

BAD EGGS, NOT BULLETS, IN CONCORD'S NEW BATTLE

Whole Town Churned Up in Great Style When Peace Workers Hold Conference in Historic Ground Sacred to American Traditions Which Are Claimed by Both Sides

Concord is an embattled village again. The town of Emerson and Thoreau is living over Abolitionist Days. Concord has harbored a pacifist conference and the town is rent with strife and bitterness.

The pacifists themselves have been egged. A local clergyman was stoned while leaving one of their meetings. The postmaster has been threatened with the loss of his job because he voted to let the peace crusaders use his church. Police have stood guard about the home of the chairman of the Selectman since a mob gathered one evening to boo and sing jeering songs under his windows, because the Selectman permitted the peace conference to meet in the Town Hall.

Traditions clash in Concord. The war veterans, feeling themselves the custodians of the Revolutionary tradition, declare their town has been traduced by the presence of men, some of whom were conscientious objectors in the World War. The vestrymen of Trinity Church and the older citizens, proud of Concord's tradition as the home of idealism and freedom in all its higher forms, feel equally that Concord has been disgraced by the attempts at denial of free speech and the persecution of her guests.

Town Split Wide Open

The town is divided and becomes more divided as the conference lasts. The division is the ancient one of idealists on the one side and practical men on the other. Hard and bitter things are said. Wild accusations are made. Even the clergymen in town take opposite sides.

The story of the Concord conference, a "convocation of youth for training in peace leadership," initiated by the New England Fellowship of Youth for Peace, is almost like a flash back over Concord's history. The issues and the incidents recall the time when anti-slavery agitators were not safe in Emerson's town, when Wendell Phillips was attacked for his abolition sentiments, when Emerson himself was called a dangerous citizen by some of his conservative neighbors. The young ministers and students and social workers who are studying and picknicking and listening to ardent crusading addresses now in Concord are reminiscent of the "conventicles" of every generation, who have always looked to Concord as the fountain of pure freedom.

And Concord is maintaining its tradition. Concord is harboring the unpopular side. Concord is insisting upon freedom for individual conviction and utterance wherever it leads.

Under Police Guard

This has cost Concord much. Citizens of 100 have been standing as stubbornly for principles as Concord men of 170 stood for their principles. A public official, who is not a pacifist, and who is by nature a man who shrinks for competition and publicity, whose position brings him daily under the bitter criticism of his townsmen, who owes his place in large measure to public good will, has staked quietly by his guns, smiling and refusing to comment on his position, that even pacifists should be heard.

A nephew of William James, the philosopher, has been entertaining a Cambridge clergyman during the conference. His house was bombarded with eggs the other evening. Some citizens who have shown hospitality to the young crusaders, leave their guests at a little distance from the railroad station, apologizing for not wishing to stand under an arc light in the evening at just this time.

The stony little station has a police guard. A whole squad of police guard the little shops, where evening meetings are held. The Episcopal clergyman personally acts as usher, to distribute the obviously hostile eggs sent in such a way as to protect any provocative speaker from the danger of being crushed.

Each meeting is invaded by a scoffing, jeering crowd that surrounds the conference guests. Every speaker is badgered. The whole atmosphere of the meetings is tense expectancy.

Much More of the Name

It all sounds like a day that has history. This time, as often before, Concord is the battleground for a fight that is not its own. The issues reach far afield. Both the contestants are outsiders.

A month ago, few in Concord had ever heard of the Fellowship of Youth for Peace. When they arranged to hold a session for study in Concord this month, nobody seemed to care. Then, all of a sudden arose intense objection to their coming. Masses of material from the Massachusetts Public Interest League and the Industrial Defense Association, two Boston organizations that are engaged in constant warfare upon liberal and radical movements, flooded Concord.

People of no interest in the cause of pacifism began to get literature in the mail, informing them that "the so-called Youth movement is destructive, degrading, un-American and un-Christian. It is the most destructive and insidious of all the efforts of seditious groups to break down the morals and religion of the youth of the country." And more of the same. The attacks wound up with charges that the leaders of the Youth movement are "free lovers" and allied with Russian communism.

The Massachusetts Public Interest League officials appealed to the American Legion and other veterans' groups of Concord, on matters of patriotism, to exclude the conference. At a meeting on Memorial Day the veterans formed a committee that protested against the coming of the fellowship to Concord.

Finally Found a Place

The conference was to have been entertained at the Aldiswick School. A conflict of dates was discovered which prevented this. The conference then secured a promise of Wright's Tavern, property of the First Parish Church (Unitarian), which was to have been finished in time for the meeting. After the agitation against the peace movement, it was found that the tavern

could not be finished in time. They applied for the Unitarian Church and were refused after a patchy debate.

The conference then asked for the use of the Episcopal Church. Rev. Smith, Doctor, supported by his true warriors, Postmaster Fred A. Tower and Gordon Hitchcock, a Harvard-bred fanatic recommended to the church vestry that the hospitality of the church be held out to the applicants. He based his appeal on two grounds. First that a Concord church should cherish individual freedom of expression and harbor it. Second, that any Christian Church should lend itself to the cause of peace among men.

Mr. Dexter was one of three Episcopal divines assigned by Bishop Lawrence to ward-time duty in Ayer. The vestry stood unanimous for entertaining the conference. In the days that followed they stood their ground under heavy pressure. Two veterans had believed their fight for exclusion won when the Unitarians refused their property. Fred Tower, as postmaster, particularly stood the gaff. Some were going to complain to Washington about him, and, of course, the doctor had to take it on all sides.

The veterans went back to the Public Interest League and got more material, attacking the war records and the attainments of various leaders of the movement. Others applied to the War Department to furnish information against the pacifists.

Pelted by the Mob

They besieged the vestry to listen to them. The vestry held a meeting. The veterans came with their documents. The vestry heard them respectfully, but retained the evidence against the peace leaders not out of consequence. They remained unanimous for extending the hospitality of their church to the cause of peace.

The Selectmen, two to one, granted the use of the Town Hall. The Massachusetts Public Interest League officials continued the fight. They put their financial support as well as the reports of their satisfied patriots who attend all meetings whose patriots they respect, at the services of the Concord veterans. Propaganda filled the town against the conference. When finally the students and teachers and agitators came a week ago, they were received on the one side as martyrs for freedom, and on the other as bomb throwers and "free lovers."

It was a stirring meeting that first night. With a mob outside that pelted the members as they left the church, Rev. Smith Dexter kept the conference.

Pleading for Free Speech

"You of the Fellowship of Youth for Peace, in coming to this town, whose very name means peace, have been aided by few clergymen, nor have churches been thrown open for your use. It is the inescapable duty of the church to oppose every evil force that disrupts the human family. And the most violent and sinister of these forces is war. Shall the church hesitate to maintain its right to foster peace by every Christian means within its reach? You have been pelted very black by your traducers. But so were Washington and Lincoln. So was Christ himself."

"Trained investigators have weighed the charges against you, and I am convinced that the charges are a cruel and baseless slander. In the house of the Prince of Peace you who have gathered to confer in the cause of peace are more than welcome. You are here by right of sentiment alone."

"And if men say there are those among your number who were conscientious objectors in the war, I will answer this: That honest men may differ as to the State's authority over the individual conscience in war-time. But no one can fairly question the courage of those who will brave the fierce push of the war spirit, who will endure the hatred of neighbors, the torture of prison, rather than yield up their convictions."

This boldly sets forth the side of those who hold to one of the great traditions of Concord.

Veterans Disclaim the Eggs

There was this counter feeling among the veterans. A loved lad of Concord played a glorious part and died in battle. The Legion post is named for him. The veterans were incited in this fashion: "These men who obstructed the war prevented the fullest strength of the nation to equip the boys in France. This aided the enemy. Hence these opponents of war were necessary to the death of your comrades."

"We did not know anything about this crowd," said Henry E. Joslin, Legion commander, until the Massachusetts Public Interest League put us up to them. They put it up to us. You veterans don't want a lot of communists and slickers using the name of Concord for their propaganda. We didn't. We've got the goods on them and we are going to show them up at a mass meeting Thursday night."

"I haven't got the real dope on these fellows straight. But the Public Interest League has. They have agents who go to all these radical meetings and find out about them. They have helped us finance this fight. Mrs. H. A. Frothington and Rev. Herbert Johnson of their league are on our committee."

We veterans believe in peace, but not in relating the Government.

"Of course, we don't believe in egg-throwing. That was done by a mob looking for trouble. We haven't anything against these young people who are here. They are harmless enough. But they are likely to be misled by extreme leaders. They are just to get publicity and prestige out of Concord."

Opposition Explained

Opposition to the presence of the conference in Concord is voiced by such men as Henry J. Gooding, a young Harvard graduate, executive of a Harvard reserve officer, who is a brother in Boston. He says:

"The leaders of this movement are not sincere peace lovers; they are spreading discontent with all our means. They take every opportunity to attack and sneer at Anglo-Saxon culture and ideals. I don't like to see them getting publicity for their propaganda by exploiting the name of Concord. I am a Unitarian and I strongly opposed letting them have our church exploiting the name of Concord as a Unitarian and I actively opposed letting them have our church."

"I believe in peace. Nobody who has been in the Army wants any peace. People are visionary in wanting us to disarm. I am in the banking business. I know that other Nations envy our wealth. If we don't have force we will fall a way from us if there are all wars are economic at bottom. Of course, the people you are talking are innocent enough. But their red leaders do not appear. It isn't easy to get their Communist connections. But I am convinced."

Some Extreme Pacifists

Some others go so far as to accuse people of planting the fire throwers for the sake of being martyrs in a riot.

The group includes such extreme pacifists as Brent Dow Allinson, who was convicted during the war for obstructing the draft and served a year in jail after the war. It includes extremely provocative speakers who, bitterly by their respect, at the services of the Concord veterans. Propaganda filled the town against the conference. When finally the students and teachers and agitators came a week ago, they were received on the one side as martyrs for freedom, and on the other as bomb throwers and "free lovers."

The conference program bears the names of the following well-known people as advisory committee: Edna D. Mearns, Mrs. John F. Mearns, Malcom Forbes, Prof. Henry R. Hunt, Mrs. N. P. Halliwell, Francis H. Brown, Mrs. Jessica Henderson. They have had a very full calendar of addresses for a week. This next week they will be meeting in study groups to consider the most effective means to further their crusade to abolish war and the fear of war.

Some of them have done more speaking and speaking than attending addresses on "International Economic Agreements" and "Progress of International Arbitration."

Extremely Irritating People

Their program of speeches has on much like the programs of the Paris Policy Association that meets in the Copple Place Hotel somewhere at 10. Dr. Rev. Harold E. Spright came in one night to deliver an address by Thomas Jefferson and John Adams. He told the conference they were not disciples of these Americans.

Prof. O. B. Gerig of Simmons College is one of the leaders of the conference. Dr. Harold Sheehy of a Christian Leader in Boston is a leader whose patriotism has been challenged by the Public Interest League which convinced the Trinity Vestry of Concord.

Robert Ralph, young Unitarian pastor of Cambridge, made one address. "My pacifism," he said, "is a very simple thing. I object to taking life. Such a stand is sufficient for a simple soul."

The fellowship aims its attack directly upon compulsory military training. It has accused the War Department and the Reserve Officers Training Corps, as well as the private ownership bodies, by its attacks upon its military training system. It is credited by these opponents with being responsible for the removal of companies to drill in several colleges, including Boston University.

Welcomes Martyrdom

"One of the leaders, Abraham White, is attacked for securing subsidies against military training in damages settlements by deceiving shell war-thortles as to his intentions. He and others are called Communists."

"O, this is thrilling," said Edward E. James, nephew of the philosopher, of the episode of the egg bombardment. "Pacifism now is passing through the seditious stage that the abolition movement went through in Garrison's time. There will be more avowed pacifists in Concord when this has passed but ever dared whisper their belief in peace cause before last week's most dramatic daring to stand its ground that is what pacifism needs and what we need."

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