

4 4.11.39.

106901

Letters to the Editor

WAR AIMS

TOWARDS A FEDERAL PLAN

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES

Sir,—Mr. H. G. Wells is usually many years ahead of his contemporaries in ideas, and any suggestions of his should receive careful consideration. I venture, however, to question whether a Declaration of the Rights of Man is likely to be acceptable as a war aim or by itself to have any appreciable result in maintaining peace or ameliorating the lot of mankind.

A declaration of rights has generally followed a revolution or political upheaval, and has in fact done much to determine thereafter the constitutional rights of the citizens of the country in which the upheaval occurred. On each occasion the importance of the declaration has lain in its practical application in a particular State, this having served as an example to the rest of the world. It was disappointing, therefore, to read in Mr. Wells's recent letter that he deprecates "constitution-mongering," if this is to be taken as referring to federation. I would ask him how the rights of man (revised) are to be fixed in the practice of more than, say, one or two States, unless some great constitutional change takes place.

Mr. Wells would appear to be seeking impatiently the world revolution as a result of which all men will live in amity and plenty; but I venture to suggest that so great a change can only come slowly by parts of the world leading the way. Actually the federation of the States now at war would be the greatest step forward in amity the world has ever known. The League of Nations was based on promoting conciliation between sovereign States and, if necessary, applying compulsion. Many people feel that to be the wrong basis for promoting peace, and a growing number regard federation as the Christian way. It involves the surrender of sovereignty to a greater or less extent, however; a proposal which most Governments view with distaste. Consequently the demand of a clear majority is necessary to bring it about.

If federation is the surest way of obtaining peace, it has its price. We cannot expect to have the blessings of peace if we are not willing to make personal sacrifices other than those of the battlefield. For the realization of federation it is essential that we exercise many virtues throughout the war, especially that we neither hate nor deride those who, for the moment, are our enemies. When the slaughter is over we must be of a mind to regard them as brothers in distress, and to offer them an equal share in every advantage possessed by the British and French peoples and their empires. Thus the peoples who have developed modern European civilization and diffused it throughout the world will cease their quarrels for ever and unite as one country, inviting the smaller democracies to join them. Would not this be the greatest achievement and example for peace the world has ever known? Yet it is by no means an unattainable ideal, if we are in earnest and set ourselves to secure a spiritual and moral advancement comparable with the marvellous technical progress of the present century.

Mr. Wells considers it to be practically impossible to make "any statement in terms of boundaries, federations, and political readjustment at the present time." Of course, the issue of the conflict is unforeseeable; but the people of this country are determined that Hitlerism shall be ended and at the same time are anxious to know what is to be put in the place of it that will prevent another war. For the purpose of interesting the public in federation it is necessary to have some concrete pro-

posal. Abstract ideas mean little to the multitude.

When federation is discussed, therefore, may it not be well to have in view as the most practicable plan the union of France, Britain, and Germany, including Austria, Czecho-Slovakia, and Poland, and such neighbouring countries as may desire to join? In any such project the Dominions and India might be given the option of joining the federation or remaining as they are under the sovereignty of King George VI and his successors. The imaginative mind will soon see that federation could solve all territorial questions such as the German colonies claim and the Polish corridor and all minorities questions and bring peace and unexampled prosperity to Europe.

Yours, &c.,

H. STANLEY JEVONS.

95, Raglan Court, Wembley, Nov. 1.