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The League of Five

The rules of procedure for the peace conference disclose a concert of nations in working order. It is a league of nations regulating the concerns of the world. Is it a projected image of that league of nations which is to emerge from the peace compact?

In the *de facto* association there is a grouping of nations according to rankings established by the war.

In the first group are the United States, Great Britain, France, Italy and Japan. They have "general interests." They are world powers.

Next comes the belligerent group with "particular interests." It embraces the minor Allied belligerents, including the new states of Hedjaz, Poland and Czecho-Slovakia.

In the third group are nations which broke off diplomatic relations with the enemy.

Russia's status is unsettled. Germany, Austria-Hungary, Bulgaria and Turkey are excluded, as are all the neutral states.

If any league of nations is to issue from the deliberations of the congress it will, therefore, be a league established by the Allied peoples. It will have to be adhered to by the neutral and enemy states without collaboration on their part, unless Article IX, the text of which is withheld, provides for consultation with representatives of the neutrals. It will be a logical development of associations cemented by the war, not an abstract scheme of union which treats all countries—ally, enemy and neutral—on a parity.

The world control assumed by the peace conference may be described as a "balance of power," exercised by the five leading Allied nations. It may be described as a league of those nations which have fought and won the battle of freedom and civilization. It may be described as a league of all nations, with gradations among the various groups. But it remains what it is—a union of power to enforce peace and justice in the world. It doesn't matter what name is given to it. The main thing is to make it work.

The Milling Wheat Shortage

A very curious situation has arisen in some Western states—and especially in the Southwestern. In the face of the splendid harvests this year there is an actual shortage of wheat for the mills to grind. This appears to be due largely to the millers themselves. Possibly through fright at the clamor raised over the government's guarantee of a base price for wheat and the considerable surplus that seemed in sight, the millers failed to make their usual purchases. The result was that the government's grain corporation was compelled to take the very large offerings from the farmers, who also seem to have been impelled to sell by fear lest the government's contract be repudiated.

The effect is that in many states milling wheat has been selling at a premium of from 15 to 30 cents over the price guaranteed by the government, that is, around $2.50 a bushel. The situation has become so acute that it is now stated the grain corporation will reverse its established policy and resell to the millers at a premium of 12 cents a bushel to meet the storage, interest and insurance charges that the millers themselves would otherwise have had to pay. This is to prevent cash wheat from soaring to some such a figure as $3 or more, as it reached in 1917, before the government stepped in.

It is an extraordinary lesson in the rôle that mere distribution has come to play in this world's affairs. There are notable examples of this same anomalous situation all over the world. The wheat crops in many parts of Russia are reported as unusually good. Yet all the horrors of famine appear to exist in Petrograd and other Russian cities. There is, we know, a considerable, though much exaggerated, surplus of wheat in Australia and also in the Argenine, some of which has been rotting for two or three years simply for lack of ships. Even Norway, a seafaring country, has had to declare meatless days. In the Argentine there has been almost a popular uprising owing, in part, to the unsatisfactory condition of the markets there; and similar uprisings are threatened in Europe for opposite reasons. In one place it is an excess, in the other a scarcity.

So the wheat scarcity in the Southwest merely reflects a world-wide disturbance. Even in England, which has managed its food supplies admirably, and where there has been no real dearth throughout the war, food prices have risen sharply since the armistice was signed. It is evident that the destruction of shipping and, more broadly, the whole disturbance of transportation wrought by the submarine and other forces in the war, will have deep effect for a good while to come. There seems now little prospect for cheaper food prices anywhere this year. It seems likewise clear that all the wild calamity talk about the United States being saddled with a loss of a "billion dollars" on its wheat guarantee was as baseless as it was vicious. The world, even the United States, will need all the wheat it can get, and will pay a high price for it.

Put Mann Aside

Two years ago The Tribune opposed James R. Mann's candidacy for the Speakership. It thought him unfit for the office then. It thinks him even more unfit now.

Mr. Mann created a factitious reputation in the House. He was industrious. He mastered the rules of that body, which have always remained a dark mystery to most of its members. He devoted himself with extraordinary diligence to the routine of legislation. Most of his colleagues looked up to him because he knew vastly more than they did about House business.

As a parliamentarian and a watchdog against small extravagances the Illinois member made his mark. But when big issues came along to test his breadth of mind and his grip on realities, he fizzled out. He was against military preparedness when military preparedness would have counted most. He was a "little navy" man. He opposed the reorganization of our antiquated army.

Mr. Mann is a survivor from the Cannonistic régime. He belongs to the past. He is not the sort of leader the Republican party of to-day can afford to tie to. He has lost his usefulness.

It is just as imperative now that he should be set aside as it was a decade ago that the power of Cannonism should be broken.

A Dubious Victory

Ostensibly the Dairymen's League and the New York farmer have won in the milk fight. But have they? A fight is never settled until it is settled right, and there have been many victories more costly than defeat.

What has really happened is this: The sanctity of the Warren formula has been sustained in New York, and New York only, as a basis for fixing the price; an economic use to which it was never intended to be put. While a higher price is paid in the months of scarcity, a lower price is assigned to the months of plenty. This encourages the winter farmer, but discourages the summer farmer, and thereby decreases production. "Price fixing" is an economic fallacy, always bringing its own reactions. The experience of the Federal Food Board even under war conditions demonstrated this, and it was practised only in a few emergency cases and always was attended by many and acute difficulties.

The whole problem is so complex as to lend itself readily to misrepresentation. Placing an arbitrary value on winter milk in New York State greater than that asked in surrounding territory cannot but place the dairy industry of the state in a disastrous position in the long run. And out of a conviction that the farmer's and consumer's interests are one and should be protected, we unqualifiedly regret the so-called victory of the Dairymen's League in fixing a price for January milk that is based on arbitrary and shifting considerations and is obtained by "strike methods."

The whole attitude of the conflicting interests has been retrogressive and shortsighted, ignoring the best lessons of food regulation learned during the war, lessons which are being applied in other industries with profit to every one. To the consumer one thing is proved, namely, that both producer and distributer must be licensed and placed under state supervision if their interests are to receive any consideration. And, in the final analysis, the interests of all three classes are the same, for decreased consumption and increased prices are Siamese twins and can never be separated. The vicious tendency to promote the handling of a smaller volume of food at an increased margin is one of the most threatening factors of the food problem. It is an outgrowth of the increased cost of distribution and inadequate terminal facilities and is always present in any poorly organized food industry. Nowhere is it more threatening than in the case of the vital, perishable commodity called milk.

Labor as a Government Employe

There are vast complications in the attitude of organized labor toward the great new body of Federal employes. If the farreaching agencies now operated by the government are to be retained in peace times and if the great army of employes are to be made civil servants then the knotty problem of unionizing the civil service, which has caused enough trouble already in the Postoffice, will be bitterly aggravated.

The right of civil servants to organize and to participate in politics through their organizations was warmly championed at the convention of the New York labor party. Within the last few days the American Federation of Labor and the Central Federated Union of New York City have brought to the fore from another angle the relations of labor to the government employer. The Central Federated Union has passed a resolution setting forth that government salaries have been "practically stationary for the last sixty-six years," and urging the addition of a dollar a day to the pay envelopes of all government employes to help them meet the increased cost of living. At the same time the Central Federated Union indorsed an appeal from Secretary Frank Morrison of the national body urging labor's support for the attempt of the Brotherhood of Electrical Workers to organize a national telephone girls' union. Secretary Morrison attacked as "industrial Kaiserism" the alleged efforts of the Postoffice officials to prevent such organization.

Organized unions among government employes mean—by all the signs of experience in Europe—two things—two dangerous things. They mean the intervention of public servants in politics, and they mean the conflict between the police power of the state and the civil servants of the state when issues of hours or wages lead to a strike. We have frowned on the first. France has had its bitter experience of the second. The dilemma is obvious. It is either domination of government by a part of labor for its own particular ends—ends not necessarily shared by the rest of labor—or domination of a part of labor by the government, tempered by any penchant government may have for intelligent and sympathetic action on its own initiative. The first alternative is repugnant. The second is dangerous.

The Soldier and His Job

Governor Edge, in his annual message to the New Jersey Legislature, dwells at length upon the need of providing the returning soldier with employment. He says it would be a disgrace if the soldier should long remain unemployed, provided he wants work. The Governors of other states treat the subject in much the same vein. The appositeness of the suggestion admitted, a natural question is: What are the Governors doing to carry out in a practical way the thing they advocate?

Governor Goodrich of Indiana is ready with a satisfactory answer. He says that last fall the Indiana people held a conference on reconstruction and readjustment. It was non-partisan in character and attended by the leading manufacturers, merchants, labor leaders, educators and publicists. The following interesting things were accomplished: Every soldier's military questionnaire was carefully canvassed; the soldier's former employer was asked if he would take the returning soldier back into his employ; also, he was asked if there was room for another soldier employe; former employers were asked to give a discharged employe another chance, on the theory that possibly army discipline had wrought improvement in the man; manufacturers were asked about impending shifts from munition making to peace time industrialism.

This state-wide canvass, conducted with the aid of the conscription agents of the Federal government, met with results regarded as gratifying by the people of Indiana. In districts outside of distinctively large manufacturing neighborhoods 99 per cent of the replies were that the soldiers would have their old jobs back if they desired them. In the mill towns 95 per cent of the replies said that the old jobs were awaiting the returning soldiers. The 5 per cent of unfavorable replies came from non-essential industries put out of business by the war, the former employers not being able to give an encouraging answer.

"As a result of the state-wide canvass," says Governor Goodrich, "there is no such thing in Indiana as the 'returning soldier' problem. The soldier goes back to his old job if he wants to."

It might be well for the Governors of other states, who seem to be mentally shivering over the vision of an unemployed soldier, to make use of the Indiana idea and discover just how much of a problem they have.

The Feeling in Italy

In a way, the reorganization of the Orlando government, as announced in Monday's dispatches, may be considered as the answer of the Italian government and people to the challenge uttered by Dr. Vesnitch, the Serbian Minister at Paris. As will be remembered, Dr. Vesnitch's declaration that the Jugo-Slavs would "fight to the finish" for the possession of Eastern Adriatic districts claimed by Italy called forth a violent outburst of nationalistic sentiment in Italy. If the Moderate leaders, Bissolati and Nitti, meant by their resignation from the Cabinet to challenge Orlando and Sonnino, or if they counted on general war weariness and a desire for the quick consolidation of peace, even at the price of concessions to the Jugo-Slavs, they miscalculated popular feeling. It was a war of Italian people, not that of the government; and the Italian people seem determined to follow up to its logical end the tremendous victory won by its army, scorning compromise and concessions.

With the retirement of the moderate, wavering element from the government and the appointment to the Cabinet of the idolized General Caviglia, the hero of Vittorio Veneto, and of Signor Stringher, leader of Italian finances and an exponent of nationalist extremism, the ascendency of Baron Sonnino, for the moment at least, seems assured. The inclusion of Salvatore Barzilai, the leader of the Irredentist movement, himself a native of Trieste, in the peace delegation, together with Salandra, the Premier, who started the war on Austria, and General Diaz, who finished it with a death blow to the tottering Hapsburg empire, seems to point in the same direction. There are signs that Great Britain and France would favor compromise with the Jugo-Slavs on the question of Fiume and Dalmatia. Short of a sudden reversal of popular feeling, the Orlando government would, in all likelihood, face a serious situation at home should it fail at the peace table to carry in full the demands of Italian nationalism.

The Conning Tower

A Number Sonnet

Reading the papers that made life so unbearable before the war and finding them back at their old tricks unrebuked even by a sense of humor, not to say of shame, I am moved to this experiment in the old Hebrew verse-form, which Moulton calls the Number Sonnet:

There be five apologies one rarely hears;
Yea, six that practically never are heard:
The expressed regret of a man who fought against preparedness;
The confessed slander of those who accused all preparationists of being munition-makers or their hirelings;
The heart-broken remorse of one who realizes that our delay cost millions of lives and billions of treasure;
The loud Peccavis of those who denounced the advocates of war against Germany as lovers of gore;
The public contrition for Pharisaic pretence of being better than other men because one advocates an impossible perfection;
The blush of self-contempt for renewing after the war the same old fallacies the war itself so bloodily disproved.

RUPERT HUGHES.

The ranking habit, in literature, always has irritated this department. What the best novel ever written is we do not know; nor does anybody else. But when the literary hot stove league gathers and fans about the war's best poem, our still choice is A. A. Milne's "From a Full Heart"—the one with the lines:

When the war is over and we've done the Belgians proud,
I'm going to keep a chrysalis and read to it aloud.

There have been many complaints against the Army Postal Service most of them justified. But some of the bitterest complainers may have been careless themselves. Last night Old Don Marquis gave us a letter he forgot to mail to us. It was dated May 23, 1918. It was a darned good letter.

"It has reached such a stage," cables the "Times's" Mr. James, "that yesterday two ardent 'American Germans' were told that the next good thing they aid to an American soldier about America would get them into jail." Can it be that there is no pleasing us?

"A Little More Than Kin"

(From The Saranac Lake Item)

Wanted—Management of small hotel or stewardship of club; best of references; change desired because of relative in neighborhood.

Somebody is always shelling the joy out of life. Yesterday morning, wearing an utterly new 4-button sack suit, we began to open the mail. "After seeing our boys in their new civilian clothes," read the first letter—from Marion, "I wish to be put down on record as being strongly in favor of a large, permanent standing army."

Uncensored advices from France are to the effect that Maximilian Foster is a slave to the map habit; and that every night he may be seen at Press Headquarters flitting from map to map, or, as Sgt. A. Woollcott puts it, "going over the top-ography."

It strikes one who first heard "The Gondoliers" last week that at least two songs dear to the auditor's youth were taken from "The Duke of Plaza Toro"—"Christopher Columbo" and "The Blow Almost Killed Father."

To the 35,000,000 civilians about to be commissioned on Nov. 9, T. S. C. adds the 15,000,000 returned warriors who went into front line positions on Nov. 10.

The civilian census is incomplete without mentioning a Gob's friend—a man who says he'd have enlisted long ago if the army had some department of warfare sufficiently dangerous to make it interesting to him. "I suggest," suggests A Gob, "a corps for the circulation among soldiers and sailors of a petition for changing the name of Washington Monument to Hearst Monument."

A day devoid of cocktails and whiskey we envisage tearlessly. But the image of hard sauce without a suspicion of Something in it causes the lower lip to quiver.

Prohibition may work a hardship on the doctors who specialize in cirrhosis of the liver, too.

Commercial Candor on Broadway: "Extra Ordinary Shoes, $3.95."

"You may talk o' gin an' beer"——

But that's about all.

F. P. A.

A CHANCE FOR A TENANT

From The Columbus Dispatch.

What It Means To Be An American

(From the Americanization Address of Secretary Lane.)

THERE is a sentimentality which would make it appear that in some millennial day man will not work. If some such calamity should come, then man will fall. The day of his loss will be a crime. God's first and greatest gift to man was the obligation cast upon him to work when he was driven out of the Garden of Eden. It was the finest thing, the most splendid thing, that happened, because when he passed the gate he met a world in chaos, a world that challenged every whim of his imagination, a world that beckoned to him, drew him on and said:

"If you are a man of intelligence, if you are a man of purpose, then I will bend before you. I defy you if you are a man without intelligence and without fibre."

And the progress of civilization, the thing that we love, is the progress of man as a working man, and that is the reason why that man must be held high always.

We have nothing that does not represent struggle. We have nothing that does not represent work. We have nothing that does not represent courage. We have nothing that does not represent sacrifice, and we have no philosophy, excepting the philosophy of hope and faith in ourselves and the righteousness of this contest that we are making against Nature. We are to conquer this land and in our spirit we are to conquer other lands, because our spirit is one that is like a living flame that goes abroad. It is like some soft, sweet wind that carries a perfume across the Pacific and the Atlantic, and we must keep in mind that thing that Americanism is, the robust and rugged and hearty and strong men who win out against all adversity. That is what made us great. That does not conflict with the gentle, sweet, kind and just side of our nature.

The one peculiar quality in our institution is that we have not alone in our hearts, but cut of our hearts, given a means by which man can acquire justice by himself. That is the reason, Russian and Armenian friends, that it is a haven to you. Bring your art and music, bring all your arts, and tone up our civilization. We hold out our hand to you. We want you with us and we want you to love America as we love it, because it serves the world.

Our boys went across the water, and let us not for one moment hesitate to speak their glorious names in pride. Our boys went across the water because they were filled with the spirit that has made America, a spirit that meets challenge, a spirit that wants to help. Combine those two things and you have the essence of Americanism. Combine the spirit of the Washington Monument that rears up in Washington like a great arm thrust up out of the soil as an eternal pledge that this land will always be independent and free, with the act that is going on to-night in Paris, where the President of this country, your President and my President, called there by duty, out of his knowledge of what war can do and has done, out of a sense of its futility, out of a sense of its barbarity, out of a hope that is not all a dream that a better day may be brought about, has challenged the intelligence of Europe to devise a machinery by which this lasting curse may be at least minimized. I say to you, visualize the man at the council table, struggling for mankind to devise a way by which men can live happily together, and the boy in khaki who gallantly went before the rifle bullet and fell in the Argonne Forest, and you will have a picture in your mind of the Americanism that you represent, a spirit that is worthy of the tradition and history of our country.

How are we to bring it about? Through the community council and through the school. I am making an appeal to Congress for an appropriation to liberate from bondage, if you please, thousands and tens of thousands of children and men and women in the United States, to show them all the beauties of the world's literature and give them a knowledge of the things that come through the printed word. Congress will be asked to help and all the states will be asked to cooperate to kill illiteracy in the United States, whether it is among the children or among the grown-ups, and I want you to help.

We want to interpret America in terms of fairness, of fair play, of the square deal. We want to interpret America in healthier babies that have enough milk to drink. We want to interpret America in boys and girls that can read and in men and women that can read, in better housing conditions and wages, and hours that will give an opportunity to a man to know his family and live and support them like a man without apology.

This word that I am speaking to you is a word of hope, this word Americanism is a word of hope for us, for Europe, for Asia; it is a spirit of the Declaration of Independence, social and economic, and I ask you to help us.

The Great Dry Mystery

To the Editor of The Tribune.

SIR: Does not the wrecking of state rights by the prohibition amendment, complicating an already tangled ordering of a society, demand the calling of a constitutional convention? The revolutionary departure in our foreign policy makes the America of yesterday extinct. To that add woman suffrage, and now the prohibition amendment. We are no longer in the torrent—it is the cascade.

The framers of the United States Constitution foresaw a day such as this, and provided against it by inserting machinery for calling a constitutional convention. They knew that there come times when the tide of innovation sweeps so whelmingly that the ordinary millrace cannot take care of it; so they provided this additional spillway, lest the flood waters carry away the dam. Besides the method of piecemeal amendment, they inserted the mechanism for convoking a constitutional convention wherein the structure of state could be reexamined from cellar to turret. That machinery has never been put to use; through 130 years it has remained a dead letter, because we were never before in a convulsion of the state.

Some may fear lest the summoning of such a convention might open the way for a tidal wave of changes. But it was precisely in order to deal with tidal waves that the founders inserted this machinery. The wave is here; is cresting itself in towering, mountainous bulk. If we can sluice that wave into channels of constitutional progress quite 50 per cent of the danger will have been drawn. The dangerous thing is when a heaped-up mass of maladjustment sees no vent for itself in civil processes. When such a mass has been persuaded to take the lawfully ordained path it is no longer a menace to civilization, but becomes the educator of the multitude in political science.

Our present Constitution was never intended for a fabric such as the America of to-day. It was drawn up in stage coach days for a stage coach type of life. Even though authorized to do so by the Constitution, difficulties of communication prevented the central government from interfering with the local units. Furthermore, the nation then was small—a fringe of states along the Atlantic seaboard, inhabited by a fairly homogeneous population. Now we are ten times that size and a hundred times more heterogeneous. And swift communication has put the central power within hourly touch with every community and every human atom therein.

To suppose that so widely divergent communities, separated by a world's diameter, living under contrasting climates and different life conditions, will submit to a régime that seeks to compress them into an asphalt uniformity is to suppose that the American people are become slaves. Authority for such a programme of compression is amply existent. When Pelatiah Webster, of the Constitutional Convention of 1787, invented a Federal government operative on individuals he invented not a republic but an empire. John Marshall, in the celebrated case of Cohens vs. Virginia, said it orotundly, "The United States of America is an empire."

Our Constitution establishes the most highly centralized fabric of government on the face of all the earth. The mischief begins in the first sentence, "We, the people," instead of that wiser wording in the Articles of Confederation, "We, the states." So long as this power of empire was not put into practice we could get along. Now, however, that the centralization of government is being taken seriously and put to use, we hear the grinding of an imperialist machine that will crush the individual into pulp.

BOUCK WHITE.

New York, Jan. 13, 1919.

To the Editor of The Tribune.

Sir: I have this to suggest, now that the prohibition amendment has been adopted: It now requires that the press of the country should advise all to give adherence to the change. The following are my reasons:

1. There are hundreds of thousands of total abstainers in the United States, which is incontestable proof that intoxicating liquors as a beverage are not good, for those who abstain as well as these who drink moderately are far better off than those who do not drink moderately.

2. The drinking of intoxicating liquors is a custom of society. The liquor traffic has only that as a foundation for its existence. In those states and counties where they have had prohibition for years there is proof that it is a custom of society that can be dispensed with without harm.

3. All disorderly conduct, rowdyism and drunkenness proceed from this custom of social drinking. Do away with the custom of social drinking and you do away with the source of the evil that has brought the constitutional amendment about.

4. Several states have in the past tried to regulate the traffic by directing the method of sales by prescribing who shall and who shall not sell, which regulation is only partial. A regulation that would be effective, it seems, would regulate the output and have breweries and distilleries in accordance with the population.

I well remember the days of Horace Greeley, the founder of The Tribune, and that he was a strong advocate of total abstinence. Another thing I remember is when the Thirteenth and Fourteenth amendments to the Constitution were adopted the Democratic National Convention in 1868, in its platform, declared those amendments "to be unconstitutional, revolutionary and void."

OSCAR JEFFERY.

Washington, N. J., Jan. 17, 1919.

Our Debt to General Wood

To the Editor of The Tribune.

Sir: I note in your paper an article by William Allen White on General Wood, giving most excellent reasons why the general would be an ideal candidate for President of the United States. Two other reasons for such a choice have long been in my mind; one is the fact that we, as a nation, are indebted to General Wood more than to any other living American for our ability to win out in the war, even at the eleventh hour. General Wood had the vision that official Washington lacked; as a far-sighted soldier he realized the imperative need of a large body of reserve officers to train and instruct a vast army, and in spite of Washington he produced the officers. Our drafted men would otherwise have been but a mob.

The great task undertaken and performed by General Wood in the face of many discouragements saved us, but brought upon himself the petty and wicked hostility of the pacifists in control at Washington. The humiliation to which the general was subjected is a matter of record and of lasting shame.

CHARLES B. HOBBS.

New York, Jan. 18, 1919.