

Ralph Borsodi's Peace Plan

by Mildred Loomis

Borsodi's concern about the [Second World] War and US participation in it, led him to turn from problems of family and community organization to problems of global reconstruction. "Why is world conflict so continuous?" he asked himself, "and why does it so often erupt into war, nation against nation?"

To answer these, Borsodi concentrated on two other questions: "What is central to world discord?" and "why does it result in open an armed conflict?" The first had to do with principle, the second with organization and practice. Of principles (based in economic justice) Borsodi was confident; he needed more time to think through organizing them on a world scale.

"Proper organization of families and communities come first," he told himself. "As we proceed to larger groups, we can go in either of two directions — the political: into ward, county, state, nation and world. Or, in more natural groupings: individual family, community, society, world."

"But 'society' is an abstraction," Borsodi observed, "not a specific, definable, recognizable group of persons to which an individual relates. 'Society' has no rights and obligations, no real functions to perform for our basic organism, the individual. We must substitute a more natural real group between the community and the world. He recognized that the natural administrative unit is a geographic region, an area of land whose topography makes it a unified system — a river basin, a natural watershed, etc. Such regions are links between the community and the globe. Geographic regions must replace nations.

As Ralph Borsodi realized the functional unity of geographic regions, the tragic absurdity of the very concept of nation became obvious, and with it the irrationality of teaching devotion to "nationalism."

"There's nothing except dumb, slavish acceptance of political organization," he said, "that puts Switzerland and Russia in the same class, i.e. 'nation', along with the tiny Monaco's few hundred square miles."

A nation has complete and final jurisdiction over its citizens. This must be changed. People could assign specific tasks common to a geographic area, a region, and still reserve basic functions to communities and families. Regions could do this by setting up regional authorities, governing bodies with specific and limited functions, such as administration of ports, harbors, watersheds, etc. (such as Port Authority in New York City). Authorities with concurrent jurisdictions would eliminate nations!

Ralph Borsodi was aware of the World Federalists and Atlantic Unionists, [and he] ...granted that the goal of a federation of self-governing

nations was a step out of world chaos and world war — so long as both the concept and the practice of nation are retained. He granted that the federation of sovereign states in America to become the United States has eliminated — with the exception of the Civil War — open and armed conflict among them. He agreed that a federation of nations — each submitting national sovereignty to a world federation — would be an improvement. He particularly approved bringing individuals rather than states or nations to account for their actions in courts of law.

“But,” he said, “a global authority would be even better — far better — than a federation of nations.” This was Borsodi’s unique organizational proposal. Not a confederation of nations: *eliminate* nations. Let families and communities reclaim their basic functions, and distribute necessary administrative or “policing” functions to decentralized, regional groups. Reserve and give to a global authority only those few functions needful to an organization of global proportions.

Principles of World Peace

What principles should undergird a Global Authority? First, said Borsodi, is a rational, just use of the earth. An agreed-on ethical method of partitioning the earth is basic to any new organization of lasting effect. Principle and practice must be joined. “At bottom,” he maintained, “world peace rests of furnishing equitable access to the land and other natural resources to every individual on the earth. Secondly, it rests in protecting and enforcing such allotment.”

What types of natural resources should be allotted, and protected, by a World Authority? “Those types which cannot be easily or rationally dealt with by local communities and regions. Local communities can and should allot surface sites to their members — farms, homesteads, residences, businesses. Regional authorities can administer regional systems — watersheds, rivers, ports and harbors. A global authority is for the high seas, air, and mineral deposits. A global authority should have charge of traffic on seas; over food resources in the oceans or mineral resources under them; over air traffic and use of air waves; over mineral, ore, metals and fuel under land and water. “No natural resource,” Borsodi insisted, “calls for assignment to users by a national government.”

A global authority would apply to world affairs concurrent jurisdiction, which has proven so successful in such federal unions as Australia, Canada, Mexico and the United States. Concurrent jurisdiction means overlapping agencies geographically, and separating them by function. Several authorities wield authority in a given territory, but each is restricted to specific tasks — such as custom guards, a school’s truant officers; penal authorities’

parole officers, port authorities' port policemen; military police, forest rangers, fish and game wardens, fire marshals. Each has limited police and protective authority.

In all cases, action is brought against individual offenders. Only thus can justice be achieved. The writers of the US Constitution saw clearly that this is essential if war is to be avoided. Oliver Ellsworth said, "This Constitution does not attempt to coerce sovereign bodies. No coercion is applicable to such bodies but that of armed force. If we attempt to execute the laws of the Union by sending an armed force against a delinquent state, we would involve the innocent and guilty in the same calamity."

Concurrent jurisdiction has succeeded in the world to the extent it has succeeded in separating the innocent from the guilty individual, through legal procedures for the administration of justice.

When sovereignty resides in the citizens, who assign to each authority its sphere of activity and influence, competition for control of in the use of protective or penal action is avoided. When such competition does develop it is settled in the courts through legal procedures.

"A big task remains," Borsodi asserted, "to teach human beings to extend the principle of limited authority to the crucial mineral resources of the earth." To get rid of conflict between groups it is necessary to universally recognize that an individual, a corporation or a nation who occupies the surface area over mineral deposits has, by this territorial accident, no title to them. Mineral resources, regardless of their location, really belong to mankind as a whole. When this logic is recognized and implemented throughout the world, the internecine rivalry of powers of the earth for possessing and controlling such resources will end. When the policing of such resources is given to a global authority, where it normally belongs, then will the "state wither away!"

If the economic rent of the mineral and oil resources of the earth were collected by a global authority (instead of by landowners or governments) there would be neither private nor public appropriation of unearned income. Then these great gifts of nature to all mankind, instead of being manipulated to create speculators and millionaires, would be administered for the benefit of everybody in the world.

This royalty would constitute an independent revenue adequate to enable the global authority to administer its tasks: assigning the land and natural resources on an equitable basis, collecting the royalties, patrolling and policing the property rights involved, checking violations and maintaining courts before which those accused of violations could be tried. Nature has created an ideal source of revenue adequate to cover all the

expenses of such a global authority.

If free trade were universally practiced there would be no tariffs to prevent people of "have not" countries from obtaining minerals at the same price as the "have" regions.

If, in addition, free migration of people were allowed, the basic conditions of freedom for all persons would be achieved.

Borsodi incorporated these three requisites into a plan for a global authority, which the School of Living issued in 1942 in a pamphlet called *Plan for World Peace by Way of a World Patrol Force*.

I. A World Military Patrol Force

The immediate, universal transfer by all nations of their armies, armaments and bases to a World Military Patrol Force, the membership to be recruited by voluntary enlistment from among all people and nations, the officers to pass suitable civil examination.

The true function of policemen is to patrol, and by patrolling to prevent crime. This military force would not be to apprehend a criminal after a crime of war had been committed by a nation. Its duties would be to patrol all the land and cities, seas and air, to report to the World Court any individual, group or corporation which was manufacturing armament. It would take steps, as entering and encircling, (thereby preventing entry to) any harbor, manufacturing plant or establishment which was making preparations for war.

By restraint, boycott and seizure, the patrol force would thus prevent the production of armament, and without armament there could be no war. Impartiality would be secured by each unit of the patrol force having membership from all parts of the world, such members having renounced their allegiance to their former country. Having pledged allegiance to the world authority, they would be granted such seal, flag, anthem and uniform as would be symbolic of all humanity and world peace.

II. Free Trade, Travel and Communication

The immediate abolition of all customs, tariffs, and trade regulations and the establishment of universal free trade between the people of all nations; the ending of all restrictions upon free travel across political boundaries (health quarantine excepted).

The ending of all restrictions upon free communication between individuals and in groups or meetings anywhere.

The renunciation of imperialism by all governments which require armies in order to maintain their colonies, and do not therefore rule with the consent of the governed.

III. Freedom of Access to the Natural Resources

The immediate pooling of the sovereignty over the seas, the air and the mines and mineral resources of the earth by declaring these resources the common heritage of all the people of the earth.

Any person or corporation extracting raw materials from the earth should be licensed by the Trustees of a World Fund, and required to pay the World Fund royalties equal to the full economic rent, for the support of the world patrol force and maintenance of world peace.

Sovereignty over surface lands, and therefore, control of citizenship, would be reserved to the people organized in communities or states. **CSJ**

The ...tendency which disposes a man to be proud and boastful of *his* country, even though the poor disinherited creature may not have any right to use a single square inch of his country, or to stretch himself out to sleep on it, without buying the privilege from some of the class who really own what he calls *his* country — binds to parties men whose only part in them is to slavishly vote the ticket their managers present. The majority of Republicans or Democrats are such for no better reason than that by some accident they have once taken that side. They are disposed to follow their party whichever it may go — to support what it proposes and to oppose what it opposes — because they deem it *their* party.

Now, whoever considers the nature of parties under our system of government, and the laws of their being, will see how childish it is to proclaim irrevocable hostility against the old parties because of their corruption, and to hope to purify government by supplanting them with a party of purity, or, as it is sometimes expressed, to form a new party that shall set politicians aside. Politicians are the inevitable outgrowth of our system of politics and corruption comes from general conditions which act upon all parties. No matter how high-minded and disinterested its founders, no matter how lofty its principles, no party could, under the political conditions which exist in the United States, rise to the point of seriously contesting for control of the national government without attracting or developing the same corrupt elements which exist in the old parties.

— Henry George in *The Standard*, 1888