Pacifism and Citizenship

Can They Coexist?

Dialogues from Public Workshops 5

UNITED STATES
INSTITUTE OF PEACE

Pacifism and Citizenship

Can They Coexist?

Kenneth M. Jensen and Kimber M. Schraub
Editors

UNITED STATES
INSTITUTE OF PEACE
Washington, D.C.

United States Institute of Peace
1550 M Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20005

First published 1991

Printed in the United States of America

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
Pacifism and Citizenship—can they coexist? / Kenneth M. Jensen and Kimber M. Schraub, editors.
p. cm.
Proceedings of a workshop held in September 1988 and sponsored by the United States Institute of Peace.
ISBN 1-878379-11-9 (pbk.)
1. Pacifism—Congresses. 2. Peace movements—United States—Congresses. 3. Allegiance—United States—Congresses. I. Jensen, Kenneth M. (Kenneth Martin), 1944- . II. Schraub, Kimber M. III. United States Institute of Peace.
JX1933 1988a 91-7307
327.1'72—dc20 CIP

United States Institute of Peace

The United States Institute of Peace is an independent, nonpartisan, federal institution created and funded by Congress to strengthen the nation's capacity to promote the peaceful resolution of international conflict. Established in 1984, the Institute has its origins in the tradition of American statesmanship, which seeks to limit international violence and to achieve a just peace based on freedom and human dignity. The Institute meets its congressional mandate to expand available knowledge about ways to achieve a more peaceful world through an array of programs including grantmaking, a three-tiered fellowship program, research and studies projects, development of library resources, and a variety of citizen education activities. The Institute is governed by a bipartisan, fifteen-member Board of Directors, including four members ex officio from the executive branch of the federal government and eleven individuals appointed from outside federal service by the President of the United States and confirmed by the Senate.

Board of Directors

John Norton Moore (Chairman), Walter L. Brown Professor of Law and Director of the Graduate Program, University of Virginia School of Law
Elspeth Davies Rostow (Vice Chairman), Stiles Professor of American Studies Emerita, Lyndon B. Johnson School of Public Affairs, University of Texas
Dennis L. Bark, Senior Fellow, Hoover Institution on War, Revolution, and Peace, Stanford University
William R. Kintner, Professor Emeritus of Political Science, University of Pennsylvania
Evron M. Kirkpatrick, President, Helen Dwight Reid Educational Foundation, Washington
Morris I. Leibman, Esq., Sidley and Austin, Chicago
Sidney Lovett, United Church of Christ Minister, Holderness, N.H.
Richard John Neuhaus, Director, Institute on Religion and Public Life, New York
Mary Louise Smith, civic leader; former member, Board of Directors, Iowa Peace Institute
W. Scott Thompson, Professor of International Politics, Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, Tufts University
Allen Weinstein, President, Center for Democracy, Washington, and University Professor and Professor of History, Boston University

Members ex officio
J. A. Baldwin, Vice Admiral, U.S. Navy, and President, National Defense University
Stephen J. Hadley, Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Policy
Ronald F. Lehman II, Director, U.S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency
Richard Schifter, Assistant Secretary of State for Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs
Samuel W. Lewis, President, United States Institute of Peace (nonvoting)

Preface

The Bible urges us to "seek peace and pursue it," but it does not say how hard one should oppose a war fought by one's own country. The clash between pacifist beliefs and the perceived demands of loyal citizenship traumatized and scarred America throughout the Vietnam era, and the seeming contradictions between them remain unresolved. Thus, when the United States Institute of Peace—established by Congress to expand available knowledge about ways to achieve a more peaceful world—addressed the dilemmas of pacifism and citizenship in its September 1988 Public Workshop, it did not promise definite answers.

The Institute seeks to examine approaches toward peacemaking from every part of the ideological spectrum, and our workshop brought together pacifists from leading American peace organizations with some of their most outspoken critics. The aim of the workshop was to provide "if not enlightenment, at least intellectual stimulation" about an enduring moral question. The three hours of sometimes emotional exchanges among pacifists and their critics proceeded as might have been expected. But, as one participant observed, the fact that the publicly funded Institute devoted a public workshop to this question was a new and encouraging development to those concerned with pacifism and citizenship. "It shows that we are taking pacifism seriously," said Tom Cornell, the national secretary of the Catholic Peace Fellowship.

Although everyone at the workshop favored peace, almost everything about it (especially how it should be pursued) proved to be controversial, so much so that the group could not agree even on basic definitions. Elise Boulding, a sociologist, a Quaker, and a life-long pacifist and activist, opened the discussion by defining pacifism very broadly to include four types of persons who call themselves pacifists (she noted that all types are found in every major peace organization): *internationalists,* who in the end support their governments in wars involving their own country; *antiwar persons,* who reserve the right to choose which wars to fight and which not; traditional pacifists, known as *conscientious objectors,* who reject all wars on religious or moral grounds but who cooperate with their governments by undertaking alternative service of a humanitarian nature; and *absolutists,* who reject all war and violence and refuse all cooperation with their governments with respect to national defense.

All but the third of these definitions were characterized as inappropriate by Catholic theologian and long-time peace advocate George Weigel, who accused Boulding of "a bit of semantic imperialism." Charles Chatfield, an historian of American pacifism, thought the discussants might do better to describe pacifists as "peacemakers, people who favor peace over war." He ran into criticism from those who felt this was too narrow. "For me, the definition of pacifism is nonviolent struggle," said Michael Simmons of the American Friends Service Committee. "My actions must be precisely in the political arena, and not afar in the academic community, contemplating the dire state of the world."

Boulding attributed to the American peace movement a host of valid political concerns, ranging from ecology to national liberation struggles and economic development in the Third World. The foremost function of a pacifist, she argued, is to criticize government policies "in light of the highest moral values and of the long-term welfare of the nation." The pressure generated by pacifists provides nothing less than "checks and balances in the [political] system."

Contesting the notion of politically responsible pacifism, Guenter Lewy, the author of *Peace and Revolution: The Moral Crisis of American Pacifism* (1988), a book critical of American peace movements, disagreed. "The pacifist [ought to be] committed to an ethic of ultimate ends which affirms the sanctity of human life," Lewy argued. But when the forces of evil are all around us, when there is no good choice, Lewy continued, then the proper course for pacifists is to remain silent rather than to compromise their principles or publicly resist the will of the majority. David Little, ethicist, theologian, and at the time a distinguished fellow in the Institute's Jennings Randolph Program for International Peace, disagreed with Lewy, asserting that the contradictions could only really be "managed." Little recommended that pacifists attend to the production of thoughtful standards for making decisions about when to compromise their principles or when to take part in civil disobedience.

Lewy stirred more controversy by insisting that pacifists have no right to use civil disobedience against government policies. "In a democracy, you win some and you lose some," Lewy said, "but you accept the verdict of the majority, even if you think it is mistaken." Several participants objected, including Little. In "a situation of extremity . . . civil disobedience is a perfectly understandable and viable moral position," he argued. "You can't just say, 'Well, the law disallows it.' " David McReynolds, a veteran peace activist from War Resisters' International, shrugged off Lewy's defense of majoritarian democratic rules as unrealistic. "We are trying to deal with issues of great passion in times of great turbulence," he argued, "and if we did not produce contradictions, we would be men and women with ice in our veins, instead of blood."

In World War II, by Lewy's account, "many pacifists . . . gradually came to realize that in fighting the Nazis the United States was fighting an evil without precedent." He asserted that there was also "the feeling on the part of most pacifists that it was undemocratic to obstruct the nation's war effort and to prevent their fellow citizens from fulfilling their patriotic duty."

During the Vietnam War, however, the substantial core of the American peace movement not only gave moral support to foreign parties to violent struggle (such as the NLF [Viet Cong] and the North Vietnamese) but also "drastically" violated rules of democracy by forcibly obstructing policies adopted by a freely elected U.S. government, thereby jeopardizing the "well-being and the survival of others."

Expectedly, Lewy was taken sharply to task by several participants. Boulding said she had opposed World War II, and Lewy asked her whether she had considered the consequences had she been successful in converting everyone to her way of thinking. David Little objected that the peace movement should not be judged "just on the calculus of lives lost" but "on the kind of world [it is] trying to promote." McReynolds was even more indignant. "The man who can stand and say he has no questions about his role in World War II, pacifist or military, does not understand what that war was and what it did," he asserted. To him, World War II was not a clear example of a "just war." As for Vietnam, McReynolds continued, "the aggressor was our own country. I have no apology for the role we [pacifists] played. . . . We are by nature in opposition to our state, because we owe obedience to higher and different bonds."

The inner conflicts of pacifists figured prominently in the discussion. Boulding, a Quaker, spoke movingly of the torment which she felt during World War II, when she identified with both American soldiers and Japanese victims in Hiroshima, and after the war, when she visited Auschwitz and was struck by the tragedy of the ashes of victims of Nazism as well as of the German people. "The tension of identifying with both sides in a conflict . . . is very much a core part of my life," Boulding said.

Duality of viewpoint—the feeling of citizenship both in one's country and the world—is at the heart of pacifists' readiness to turn against their own governments, according to Boulding. Peace advocates, she said, look at the world "with

an inward and an outward eye. The outward eye sees things as they are, but inwardly, the visionary eye can see a more peaceful, more just, more humane social order." When the policies of their own country fail to live up to the ideal, Boulding said, pacifists sometimes plunge into unbridled protest actions. "They love their country very, very deeply," she maintained, and they can't "bear seeing it act in a way which they regard as betrayal" of the highest moral standards.

For once, most of the participants agreed with the speaker, although there were differences about the origins of the pacifist's split vision. One workshop participant traced the dilemma in part to the United Nations Charter, which created a model for the behavior of all states. According to Betty Goetz Lall of the Peace Studies Consortium at New York University, that supranational constitution clashes with the traditional American concept of "my country, right or wrong," and thereby blurs the definition of citizenship.

Chatfield, who is a professor at Wittenberg University, took an even broader view. To him, peace activists are social reformers struggling with "the enormous, pervasive, universal dilemma of those who are trying to change the culture of which they're part." Chatfield summed up the pacifist's inner tensions: "You're part of a nationalism which you try to universalize."

This publication presents the full discussion that took place during the Institute's "Pacifism and Citizenship" Public Workshop. Although what follows is drawn nearly verbatim from transcripts of the event, it has been divided into chapters for greater readability, and references (in chapter notes) have been added at the suggestion of several workshop participants. At the request of Dr. Elise Boulding, we also have included (in an appendix) a reproduction of a letter that figured significantly in the discussion. The letter is entitled "An Epistle to People of All Conditions, Everywhere." Dr. Boulding and her husband sent it as a plea for peace soon after the bombing of Pearl Harbor.

We hope the reader will agree that this addition to the Institute's Dialogues from Public Workshops series provides a thought-provoking look at the relationship between pacifism and citizenship in both its contemporary and eternal dimensions.

Samuel W. Lewis, President
United States Institute of Peace

Contents

KENNETH M. JENSEN

Introduction

The subject of today's public workshop is the relationship between pacifism and citizenship. The assumptions and prejudices that surround this topic remain deeply rooted. The world of unexamined opinion may be fairly—or, rather, *unfairly*—divided between those who believe that pacifism is not a political identity but rather a matter of personal morality and those who believe that pacifism is and always has been a matter of broad political and social responsibility. Of course, this division of opinion is likely to remain, but inasmuch as the United States Institute of Peace knows that there are those from a wide variety of provenances who would have it otherwise, we believe it is incumbent upon us to give them a public forum.

As an introduction to this discussion, I would like to cite a few excerpts from a paper written by one of our discussants today, George Weigel,[1] who describes why he agreed to write a paper on pacifism although he is not a pacifist. I was struck in reading this paper by how well his reasoning resonates with the reasoning of the Institute in staging this workshop.

That is, of course, not to say that the Institute is not pacifist or that it must argue its way into discussions of pacifism. I quote the following as an eloquent statement on the importance of the discussion of pacifism to all those who are interested in the subject of morality in foreign policy. George states a general argument, then delineates four specific reasons for wanting to

get in on the discussion of the current state of pacifist thought. He says,

> As a general intellectual proposition, I believe it to be the case that any tradition of moral reflection, no matter how secure in its own self-understanding it may be, benefits from the friendly critique of other traditions. All things being equal, then, moral traditions which are experiencing a ferment in their self-understanding should be even more open to widening the circle of critical conversation about their future. . . . [As] American pacifism is in a period of perhaps unprecedented ferment, it seems to me that the time is precisely right for a candid exchange between pacifists and nonpacifists on the future of the pacifist conscience and pacifist politics.[2]

He continues by describing the reasons to join in a discussion of pacifism:

> First, there is the empirical fact that the pacifist conscience . . . animates a significant and increasing number of American Christians [and, I might add, others] today, and those pacifist convictions can be expected to have a discernible impact on the future of our public life. Thus, anyone interested in the intellectual and moral health of the debate at the intersection of ethics in U.S foreign policy must be interested in and, it is hoped, a part of the debate over the pacifist future.
>
> Second, there is the demonstrable historical impact of the pacifist conscience on the conduct of America's business in the world in the past as well as the present. This impact is persistently (and wrongheadedly) minimized by pacifists and foreign policy realists alike. But I take it to be an unassailable matter of historical record that one cannot begin to understand the terms of, or the passions engaged in, the debates over isolation and intervention in the 1930s, over nuclear testing and related issues in the 1950s, over America's role in the second Indo-China war in the 1960s and 1970s, and over U.S. policy in Central America today without taking serious account of the role pacifist individuals and agencies have played in shaping the contours and themes of the public discourse on these issues. Pacifists have

> been, and remain, a small demographic minority in the United States. But they have had, and continue to have, an influence in our public discourse that is far greater than their numbers might suggest.
>
> The third factor . . . is the contemporary recognition by both mainline/oldline Protestantism and Roman Catholicism of the legitimacy of the pacifist conscience within those religious traditions. Those who think that American pacifism is still largely confined to the historic peace churches can simply be said not to have been paying very much attention to the American religious scene for the past generation.[3]

George goes on to note that this pacifist renaissance in the mainline churches has been "a source of light as well as heat," which I believe is true. Fourth, and most important, George says, "I know and admire pacifists of deep moral conviction and impressive political sophistication. Having learned much from them, I hope to make some small recompense in what follows."[4]

Like George Weigel, the United States Institute of Peace and the public at large would do well to come to know and admire pacifists and nonpacifists of deep moral conviction and impressive political sophistication, and to begin to learn from both. We might look at this discussion as a three-cornered conversation between pacifists and nonpacifists, with the Institute standing in for the American public. We will hear first from Dr. Elise Boulding, then from Dr. Guenter Lewy. Both speakers have been asked to speak on the following question: In your estimation, what was, is, and should be the relationship between pacifism, in a strict and broad sense, and citizenship, in terms of social and political responsibility, in the United States? After the speakers have addressed the question, we will open the discussion to all the participants.

Notes

1. George Weigel, "Christian Pacifism and World Politics: The Path to Distress, and Five Theses for a New Reformation," delivered at the Conference on the Future of Pacifism sponsored by the Ethics and Public Policy Center, Washington, D.C., September 15-16, 1988. Subsequently published in Michael Cromartie, ed., *Peace Betrayed? Essays on Pacifism and Politics* (Washington, D.C.: Ethics and Public Policy Center, 1990).
2. Ibid., pp. 1-2.
3. Ibid., pp. 2-3.
4. Ibid., p. 4.

The Pacifist as Citizen

Because it is useful to understand the contexts out of which people speak, I will begin by saying that I speak about pacifism and citizenship from the following background: I am a sociologist, a Quaker, a pacifist, and an immigrant. I came as a child to this country because my family sought a better life than poor, depression-ridden Norway could offer. I also am a precinct co-chair for the Democratic party in Boulder, Colorado.

Because there are many meanings associated with the term *pacifism,* let me clarify what I understand the range of meanings to include. The word is constituted from the Latin words *pace* and *facere* and refers to making peace. Contrary to popular opinion, it has nothing to do with passivism or a state of passivity.

The pacifist holds dual citizenship: she is a citizen of a given nation-state and of the world community. The pacifist looks at present reality with both an inward and outward eye. The outward eye sees the sociopolitical realities of the world as it now is, organized by threat and violence. The inward eye is a visionary eye that can see another social order, more peaceful, more just, more humane than the one we experience daily. That dual citizenship and the two ways of seeing are very important to understanding the fully committed pacifist.

There is an enormous ambiguity in the term *pacifism,* however, because of the diversity of views held by people who

go under the label of pacifism. The term has been used to refer to people who are primarily internationalist; who, when it comes right down to it, will support military action by their government in wartime. There is no reason why they shouldn't call themselves pacifist if they want to, and some of them do.

The second variety, and we saw many of them during the Vietnam War, is the antiwar person, who believes that there are certain wars in which it is all right to fight and certain wars in which it is not all right to fight. This kind of pacifist reserves the right to choose which war to fight.

The third variety is perhaps the one we usually think of when the word pacifist is used: the person who rejects all war and all taking of life, including animal life (they are not all vegetarians, but many are). This kind of pacifism is based on religious and/or moral grounds. These pacifists, known as conscientious objectors, cooperate with their government in wartime by undertaking alternative service of a humanitarian nature, welcoming the opportunity for community identification, but always in the context of furthering the welfare of the international community.

Finally, there is the absolutist, who not only rejects all war and all violence, but refuses all cooperation with the government in relation to national defense on the grounds that governments are basically organized as war systems. These are the resisters who refuse to register for the draft and who, when they go to jail, go on work strike in order not to cooperate with the prison system—another part of the war system. The nonregistrants I have known are people of incredibly high moral character who not infrequently have endured several years of solitary confinement in prison for their convictions. They have emerged from their prison experience as luminous human beings before whom one can only stand in awe. The Iowa farmer I spent a few days with at a conference in Kansas was an absolutist who survived solitary confinement in prison during World War II and has stood as a bulwark of his rural community ever since. Such people have made a very special contribution to the concept of citizenship.