

Dare We Speak of Goodwill?

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Certainly we dare! We must! But—runs this reply—we will do better to seek and burn the seeds of illwill.

NOT LONG AGO I accepted an invitation to speak at an evening forum which my Rotary Club was conducting. My subject was to be "International Goodwill and Peace."

"What would *you* say," I asked a friend, "if you were to make such an address?"

"Well, Padre," he answered, "I'd just get up and say: 'There's no such thing,' and then I'd sit down."

I could well understand his cynicism, but I could not share it. My friend is deeply depressed because the rosy world of "might have been" did not come to be. Most of us suffer that same nostalgia at times. Yet if I did not feel that the world of "might be" holds hope for us all, I should never have given that speech, should never have penned these words.

Certainly our old world order is sick. Indeed, it is already dead. We stand, as someone has said, between two worlds, the one dead, the other powerless to be born. Thus when we talk about Rotary's effort to advance "international understanding, goodwill, and peace," let us see it against the background of the grim world of now, and not against our never-born dream world of yesterday.

The world needs realists—but the kind of realist who roots his feet on the rock of fact and keeps his eyes, not on the mire around him, but on the ideal for which he strives. Rotary holds out an ideal. It visualizes a band of men in every land who see a higher motive in life than mere private gain, men who, convinced of the oneness of humanity, strive to help build on that common humanity an international social and economic life which will develop to the fullest all the faculties of man which lift him. That ideal also sees Rotarians of each land studying with understanding sympathy the problems of other na-

tions, all linked by the ideal of service.

It is good that that ideal is being kept alive, that there is a body which will act as a leaven in public opinion, a leaven of reason and farsightedness in a mad and tortured world. Loyalty to such an organization is not always easy just now. When feelings are rightly strong, when perils are near and great, it is easy to forget how precious is a world-wide organization which strives to keep all within its fold.

Am I taking the very line I have condemned? Am I voicing beautiful, empty platitudes about our movement's powers? I am not. Note that I said Rotary *visualizes* these goods. No one claims that it has fully achieved them. Note that I said Rotary *visualizes Rotarians studying*. Perhaps we have not done enough of that. Perhaps our internationalism has been too narrow. We haven't tried hard enough to get at the roots of things which bind.

But whatever we may have done or left undone, we now face stark reality, for as Rotary was spreading from land to land, the growth of extreme nationalism was also spreading. It seemed an anachronism to us, for everything else in our world pointed in the opposite direction. Growing international trade, swifter communication, wider travel for more people, broader education — everything indicated a world drawing closer together in mutual goodwill and peace. Yet all the while this opposite spirit was working underground.

Thus once more, what could have been for human good has be-

come a thing of human ill. It is an old story. The acquisitive instinct, which brought primitive man from the nomadic to the pastoral stage, becomes a public nuisance when it produces a thief or a conscienceless millionaire. A wholesome patriotism degenerates into a nationalism which seeks aggrandizement at the expense of all rather than the enrichment of all—when it is misdirected.

So it seems to me that it is essential to international goodwill and peace that each State should consent to some limitation of its sovereign power. But a nation's external relationships are not the only concern. If a State regards man as a means and not as an end, then that internal policy will so affect the externality as to make it a sore on the world's life. A sane and real internationalism cannot remain unaffected by what goes on within nations.

BUT WHAT CAN Rotary do? Like any other organization, it can function only through its individual members. There is much that they—that *we*—can do. We can be prepared to lead. We can extend our contacts. We can study world problems, seeking to see in every nation the best and not the worst. By encouraging each people to bring its contribution to the common pot of life, by letting each share in the bounties meant for all, the world can get on the road to its goal.

Is that a task for Rotarians? It is. It is a task for every man with a clear eye, a stout heart, and a strong faith in the world of "may be." It is a task for all men of goodwill. Let us go to work!

