The Birmingham Eccentric

PART TWO

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'How Can America Stay Out of War?' Discussed by Teacher

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Fears the Odds Heavily Against U. S. Neutrality

(Editor's Note—On the eve of Congress' meeting in Washington in special session to consider the momentous problem of neutrality, Wilson Jenkin, history and civics instructor at Baldwin High, wrote this article, on the invitation of The Eccentric. His opinions come from him as a private citizen and are not necessarily the views of The Eccentric nor of the school system. In the future, the opinions of other Birmingham people on timely matters of importance will be solicited for The Eccentric's Forum. Should anyone have comment on Mr. Jenkin's article, the Editor invites its receipt.)

BY WILSON JENKIN

It is fruitless to attempt a factual resume of the European situation. Experts are doing this daily, Professor Slosson and others will be analyzing the picture for us, and many of our Birmingham citizens have mastered the crisis and war developments more thoroughly than the time restrictions of the public school setup permit a history teacher to do, much as he may crave the time to do it.

It should be far more profitable, moreover, to suggest some things all of us may do in the days ahead. Because I write as a private citizen and because The Birmingham Eccentric should be held responsible for no view herein presented, I shall write in the first person. If The Eccentric can persuade citizens thus to share frankly personal points of view perhaps democracy locally will be made more effective.

Students Ask

Students constantly ask: "Do you think America **will** stay out of the war? Do you think America **should** stay out? Do you think America **can** stay out?" To these, very little answer can be made in the classroom, but I welcome the opportunity to participate in a public forum on the subject, knowing that my prejudices and errors will be fully discovered.

I would not risk a wager on the first question; the lessons of 1800-1812, of 1898, and of 1914-1917 warn that the odds are against long-continued neutrality. Further, capitalistic, profit-seeking America is loaded too heavily in the direction of some kind of participation, whether of a naval or military nature or not, to permit us easily to remain aloof. It would seem that the Soviet Union, minus many of the basic conditions which predispose other modern nations to war, could better have pursued a neutral course, yet the war-breeding greed of which G. R. A. spoke last week in "This and That" seems to be bringing even the U. S. S. R. into action. Only time can tell whether the United States will remain at peace; the odds against such a course, however devoutly wished, are terrific.

The second question lends itself to a direct answer: I believe with all my heart that the United States **should** remain out of the war. Not simply **now**, when we are relatively free from danger, but **later**, when American investments abroad are evaporating, when American vessels are being halted and sent to the bottom, when American foreign trade is ruined, when home industries have been starved (as under a strict isolation policy), when American lives repeatedly are being lost at sea, and when neighboring peoples are being hard pressed, defeated. Yes, I believe that America should remain genuinely at peace through those conditions and beyond; that America **must** do these things.

What Is Needed

Whether America **can** remain out of war will depend on the steadiness of American nerves, the realism and intelligence of American judgment, and the depth of American faith in the values of peace relative to all other conceivable conditions. A cynic might well say that America has none of these in the degree to which they will be needed. Yet I believe that Americans can yet catch a striking, challenging vision of peace which shall nerve us for every required sacrifice. I believe such sacrifices are immeasurably justified in terms of our own future and that of other peoples. We can remain at peace if we can master our spirits, keep peace within our souls under circumstances such as the following:

When they deluge us with headlines, bulletins, sound effects, photographs, posters, maps, quotations, official statements, and historical analogies, let us reassure ourselves with the knowledge that all of these can be made to lie, even by supposedly respectable statesmen. When they speak to us of the Huns (as sections of the press are already doing) let us think rather of the actual Germans of our acquaintance. When they report all manner of atrocities let us recall the atrocious propaganda the Allies used in 1914-1918.

When war guilt "evidence" is heaped on Adolph Hitler, let us remember the natural human temptation to make a scapegoat for the sins of all of us (cf. the Kaiser), and make due allowances. When Germany is condemned in blanket fashion for the war, let us bear in mind that the same charge was made in 1914 and 1919, but that reasonable, middle-of-the-road historians agree that Germany's "war guilt" was no greater than that of the Allies, if indeed as great in some instances. When, similarly, supposedly authentic documents are quoted and printed in support of war-guilt charges, let us recall that the German White Book of 1914 was relatively accurate as compared with certain Allied publications of that crisis, and that we swallowed the latter "hook, line, and sinker."

Spawn of Versailles

When fantastic tales of insatiable imperialism are spun by the propagandists, let us remember the tales of 25 years ago, and realize that there have been and still are other greedy imperialists. When the people clamor for war to "crush Germany for all time," let us consider that Hitlerism was born, perhaps, inevitably, out of the Versailles attempt at such an end.

When pretty idealisms are preached as giving a "cause," let us recall how sordid actually proved to be the materialist motives beneath such preaching. When "democracy" and "peace" are proclaimed as the ideals for which we must fight, let us reflect how these are sabotaged by all modern wars; let us remember the story of Europe since last we rallied to save democracy and end war in this fashion. When the conflict is pictured as a "holy war" (as is now being done less than 25 miles from here in the pulpit) let us ask ourselves how holy are the specific measures all nations undertake in modern warfare. When they prate to us of "neutral rights" and "national honor" let us call to mind how treacherous is the path of legal neutrality and how tragically dishonorable is vengeance in the light of history.

Weigh the Losses

When bulletins flash dismay and disaster let us listen with the calm born of having been such disillusioned propaganda of the Great War, subtly used in the hands of calculating masters. When people point to normal business lost and huge possible profits foregone as the result of our isolation, let us remember the two hundred billion dollar havoc wrought less than a generation ago, plus the economic unsettlement which accompanied our attempt to return to normal. When hundreds and thousands of American lives are lost at sea, let us ponder the fact that to take up arms in reprisal would be voluntarily to doom hundreds of thousands of young American lives wholly or in part, and to take the lives of corresponding numbers of other nations. When millions, even billions, are lost in shipping and foreign investments, let us realize such losses are paltry compared to the losses of a belligerent.

In brief, when emotional appeals and seemingly logical arguments appear unanswerable let us still remember our disillusionment after the last war. Meanwhile, though our hearts are torn between many impulses, can we not examine again our own individual stand in case of war? In case our people and our government are swept by events into war will we as individuals participate in the strife? In the armed ranks? In non-combatant war service? Have we the courage and self-sacrifice to say to our government, now as Congress convenes this very day, and then when conscriptions calls, that we refuse to support war on any grounds? The day is surely not entirely past when thoughtful citizens can make their influence felt upon the legislation of our country.

These views are stated in extremes, but extreme discipline of spirit doubtless will be demanded. Truly the answers to the pressing questions with which this discussion begins are to be found within us. We dare not dodge the extreme issues which almost certainly will be thrust upon us. Let us be calm; let us keep peace within at all costs.

The Eccentric's Forum

Fairfax Home Sold

This Early American farm house type home located at 661 Fairfax Road, in Quarton Lake Estates, is one of several recent real estate transfers made on this street. The new owners of this lovely home are Mr. and Mrs. Theodore G. Siekerman. Joseph C. Grinsell of Snyder, Buck & Bennett made the deal.

Fairfax Road Deals Total $200,000 in 12 Month Period

According to M. E. Snyder, president of Snyder, Buck & Bennett, Fairfax road in Quarton Lake Estates is experiencing phenomenal real estate activity.

"During the past 12 months," said Mr. Snyder, "there have been real estate transactions involving more than $200,000 on this street alone. Participating in these transfers were new and used homes as well as vacant home sites."

"Since the European conflict started," stated Mr. Snyder, "real estate activity has advanced quite sharply. Many families who have been postponing the purchase of a home are now buying or building before the rise in building costs affect the price of houses. Wartime inflation is already making itself felt in the price of certain materials, which will inevitably reflect in higher prices for homes."

On The Spot Again

BERKLEY—Forced last year by writ of mandamus to levy a tax of $26,925 to pay bondholders, Berkley is faced with a second mandamus suit which would force the turning over of this money to the creditors.

"University to Open"

ROYAL OAK—The second annual "University of Life," will open Sunday evening, Sept. 24, at the First Methodist Church. Problems will be discussed by three age groups. Attendance last year was as large as 1,000 per night.

Money Put to Work

SOUTH LYON — Twenty-two silver dollars were "put to work" by the Kiwanis Club and the investment grew to $165 in three months. One member bought a small pig and sold chances on it; another sold a bird dog, similarly.

Woman Is Scratched In Crash on Hunter

One of the first auto mishaps to occur on new Hunter boulevard took place Sunday at 6:48 p. m. at Haynes, when the machine of Clarence H. Enggass, 54, 223 Monroe, Detroit, said to be a member of the well-known jewelry firm, collided with a car driven by James W. Kelley, 51, of Bloomfield Hills.

Ethel Lovin, 45, of 1001 Covington, Palmer Park, Detroit, received a strained neck and abrasions in the crash. The mishap occurred when Enggass essayed to make a left turn. The injured woman was riding with Kelley.

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Supt. Howard Crull Going to Conference

School Supt. Howard D. Crull was authorized by the Board of Education in its session Tuesday night to attend the state conference of city superintendents to be held in Traverse City on Friday and Saturday. Last year, Supt. Crull said he went to a similar meeting at Sault Ste. Marie and required $17 for his expenses.

Relief Set-Up Advice

PONTIAC—Oakland County's relief work can be better handled if the Board of Supervisors sets up a non-paid commission and hires a manager, rather than by establishing a paid commission which would divide the responsibility, several members of the Oakland Citizens League has advised the welfare committee of the Supervisors.

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Millers Set Sail

ROYAL OAK—Floyd J. Miller and his family are believed some where on the high seas, after succeeding in booking passage from England—finally. A cablegram did not state time of departure because of a legal ban on the disclosure of this information, by reason of the submarine menace.

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