
Scott Nearing Explains Why He Tendered Resignation

Published in *The Labor World* [Duluth], vol. 24, no. 36 (April 21, 1917), pg. 6.

Because of the writings and utterances of Scott Nearing, professor at Toledo University, on pacifism and patriotism, several prominent Toledo citizens demanded a severance of his relations with the university. Subsequently Mr. Nearing tendered his resignation,¹ submitting the following written statement:

“A number of prominent Toledo citizens have made statements indicating that my further continuance at Toledo University will prove detrimental to the welfare of that institution. In order that the Board of Directors may feel free to act for the best interests of the university, I have tendered my resignation to take effect at their discretion.

“My utterances on the question of pacifism and patriotism have led to the storm of criticism that has been directed against me and against the university. May I take this opportunity to make clear my position?

“I am opposed to tyranny, despotism, and irresponsible power, whether vested in a king, kaiser, or any other individual or group of individuals.

“I believe in democracy and in the brotherhood of all men. No community can endure which ignores the Golden Rule, the basic law of social life – ‘Each for all, and all for each.’

“Millions of people, the world over, are today seeking to overthrow German militarism. There are two methods of securing this result. The first way is to militarize all of the great nations. I am opposed to this plan because I believe that the dearest liberties of democracy must be sacrificed in the process.

“There is another method of overcoming German militarism — to promulgate a higher ideal than the ideal of militarism.

¹ Although his resignation was not accepted when first tendered in the days after American entry into World War I, Nearing’s career as a professor of Political Science came to an end at the end of the 1916-17 academic year. Nearing joined the Socialist Party on July 1, 1917.

“Ideas and Ideals are the most powerful and permanent things in the world, as our own history shows. A century and a half ago our ancestors immortalized themselves by broaching the idea of political democracy to a king-ridden world. Since that time the idea has encircled the earth.

“The only possible way to save the present-day world from militarism is to cut to the root of the problem and establish an industrial democracy, which, in its turn may prove a beacon light to mankind. If we adopt militarism, we lower ourselves to the level of German militarism. If we adopt industrial democracy, we have an opportunity to raise them to our new plane of justice and liberty.

“I oppose militarism because I believe that it stands for the brute in human nature, and that if we adopt it the democracy is doomed. I hold to this doctrine — ‘Peace on earth and good will among men,’ because I believe that only thus can the spirit of man be emancipated and the human race be saved. That they take the sword shall perish with the sword. It is only those who are willing to overcome evil with good that can attain to the free promise of manhood.

“I revere the government that represents democracy. I honor the flag that stands for liberty and justice. So strong is my feeling on this point that I resent seeing the government turned over to an irresponsible plutocracy or an irresponsible bureaucracy, just as I resent having the flag, which is the symbol of our democracy, used to cloak special privilege and shameless exploitation.

“Militarism is the madness of the past — dragging us down and destroying us. The spirit of brotherhood and good will among men is the voice of the future, calling us to a higher plane of life than humanity has ever known. To that future I have dedicated my life, and so I purpose to continue to the end of the chapter.”

The Board of Directors decided to not accept Mr. Nearing’s resignation, and indications are that he will continue his duties as an instructor in that institution.

Edited with a footnote by Tim Davenport

1000 Flowers Publishing, Corvallis, OR · November 2013 · Non-commercial reproduction permitted.