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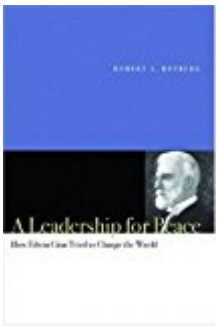

Robert I. Rotberg. *A Leadership for Peace: How Edwin Ginn Tried to Change the World.* Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006. 264 pp. $50.00, cloth, ISBN 978-0-8047-5455-2.

Reviewed by Carl Bouchard

Published on H-War (September, 2009)

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Working Toward an Alternative to War

Edwin Ginn (1838-1914) founded the World Peace Foundation (WPF) in 1910, the same year that Andrew Carnegie founded the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace (CEIP). Ginn and Carnegie, both wealthy philanthropists seeking world peace, were long-time collaborators who also often vied with each other. The foundations they established still exist, but while the latter became a figure of international and U.S. history, the former is barely known outside a circle of political scientists, peace historians, and pacifists. We have Robert I. Rotberg to thank for offering a readable history of the creation of one of the most important peace institutions in the United States. We should also thank him for brilliantly highlighting the unique atmosphere of the pre-World War I era, when such individuals as Ginn and Carnegie, calling upon human reason and logic, tried to persuade their fellow citizens of the urgency of world peace.

Rotberg is presently director of the Program on Intrastate Conflict and Conflict Resolution at the Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs (Kennedy School of Government, Harvard). His work focuses on international and intrastate relations, and conflict resolution in Africa, Asia, and developing countries. Rotberg is also the current president of the WPF, which explains his interest in its founder. He previously explored the biographical genre via a book on Cecil Rhodes,*The Founder: Cecil Rhodes and the Pursuit of Power* (1988).

Ginn's story is one of a self-made man from Maine who built his publishing empire, Ginn & Co., selling textbooks to schools throughout the United States from his headquarters in Boston, Massachusetts. It is mostly through what he knew best--education, marketing, and books--that he became a major advocate of peace at the turn of the twentieth century. Profoundly influenced by the Reverend Edward Hale, as well as Edwin and Lu-

cia Ames Mead, Ginn's already deep civic engagement with the Bostonian community was later coupled with a commitment to world peace through legal measures: arbitration, the world court, an international police force, and a permanent international organization. Ginn was involved in the Mohonk Lake conferences (he became a member of the finance committee), and closely followed the two Hague conferences of 1899 and 1907. He was fully involved in the U.S. internationalist/pacifistic network of the beginning of the century, which included David Jordan Starr, Charles W. Eliot, Elihu Root, Jane Addams, Nicholas Murry Butler, Hamilton Holt, Abbott Lawrence Lowell, and many others. The inauguration of the WPF in 1910 is Ginn's main achievement. He died in January 1914, six months before the outbreak of the war that plagued peace movements for many years.

A Leadership for Peace is not a biography in the strictest sense. A biographer digs into the private life of its protagonist. Through a chronological narrative ("from birth to death"), a typical biographer scrutinizes every detail of a character's life in order to discover which given experience and inner motivations influenced--consciously or not--later actions. In Ginn's case, this kind of biography would have been virtually impossible. The New England publisher left no diaries and no personal correspondence, merely a short autobiographical essay, which is, according to Rotberg, "embarrassingly evasive," and therefore of little use (p. 200). This left the author only discourses, pamphlets, reports, professional and vocational correspondence, and recollections from his friends and colleagues to work with. The section devoted to sources, (tucked between the conclusion and the endnotes), where Rotberg exposes the lack of information regarding Ginn's private life, is of crucial importance to understanding the constraints that affected Rotberg's research. It merited a more suitable place in the book, perhaps directly in the preface. Rotberg's ability to render Ginn's life with such depth and liveliness despite these constraints is truly to be applauded.

Nevertheless, such constraints did not prevent Rotberg from falling into the trap of a "typical" biography. First, there is no real argument to support the book. Second, Rotberg is hagiographic regarding Ginn, which is often the case with authors who idolize their subjects. Finally, Rotberg presents Ginn's life from "birth to death," through eight chronologically constructed chapters: from his ancestors, his family, and his childhood years; through his first challenges as a book editor, his various civic engagements, and the creation of the WPF; and finally his legacy. Whether such a structure was necessary is questionable, especially given the little we know about Ginn's private life prior to his career and fortune in selling textbooks, and even after his commitment to peace.

The lack of detail regarding Ginn's private life is, in fact, a blessing. It has prevented Rotberg from falling into deeper (and undoubtedly shakier) psychological explanations, and has forced him to concentrate on Ginn's true motto: Action. Indeed, Ginn scoffed at idealists and pacifists who favored discourse over action. Like many of his fellow peace advocates, he put his faith in reason, viewing himself not as a pacifist but as a realist. This explains his reluctance to attend peace gatherings--including the Mohonk Lake conferences that he increasingly criticized--where words and moral arguments seemed to him to be more important than practical and rational measures. Chapters 4 and 5, in which Rotberg describes the road to the creation of the WPF, are the crux of the book. Rotberg shows how Ginn's nineteenth-century business culture, imbued with rationalism, guided his actions toward peace. As Rotberg convincingly sums up in the conclusion, Ginn always stood on the legal/rational side of pacifism, compared to a more moral one that he despised. In Ginn's own words: "'It is not the lack of knowledge of the horrors of war ... that retards our [peace] movement, but rather the indisposition of the

people to grapple with the subject in a business-like way'" (p. 85). The publisher, tired "of preaching for the converted" and "anxious for action," firmly believed that peace ideas were best disseminated in the population not by lengthy speeches or abstruse philosophy, but through schoolbooks, pamphlets, and newspapers--in short by "educating the world" using logical and rational arguments (pp. 94, 123). This was the sole purpose of his International School of Peace, renamed the World Peace Foundation a few months after its creation, and to which he donated a third of his fortune.

"Many of Ginn's aspirations may now appear quixotic, if not hopelessly unreal," confesses Rotberg (p. 130). Looking back at the last century, one cannot help but agree with this statement. The idea that, if properly educated, men and women would start acting rationally and build peace does indeed seem overly optimistic, if not absurd. Yet, at the same time Ginn was devoting his time and money to peace in the United States, ***The Great Illusion*** (1909) written by Britain's Norman Angell was becoming a worldwide bestseller, eventually selling more than ten million copies; and in France, Léon Bourgeois was already talking about the creation of a Société des Nations. In every country, thousands of men and women talked about ways of doing away with war. "Ginn was an assembler and popularizer of the views of others," says Rotberg (p. 127). He could not be more accurate. Pacifists and peace advocates around the world were confronted with a veritable conflagration when the First World War broke out; some abandoned their ideals and talked instead about the defeat of reason. Others stood up and pointed out that this horrific bloodshed was precisely the confirmation of the urgency of peace. The WPF courageously took the latter stance.

Rotberg's book, for its numerous and informative details on the creation of the WPF and especially for its depiction of late nineteenth-century U.S. pacifism and peace advocacy, will inevitably be of interest to peace students and peace researchers, but also to all those who seek to better understand the intellectual atmosphere that characterized the crucial years before the outbreak of the Great War.

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Citation: Carl Bouchard. Review of Rotberg, Robert I. *A Leadership for Peace: How Edwin Ginn Tried to Change the World.* H-War, H-Net Reviews. September, 2009.

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