

June 1959

President's Page

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Recommended Citation

Harry Scherr Jr., *President's Page*, 61 W. Va. L. Rev. (1959).

Available at: <https://researchrepository.wvu.edu/wvlr/vol61/iss4/6>

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THE WEST VIRGINIA BAR ASSOCIATION

PRESIDENT'S PAGE

Lawyers in all parts of the United States have been giving increasing attention to the proposition that world peace can be achieved only through world law. "World Law" is a very comprehensive term and may be too broad for acceptance in its fullest meaning by other than a few exponents of a super-state which would become the supreme sovereign, a "world federal government". Regardless of objections to this concept, behind it lies many years of gradually increasing numbers of international agreements, some of which arose from customs and practices almost as old as commerce and trade between nations. Certainly, the orderly conduct of business dealings between citizens of different states demands some body of rules in order that each may deal with the other on an equal basis and have assurance that commitments and contracts made will be carried through. This objective originally was reached through reciprocal agreements and understandings between the business men who would be affected and, later, recognition by governments through treaties and executive agreements entered into on behalf of their citizens.

In modern times the peace through law concept resulted in the creation of the League of Nations, with its primary objective to insure a lasting peace through disarmament, and enforcement through the imposition of sanctions upon any nation which failed to abide by its undertakings. This was a failure. Of late the United Nations organization has not only this lasting peace as an objective, but has other objectives which, if adopted by the several signatories, would vest it with many elements of national sovereignty now reserved to the states, and give it a considerable measure of control over the internal affairs of all nations. Likewise these goals have not been attained.

Up until the advent of World War II the United States had been able to maintain its comparatively aloof position among the nations of the world, sufficient unto itself and remote from the problems of less enlightened peoples. The end of the war found us entangled in the internal and external affairs of many nations large and small, and we are now no longer aloof and remote, and will not again be in the foreseeable future. In our salvation we may be forced to turn to some form of a world legal system. What is needed and what will work no one can say at the present time, and whether

our nation or Russia will ever be willing to cede the inherent sovereign right to make war is questionable.

To answer this challenge the American Bar Association has created a committee of world peace through law to coordinate the thinking and conclusions of lawyers throughout the United States, and, as its beginning point, has undertaken to hold regional meetings in several parts of the country. Whatever the opinion of the individual lawyer as to the necessity or desirability of laws of international application all of us must recognize that the problem is present, and it is our duty as lawyers to cooperate.

It is my pleasure to extend every best wish from the Association to Louise Farrell Winterbottom upon her retirement as librarian of the Law School. Her tenure of thirty-five years covers more than a generation of West Virginia lawyers, each of whom will cherish memories of many happy contacts with Louise, sometimes serious, sometimes otherwise. All of the hundreds of her former charges join with me in saying that we will never forget her, and wish her happiness and the best of futures.

This is my last opportunity to speak from this page and I wish to thank each member of the Association for cooperation and assistance in making my term of office a satisfying and enjoyable one. I look forward to seeing as many of you as possible at our Annual Meeting in The Greenbrier Hotel September 4th and 5th. In addition to business sessions, the less serious aspects of life, so dear to lawyers, have been recognized in making the arrangements.

Harry Scherr, Jr.