

The League of Nations and Its Importance to World Peace

By LEON BOURGEOIS

PRESIDENT OF THE FRENCH SENATE AND CHAIRMAN OF THE COUNCIL OF THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS

Leon Bourgeois has for many years past been regarded as one of the most prominent personages in the French Republic and best known of European statesmen. His name is associated with the framing of the Covenant of the League of Nations hardly less closely than that of President Wilson and at this moment he fills the post of president of the French Senate and chairman of the Council of the League. It will be recalled that after having filled several high administrative offices in the service of his country, he entered the Chamber of Deputies in 1888. He subsequently became several times in succession a cabinet minister and president of the Council (premier). When, in 1899, the Powers were convoked to the Hague Conference, it was Bourgeois that was chosen to represent France and he is entitled to the credit of having in large degree directed the debates and discussions that resulted in the constitution of the International Tribunal of Arbitration. His record and his talents made him the obvious choice of the French delegation in the Peace Conference on the committee charged with the elaboration of the Great Charter of the League. Through the courtesy of the editor of *Le Monde Nouveau*, THE DEARBORN INDEPENDENT is privileged to place before American readers the following translation of an article in that review which has special interest for Americans in the present campaign.

THE session in which the Peace Conference adopted the Covenant of the League of Nations left public opinion a bit uncertain. Three of the Allied nations submitted express reservations on certain important points in the project:

Belgium, in grieved terms, recalled reasons of the highest moral value dictating the choice of Brussels as the seat of the League of Nations.

Japan had insisted that the principle of the equality of races and peoples should be inscribed in the preamble of the document.

Finally, France had insisted on the amendments already presented by her during the session of February 14, and the defense of those amendments had been energetically sustained by the representatives of France. But no response was made in the name of the commission to any of these formulated criticisms; no vote was taken upon them, and the text as presented must be considered as unanimously adopted.

It was made plain to all the world that the Allied governments deemed it necessary to avoid, on the eve of the signature of the peace preliminaries, any appearance of division between the Allied and Associated Powers, and that a superior interest, that of a united diplomatic front, dictated to all the attitude of agreement on a common policy, which in reality left subsisting a profound divergence of views.

Another consideration that had equal weight in dictating the course adopted was that, unanimity of votes being necessary to give force to such a diplomatic convention, any vote which would have made for the rejection of certain articles in the Treaty by a certain number of votes would have entrained, as an inevitable consequence, risking the failure of the League of Nations itself, and there were those who felt that although laboring most sincerely for the creation of an international organism of justice and peace, they would be made responsible in the eyes of the world for the failure of their hopes.

It was important beyond all else that the League of Nations should be created. That it should come into being imperfect, incomplete, lacking certain organs necessary to its development—this was certainly unfortunate. But more unfortunate still would have been the failure to agree upon a peace pact and the return to a state of international anarchy of which

such a failure would certainly have increased the dangers. As I said in the Conference, the problem thus confronting us touched our conscience most deeply. Let us examine it without prejudice or prepossession and with the necessary calm and impartiality.

Summed up, what value has the Covenant of the League which was finally adopted?

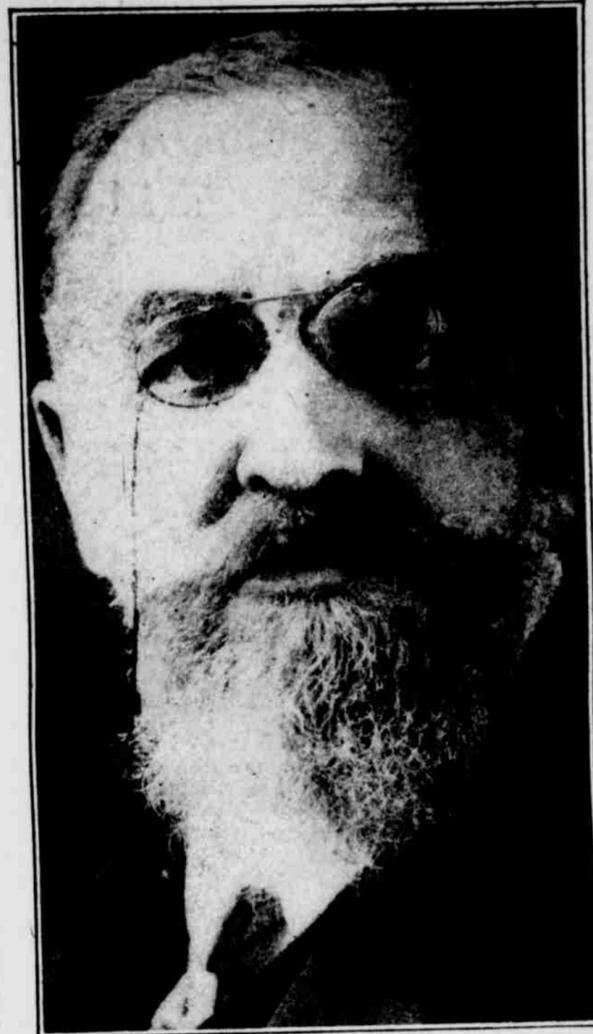
Have the essential provisions of the Covenant a value sufficient to permit it to really commence to live as an international institution?

May we consider the present text of the pact as a sufficient point of departure?

The import, in substance, of Articles 10, 12, 13, 15 and 16 is that the League of Nations guarantees against all external aggression, the territorial integrity and political independence of its members, that it imposes the obligation on all to submit any and every difference which may arise between them to arbitration, or the consideration of the Council of the League; that if a state has not followed this procedure, or, having followed it, enters upon a war, be it before the expiration of the delays fixed by the finding of the arbitral tribunal or by the decision of the council, that is to say, in three months following that finding or decision, it would *ipso facto*, in virtue of Article 16, be considered as having committed an act of war against all the other states in the League. These engage themselves to immediately break off all commercial and financial relations with the offender, and to forbid all relations between their nationals and those of the state breaking the pact; at the same time, it is made the duty of the council to indicate to the various governments interested, the military or naval contingents which they should respectively furnish to constitute the international force required to preserve the peace.

Furthermore, the Covenant very happily groups around the political and juridical system of the League of Nations a complete system of provisions destined to assure the development of international interests, which make for the protection of labor under humane conditions, the repression of the sale of women and children and the traffic in opium, liberty of communications and of transit, and the fight against social evils.

These mutual and constant relations established between the peoples of the earth, as I have already said, cannot but contribute powerfully not only to their



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moral and material interests, but also to that conscious solidarity which is one of the best guaranties of world peace.

On the other hand, it is easy enough to perceive the grave omissions which the Covenant of April 28 presents. The obligation not to resort to war is far from absolute. War remains not only possible, but permitted whenever the International Council is not able to pronounce unanimously on the solution of a dispute submitted to it. War is permitted even in the case of a unanimous decision, after the delays imposed on the disputants by Article 12. The Covenant counts, evidently, on the pressure of public opinion to hold back the disputants; it gives no definite authority to the international organism to stop a war; a certain number of states among the signatories have certainly recoiled before the idea—essential, however—of the obedience due to the sentences pronounced in the name of Justice and Right.

We should not ignore, however, the power which will be exercised upon the peoples in litigation of universal opinion enlightened by public discussion of the sentences or recommendations so solemnly proclaimed and one may hope that the judgment of the tribunal of the peoples, placed well above that of any court of justice or international council, would be considered by the parties in dispute as imposing itself on their will. But in order that this may be assured, the parties should know that this universal opinion would, at need, be supported by a universal force. They should have the certainty that in case they tried to go beyond it and resort to arms, they would find themselves face to face with a power capable of breaking their resistance and bringing them back to respect for the law.

In two words, it is necessary, on the one hand, that the armaments of each of the states should always be limited to the strength strictly necessary to assure their internal security, and, on the other hand, that the contingents asked from each of the states for the constitution of the international force should be calculated to assure to that force the last word in every case. It is necessary, finally, that this international force should be sufficiently organized in advance to be able to intervene with a sure stroke and in good time in case of aggression.

These are the indispensable conditions which it was the object of the amendments proffered by the representatives of France to define and to realize.

No one among the members of the Peace Conference believed that these amendments were definitely abandoned. In the first meetings of the Assembly of the League of Nations they will assuredly be taken up again in conformity with Article 26, which fixes the procedure for amendments. And France, at that hour, will be far from being alone in sustaining them. More than one neutral state—and the neutral states are now part of the League—has already given in advance its adherence to the same ideas, and the resolutions adopted by the great associations of the free countries: America, Great Britain, Belgium, Serbia, Greece, Rumania and others, leave no doubt as to the state of mind of the world democracy, especially of the British and American democracies.

The campaign of propaganda in behalf of the League, which will not fail to be carried on in France as in Britain, will not be at all aggressive; it will avoid anything which may seem to touch on the internal politics of each country. It will address itself solely to the elevated and generous sentiments which today fill the souls of the peoples; to that horror of war which still beats in all hearts.

The grand idea of the League of Nations is destined to certain triumph, for every idea once launched is sure to attain its object when it conforms to Truth.

Sharpening Up the Ax

By BENJAMIN OGDEN WILKINS

A WOOD-CUTTER was seen very actively chopping some poles that he had brought in from the forest. He was making them into kindling and stove lengths for his household use. It was early in the morning, and the man was working with all the energy in his muscular arms, as he swung the ax and struck clear through a sapling at each stroke. A new neighbor, not yet used to the wood-cutter's habits, passed and saw the man at work.

"Guess you'll finish that pile, there; call it a day, and quit, won't you?" sang out the passer-by.

"No," returned the other, "I'm just sharpening up the ax."

The man who was doing the chopping continued to make the chips fly until he had converted the lot into the proper size and stacked it neatly beside the house, ready for use. Then he shouldered his ax and started for the big trees in the woods where he found his regular work.

It is so easy to toss off a little work, of one

variety or another, and then lay down the tools with a sigh and say: "Well, I guess that'll do for today. I'll do the other work tomorrow."

But the man or woman who accomplishes real things completes some *real* work merely to get himself in trim—just as a preparation for the heavier tasks that are to follow.

The old wood-chopper set a real example, worthy of attention. He went from what most of us would call a day's work right on to the heavy part of his labors, instead of laying down the blade. Doing what most men would consider a day's work, merely as a little preliminary training, just to tune himself up for the hard work of cutting a chunk out of a forest, stamped that man as one who would accomplish something.

You don't need to be a wood-chopper, but, the next time you think you have done a real job, remember that there are men who, having finished what some men think ample labor for a day, go right on to a still bigger job—and credit the first effort merely to "sharpening up the ax."