

# Emily Greene Balch

BY JOHN HERMAN RANDALL, JR.

EMILY GREENE BALCH, who together with Dr. John R. Mott was on November 14 awarded the Nobel peace prize, is the first graduate of the editorial staff of *The Nation* to receive that honor. During 1916-17 she was actively associated with Oswald Garrison Villard and other distinguished liberals in the Committee against Militarism, which carried on a vigorous campaign to prevent American entry into the war. She kept up her active opposition to the war, and in 1918 the trustees of Wellesley College, where she was professor of economics and social science, refused to renew her appointment. Despite her twenty-two years of distinguished teaching, the principle of academic tenure, already shaken by her progressive economic views, was not strong enough to withstand the war fever—though the decision was narrow and President Pendleton and all the alumnae trustees supported her. The Balch case was one of the outstanding violations of academic freedom during the First World War.

Mr. Villard, who had a high opinion of her scholarly attainments and of her accurate and discriminating judgment, seized the chance to add her to the editorial staff of *The Nation*. He and the group he had gathered about him were then at the height of their crusade for a just peace settlement that could be maintained. Miss Balch made especially valuable contributions to the International Relations Section, which was a keen weapon in this historic fight. She left *The Nation* in 1919 to take up her life work in Geneva with the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom.

In her association with the *Nation* group Miss Balch acted both as the ardent advocate of specific causes and as the informed expert bringing exact knowledge to bear on international issues. This double role was continued in her life-long devotion to the detailed problems of creating peace. In the peace movement she has been above all the practical and realistic scholar. She is conscious of the number of different channels through which men can cooperate and distrusts sweeping governmental action from the top. She has always found special promise in the international administration of matters of common interest—in various kinds of functional international "au-

thorities" or trusteeships to deal with specific problems.

In disagreement with *The Nation* of 1919 Emily Balch was a supporter of the League of Nations. From the outset she felt that even enlightened public opinion must work through existing political organizations capable of dealing with concrete political issues. With all its limitations, the League was a going concern, an instrument for dealing with a multitude of international problems. In the course of these activities the League could develop habits of cooperation that might be extended to wider political relations. This experience of the League, she recognizes, has not been lost; and the opportunity of acquiring more is the greatest promise of the United Nations. "What is needed," she pointed out last November, "is exactly the sort of thing the Economic and Social Council and the UNESCO stand for—namely, human, tolerant, elastic cooperation in which the threat of war is as inappropriate as it is in any civilized undertaking. I hope we are not going to try a federal world state, but instead a complex interweaving of functional arrangements for common interests."

In company with a remarkable group of coworkers at the Geneva headquarters of the Women's International League, Emily Balch devoted much work to specific issues of international government, in close cooperation with experts in the League Secretariat and with many European statesmen of good-will. She planned many international congresses of women and helped organize conferences on drug control, the internationalization of aviation, and above all disarmament. She undertook some ten "peace missions" to investigate problems of international tension on the spot. Her most successful one, with Paul H. Douglas in 1926 to Haiti, undoubtedly helped to bring about the withdrawal of the American occupation forces.

The Nobel peace prize, while usually given to statesmen whose official position has made it not too difficult for them to work effectively for peace, has also been bestowed on representatives of those unofficial organizations whose work has prepared the ground for governmental action. In honoring Bertha von Suttner, Jane Addams, and Karl von Ossietzky the Nobel Committee has recognized how much private citizens can contribute to the conditions for international peace.

It is interesting to note that of the three women who have won the award, Jane Addams and Emily Balch, have chosen to work through the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom. This organization grew out of the Congress of Women held at The Hague in

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1915—a group of pioneers in the movement for women's rights who tried to stop the war, and almost succeeded. It has through the years enlisted the support of eminent leaders among women—Jane Addams from America, Lida Gustava Heymann, Yella Hertzka, and Gertrud Baer from Central Europe, Gabrielle Duchêne and Mme Roland from France, Helena Swanwick and Catherine Marshall from England. Like Emily Balch, most of these women have not been absolute pacifists. The Europeans have in the main been Socialists, opposed alike to war and to the social conditions that breed it. They naturally found themselves in the forefront of the fight against fascism. The prominent role played by the W. I. L. in the resistance movements, and especially in working out methods of non-violent opposition, was undoubtedly in

the mind of the Nobel Committee in honoring its international president, Emily Balch.

Miss Balch is well fitted to be a symbol of the whole body of voluntary workers for peace throughout the world. Never the narrow partisan of a single method, she has always gladly cooperated with organizations of very different shades of opinion, convinced that all are needed in the work of constructing peace and that in a pluralistic and not too centralized movement they can learn much from one another. With her dry and kindly sense of humor, her modesty, her integrity of mind, and above all with that priceless quality of spiritual intensity and vision, she has won the respect of sincere workers for peace everywhere. And in her they have all received recognition.

## Homeless America

BY CHARLES ABRAMS

### III. A Workable Housing Program

**T**HE government's policy in housing has been to have no policy. Each new emergency has spawned a new proposal; each proposal has had to be shaped to suit the more vocal pressures. Fifteen billion dollars of federal commitments for housing have brought forth a maze of laws, regulations, and pronouncements that have allayed public clamor for a time, raised hopes, and in the end left the housing problem unsolved.

In treating the problem again as an emergency we only set the stage for a new emergency and speed its arrival. Mounting sales prices threaten soon to start another epidemic of foreclosures. We are assured that houses will spring up as soon as materials are available, but none that are built will be within the reach of the rank and file. Homeless veterans are becoming unmanageable. The makeshift houses now being hastily put up to meet the immediate deficit of four million dwelling units will leave us with as painful a hangover as ever followed an orgy of jerry-building.

The only way the housing crisis can be met is through public building operations; yet this solution remains unmentioned and unmentionable. If local communities and the 800 local housing authorities were given the signal to build houses for veterans and others, land would quickly be purchased, mass production inaugurated, and

labor used efficiently. Plans and specifications would be integrated, parts standardized. Materials would be purchased in bulk; the complete outputs of factories would be contracted for; millions of standardized parts would be turned out on mass order. Larger self-contained neighborhoods would replace the current mushroom developments. Instead of waiting for little builders to select small sites at random, then subserviently moving into the area with costly schools, streets, and utilities, the cities could plan their growth in advance, bring new neighborhoods into being where they should be. If speculative profit were eliminated, interest reduced to the going government rate, and the amortization period extended, homes could be built at prices within reach of veterans and others in the middle-income group.

What, then, holds us back? In the main it is the acceptance of the myth that the end of hostilities means the end of the public's right to build housing. From now on, according to the myth, we must revert to pre-war practices and depend for our houses on the two-by-four builder—anything else would be socialism. Yet if fifteen months after the war's end we can prosecute John L. Lewis and his union in an effort to stop the coal strike, why do not the government's war-time powers authorize it to build houses? What stops government from building for returning veterans as it did for war workers? It has long been acknowledged that the war powers may be employed for the period of reconstruction. We are using those powers in moving temporary houses, giving premium payments to materials manufacturers, and encouraging prefabrication. Yet any official who dared suggest home building by public agencies would be automatically classed as anti-capitalist.

CHARLES ABRAMS, former counsel to the New York City Housing Authority, is author of "The Future of Housing." This article is the last of a series on the housing problem in America.

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