness and fraud to atrocities and annexations, are abhorrent to me.

In all such activities as food conservation and relief reconstruction work of all kinds I can of course take part gladly to the limit of my ability.

I fully realize that wiser as well as infinitely more spiritual disciples of Christ believe that they are following him in taking part in the war according to their respective functions. This does not excuse me however from doing what seems to me right as I see it. I may have a larger vision some day, then I can follow the new leading. Meanwhile one of the hardest things about holding the position that I do is that it is so hard to keep it clear of Pharisaism.

Now as to the practical side of all this. It means that I have no temptation to dampen patriotism even in propas that I could not personally adopt nor to carry on any propaganda for my own peculiar views in connection, direct or indirect, with my teaching. It means that at Wellesley or elsewhere I desire to do all that in me lies toward making the world safe for democracy by whatever phrase we may choose to express our national

purpose at its purest, to work for honest and vigorous thinking, self-control and above all for service.

(Signed)
Emily G. Balch

FROM
Toward Human Unity or Beyond Nationalism

Nobel Lecture, delivered at Oslo, April 7th, 1948

Another thing—men are everywhere becoming less “private-minded.” There is a growing community sense. It is as though the urge which found expression in monasteries and nunneries in the middle ages were finding new expression. In the political field this consciousness of the common interest and of the rich possibilities of common action has embodied itself in part in the great movements toward economic democracy, co-operation, democratic socialism and communism. I am sure we make a great mistake if we underrate the element of unselfish idealism in these historic movements which are today writing history at such a rate.

A dark and terrible side of this sense of community of interests is the fear of a horrible common destiny which in these days of atomic weapons darkens men’s minds all around the globe. Men have a sense of being subject to the same fate, of being all in the same boat. But fear is a poor motive to which to appeal and I am sure that “peace people” are on a wrong path when they expatiate on the horrors of a new world war. Fear weakens the nerves and distorts the judgment. It is not by fear that mankind must exorcise the demon of destruction and cruelty, but by motives more reasonable, more humane and more heroic.

The peace movement or the movement to end war has been fed by many springs and has taken many forms. It has been carried on mainly by private unofficial organizations, local,

national and international. I would say that peace workers or pacifists have dealt mainly with two types of issue, the moral or individual, and the political or institutional. As a type of the former we may take those who are now generally known specifically as pacifists. Largely on religious or ethical grounds they repudiate violence and strive to put friendly and constructive activity in its place.

There has been personal refusal of war service on grounds of conscience on a large scale and at great personal cost by thousands of young men called up for military service. While many people fail to understand and certainly do not approve their position, I believe that it has been an invaluable witness to the supremacy of conscience over all other considerations and a very great service to a public too much affected by the conception that might makes right. It is interesting that at the Nuremberg war-guilt trials the court refused to accept the principle that a man is absolved from responsibility for an act by the fact that it was ordered by his superiors or his government. This is a legal affirmation of a principle that conscientious objectors maintain in action.

It is to me surprising that the repudiation of the entire theory and practice of conscription has not found expression in a wider and more powerful movement drawing strength from the widespread concern for individual liberty. We are horrified at many slighter infringements of individual freedom, far less terrible than this. But we are so accustomed to conscription that we take it for granted. A practical and political form of opposition to conscription is the proposal, first put forward, so far as I know, by an American woman, DOROTHY DETZER, long secretary of the United States Section of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom. She urged something that suggests the Kellogg Pact but is quite specific, namely a multilateral treaty between governments to renounce the use of conscription. A bill to this effect is now in the United States Congress but attracts little attention.

I feel it rather surprising also that refusal of war has never taken the form, on any large scale, of refusal to pay taxes for military use, a refusal which would have involved not only young men but (and mainly) older men and women holders, of property.

Peace work of this first type relies mainly on education. The work done and now being done to educate men's minds against war and for peace is colossal, and can only be referred to.

Perhaps it is under this head that the Nobel Foundation and the work of BERTHA VON SUTTNER should be listed, for this the world, and not alone the beneficiaries must be grateful.

The other type of "peace" activity is political, specifically aiming to affect governmental or other action on concrete issues. For instance peace organizations criticized the terms of the Peace Treaties made at Versailles and (in America at least) opposed the demand for unconditional surrender in the second world war.

The Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (with which I have long been connected) has worked both as an international body and in its national sections from 1915 till now and I trust will long do so, in the political field of policies affecting peace, though not alone on the political level. Among its strongest supporters have always been Scandinavian women. I am presenting to the Nobel library, if I may, a brief history of this organization "A Venture in Internationalism" a pamphlet now out of print and consequently rare.

The form of work for peace which has most obviously made history is the long continued effort to create some form of world organization which should both prevent wars and foster international co-operation.

The efforts to secure peace by creating a comprehensive organ have been many and varied. One of the most curious was the confederation of certain tribes of Iroquois Indians in America known as "The Six Nations." One of the earliest was the ancient Amphyctyonic Council in Greece. There has been a long series of schemes, each more or less premature and Utopian, but each making its own contribution, from those of SULLY and WILLIAM PENN and KANT to WOODROW WILSON and his co-workers and successors. WILSON did not live to see the League of Nations established nor did his own country ever join it. At present there is tendency to underrate its importance. I, for one, would not for a great deal lose out of my life my years in Geneva during the first spring-time of the hopes and activities of the League of Nations.

As we know only too well, the League of Nations, lacking Russia and the United States, was not sufficiently inclusive. Also when the pinch came, different governments proved unready to make the sacrifices or face the risks involved in effective opposition to imperialism in Japan, reaction in Spain, fascism in Italy or nazism in Germany.

The new institution, the United Nations, has some marked advantages over its predecessors. Its origin was the work, not of a small group of statesmen mainly preoccupied with elaborating the treaties of Versailles and the rest, but was worked out in careful preliminary discussion, first at Dumbarton Oaks, then at San Francisco, by a comprehensive group of countries which included, this time, the United States and Russia, though not the Axis powers, and which owes an immense debt to President FRANKLIN ROOSEVELT. It has the experience of the League of Nations to draw upon and the second world war offers it useful warnings. With less of a flush of idealism, hopefulness and confidence than the League of Nations enjoyed in its early days, it is soberer, and Norway has given it in TRYGVE LIE a Secretary General who inspires confidence and hope.

In such a world all war would be civil war and we must hope that it will grow increasingly inconceivable. It has already become capable of such unlimited destruction and such fearful possibilities of uncontrollable and little understood "chain reactions" of all sorts that it would seem that no one not literally insane could decide to start an atomic war.

I have spoken against fear as a basis for peace. What we ought to fear, especially we Americans, is not that someone may drop atomic bombs on us but that we may allow a world situation to develop in which ordinarily reasonable and humane men, acting as our representatives, may use such weapons in our name. We ought to be resolved beforehand that no provocation, no temptation shall induce us to resort to the last dreadful alternative of war.

May no young man ever again be faced with the choice between violating his conscience by co-operating in competitive

mass-slaughter or separating himself from those who, endeavouring to serve liberty, democracy, humanity can find no better way than to conscript young men to kill.

As the world community develops in peace, it will open up great untapped reservoirs in human nature. Like a spring released from pressure would be the response of a generation of young men and women growing up in an atmosphere of friendliness and security, in a world demanding their service, offering them comradeship, calling to all adventurous and forward-reaching natures.

We are not asked to subscribe to any Utopia or to believe in a perfect world just around the corner. We are asked to be patient with necessarily slow and groping advance on the road forward, and to be ready for each step ahead as it becomes practicable. We are asked to equip ourselves with courage, hope, readiness for hard work, and to cherish large and generous ideals.