

Parliament

BRITISH TRADE  
OUTLOOK

PLANS TO MEET NEW  
CONDITIONS

MEDICAL SERVICES IN  
AIR RAIDS

HOUSE OF LORDS

WEDNESDAY, NOV. 30

The LORD CHANCELLOR took his seat on the Woolsack at 3 o'clock.

THE PARIS VISIT

LORD HALIFAX'S STATEMENT

LORD SNELL asked his Majesty's Government whether they had any statement to make on the recent visit of the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs to Paris.

VISCOUNT HALIFAX, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.—My right hon. friend, the Prime Minister, and myself were most happy to avail ourselves of the invitation of the French Government to visit Paris from November 23-25. We were much impressed by the warm welcome extended to us by the French Government and by the people of Paris, which gave a further proof of the cordiality and understanding existing between the French nation and this country. The visit gave us an opportunity, which we much appreciated, of resuming personal contact with the French Ministers and of discussing with them questions of common concern to our two countries, including matters of defence as well as of diplomatic action.

It is perhaps unnecessary for me to say that we found ourselves in complete agreement on the general policy to be pursued by our two countries which, in both cases, finds its main objective in the preservation and consolidation of peace. The House will not expect me to give a more detailed account of the conversations, the purpose of which was not to reach decisions but to exchange views and in the course of which no fresh commitments were entered into by his Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom.

LEAGUE REFORM

PLANNING FOR PEACE

LORD PONSONBY asked the Government whether they would make immediate preparation for close international consultation on the underlying causes of complaint and friction between the nations of the world; and with that in view, whether they would consider and initiate proposals for the amendment of the Covenant so that the League of Nations might be absolved from any of its present political and military obligations and be established as an all-inclusive permanent body for examining, deliberating on, and, if possible, resolving economic, commercial, currency, tariff, and colonial problems which, if neglected, might continue to be the causes of international conflict.

The noble lord, who also moved for papers, said he wished to call attention to a constructive piece of peace building. In a letter he addressed to *The Times* on October 18, he sketched his idea and received a surprising amount of support for it from different quarters irrespective of politics. The Munich Conference had a dramatic effect in stopping a war and the action of the Prime Minister had been acclaimed throughout the world as few movements of statesmen had been in history.—They looked forward to a new chapter, but since October they were inclined to think that their hopes were placed too high. There had been an acceleration of armament production and further elaboration of air raid precautions. Bilateral agreements, though necessary in a crisis, were a doubtful method of establishing a lasting peace.

He was not proposing this drastic alteration of the Covenant to suit the totalitarian nations, but in view of the fact that the present powers of the League had proved to be beyond its capacity. Its scope and range, devoid of all compulsion, would then be well within the power of an all-inclusive international body, and its deliberative and advisory functions would receive the general confidence it now lacked.

the establishment of personal contact between the great leaders and the association at the beginning of the four great Powers in Europe.

LORD STRABOLGI said that Lord Ponsonby's desire to get rid of all attempts to create a system of collective security was diametrically opposed to the present official policy of the Labour Party. It was imperative to attempt to rebuild the League of Nations. The system of collective security was more necessary now than ever. Among other reasons was the new territorial guarantee for the frontiers of Czecho-Slovakia.

He hoped that Germany was going to pursue an aggressive policy, but it was not at all certain that if she did she would move east. The British Empire had been invulnerable until the air weapon came to challenge the sea. To-day we could be ruined by successful air attack on a sufficiently large scale. We must not hope to maintain ourselves alone by our own efforts. It was in our highest interests, and our duty to our people and to the Empire, to recreate a system of collective security.

We were neglecting the United States of America. That was no reflection on the exceedingly able American Ambassador presently at the Court of St. James's. He could not understand why any Minister of first rank had not been to the United States for many years. There would be an opportunity next May, when their Majesties made a visit to the United States. He understood it would be in order for a British Minister, and probably the Foreign Secretary, to accompany them as Minister-in-Waiting when they went to Washington. He was astonished to read in *The Times* on November 29 a doubt on this point. It was understood that events in Europe might prevent the Foreign Secretary from accompanying their Majesties to Washington. The more week-end crises they had in Europe the more important was it that Lord Halifax should go to Washington. The ground should be well cleared beforehand. The time seemed suitable for drawing relations closer together.

"18TH-CENTURY MINDS"

LORD DERWENT, in supporting the motion, suggested that we were living in the twentieth century with nineteenth or eighteenth century minds. He devoted a large part of his speech to quotations from the letters from Sir William Goodchild and Sir J. Fischer Williams which had appeared recently in *The Times* and which he commended to the attention of their lordships.

LORD NEWTON sympathized most strongly with the motion. There were two alternatives before us: to let Herr Hitler have his way or to embark on a world war. Blame for the present lamentable situation must be shared by various parties, and as much by the League of Nations as it was at present as by anybody else. The person most responsible for the impotent condition of the League was its founder, President Wilson.

LORD RENNELL said there seemed to be some reason for welcoming the international exchange of authoritative views regarding the causes and possible elimination of conflict, which was only likely to be intensified by un-intelligent and unenlightened public discussion. In our own experience the League seemed really to have resulted in the creation of tension among other nations rather than in removing it. None the less, he could conceive that were these military or economic obligations altogether removed from the Covenant, the League might still play a very important part in investigating the nature of international differences referred to it, and in registering a majority opinion denouncing the menace of unjustified aggression or a disregard of the comity of nations.

A REAL FAMILY OF  
NATIONS

LORD MOTTISTONE supported the motion, particularly in the hope that the Government might be moved to accept, if not the whole of it, the part which asked that the political and military obligations should be removed from the Covenant. He could not forget how short a time it was since we were nearly involved in war with Italy, now again our close friend, all because of this clause in the Covenant. If these words were removed, we should get a living league, part of it perhaps sitting at the Hague, and the Labour part still sitting at Geneva, to which then all would go. Then gradually, as part of a settlement and abandoning the idea of force, we might get a real family of nations, all trying to avoid war and to see justice done.

LORD MARLEY said he had always felt that sanctions could never succeed. With the elimination of Article 16 and a greater concentration on Article 19, we might possibly secure a much more successful development of the League. He would like to see Article 16 omitted, for there was a possibility—he put this forward very tentatively—that there was a possibility that the League might eventually be used for the furtherance of a common policy against democracy. It might be, so to speak, captured by the growing totalitarian groups in the world; and therefore it would be advisable to eliminate Article 16 now to avoid any sort of international justifica-

machinery to deal with them. That machinery still functioned and to a considerable extent with the support of non-members of the League.

The point surely was that the world which had benefited and continued to benefit from that machinery was still ringing in our ears with the noise of war and conflict and the thunder of threats and cries of hatred in spite of the work being done on those very topics all the time. In addition to those causes mentioned, there were deep psychological, moral, and spiritual causes at work. Without a profound spiritual regeneration of the nations—and among them he did not exclude our own—he did not know whether we would succeed in preventing war.

FACING THE FACTS

After dealing with the difficulties which had faced the League of Nations, the noble viscount said that what might have been possible for the League of Nations to do in 1938 was not necessarily possible by the League in 1938. They did not do the League any service by trying to blink facts because they were difficult and unaccommodating. There were critics of the Government who reproached them for not being willing to take risks in support of what they regarded as the cause of right. He respected such criticism but surely even they, or many of them, must admit distinctions and would not claim that this country could be a kind of moral high commissioner of the world irrespective of geography and irrespective of the practical application of those moral principles which we all accepted.

Personally, he was sometimes inclined to think that it would be better to face the fact frankly and to cut out from the Covenant the coercive clauses which we must acknowledge to-day to be, at the best, extremely difficult, if not impossible, of application. A calmer reflection led him to acknowledge himself that there were very weighty reasons against so drastic a course. He did not believe it would command the approval of the majority of the people of this country. It would divide the forces of those who ought to be united in support of the League of Nations' ideal principle and thought; it would cause great dissatisfaction among the members of the League, and would have the effect of a further weakening its organization, which was the last thing any of us ought to wish to do.

Having recalled the carefully considered views which his Majesty's Government forwarded at Geneva last September, the noble viscount pointed out that there was nothing in that attitude to preclude arrangements, such for example, as the guarantee to Czecho-Slovakia, being made in the spirit of the Covenant and with the explicit or implied approval of the League, under which certain countries could, if they so desired, undertake obligations to support the efforts of another in promoting the cause of peace.

CONTACTS WITH U.S.

Their lordships would recall that Mr. Anthony Eden was going to the United States at the end of this week. While he was no minister at present, the right hon. gentleman was going there with the fullest assent and approbation of the Government and his visit would be extremely valuable for the establishment of the same contacts that Lord Runcin was able to make in 1935. Every member would be fully sensible of the immense benefit which the King was conferring on international relations in making the highest and best contact by going himself, in company with the Queen to the United States in June.

It would be a complete misunderstanding of the British temper if any one thought that because our people regarded peace as the greatest necessity of the world they would be any less resolute than they had ever been should need arise, to maintain those things on which their national and material depended. A positive faith in peace was more widely spread and more deeply rooted in the peoples of the world than was sometimes supposed.

The motion was, by leave, withdrawn. Their lordships rose at one minute past 7 o'clock.

*Robert Mottistone*  
*W. K. Marley*

method of establishing a lasting peace. He was not proposing this drastic alteration of the Covenant to suit the totalitarian nations, but in view of the fact that the present powers of the League had proved to be beyond its capacity. Its scope and range, devoid of all compulsion, would then be well within the power of an all-inclusive international body, and its deliberative and advisory functions would receive the general confidence it now lacked.

#### AUTOMATIC REVISION

It was the utter neglect of Article 19, dealing with the revision of treaties, which had been at the bottom of a great deal of our troubles latterly. Revision must not be on the application of any one Power, but automatic and periodic, and done by the appropriate committee of the League in such a way as to give nobody a chance of making a complaint or desiring to be released from their obligations. It must be done without any of the spectacular contests of arguments which might arise if it were left too late.

He was not asking for something extraordinary or beyond human power. He took as an example the International Labour Office, the activities of which had been to some extent hampered by the fact that the League was not all-inclusive, and until it was all-inclusive anything that he suggested really fell to the ground. Collective security, as it had been understood, must go by the board. There was no difficulty about that, because his Majesty's Government killed it long ago. He wanted a restriction of the powers of the League, but a great enlargement of its functions. He was afraid that the Government were not greatly interested in this question, they were always more interested in arming this country to the teeth and in preparing for another war. Emphasis should be placed on peace-building rather than on war preparation.

#### THE SECRET OF PEACE

##### PERSONAL CONTACT BETWEEN LEADERS

The MARQUIS of LONDONDERRY said that a great conception of the League of Nations was one for which they ought to strive. It was not the League of Nations that failed but the members of the League who had not really been able to carry out their duty, and it was due to those other nations who had not pulled their weight to give support to that magnificent idea.

We must condemn the persecution of Jews in Germany to the fullest degree. While it continued, unless we could convert others to our way of thinking so that they gave up the persecution, all the desires of bringing the nations closer together were rendered more difficult. Even on that account, however, none of us was justified in feeling that all our efforts at cooperation had been brought to naught.

He did not exactly understand what our policy was. We were in an impregnable position. We were in friendly communication and understanding with America. We were in close cooperation with France, and he was glad to see that she was coming through her difficulties. There was some pusillanimous idea in this country that we had to wait, with gas-masks fitted to our faces, for a coming invasion which no power could withstand. He had not purchased a gas-mask and did not propose to do so. He did not believe it would be required. When we were faced with a policy of truculence and threats then, if we could not overcome that by the policy which we had endeavoured to follow of peace and friendship and holding out the helping hand, we should adopt another policy of truculence and vehement protestations against any threats hurled at our heads.

We were told that democracy was threatened and that the totalitarian States were carrying all before them. He did not believe one word of it. Democracy now was as strong as ever it was. If a crisis came the people could be relied upon to be united and to stand behind the Government. The real secret of peace was

concentration on Article 19, which might possibly secure a much more successful development of the League. He would like to see Article 16 omitted, for there was a possibility—he put this forward very tentatively—that there was a possibility that the League might eventually be used for the furtherance of a common policy against democracy. It might be, so to speak, captured by the growing totalitarian groups in the world; and therefore it would be advisable to eliminate Article 16 now to avoid any sort of international justification for the use of force subsequently. The elimination of this article would provide the possibility of closer cooperation with the United States.

The EARL of MANSFIELD said that the Government should be congratulated on what they had done and be urged to carry out further measures of precaution. He could not admit that our rearmament was provocative. While agreeing with the movement towards cooperation with the United States he suggested that steps should be taken to put right our propaganda in America.

VISCOUNT CECIL said that to declare that force could never be of any use was going too far. It was essential to recollect that apart from one or two spectacular cases in which force had failed to prevent aggression, there were a large number of much smaller but very important cases in which it had been stopped, and stopped in great part because there was behind and at the command of the League irresistible force to which the parties concerned, were not prepared to appeal. The issue was not whether there should be force or no force in international affairs, but what kind of force should be used. If peace could not be maintained nothing else mattered and the only hope for maintaining peace was the reviving and strengthening of the League.

#### LORD ASTOR'S VIEW

VISCOUNT ASTOR said that he agreed with Lord Ponsonby's general propositions. The fate of the League might be decided one way or the other in the very near future, in the next year or two. One of the reasons why he was glad they had those periodic discussions was that, particularly at this moment, there was a very real danger of more Powers resigning from the League, and every effort should be made along the lines indicated by Lord Ponsonby to increase international cooperation.

The two causes for the failure of the League were its inherent constitutional weakness and the fact that it had been used to prop up the Versailles peace treaty. The League had fallen because it was not a federation; it was not an organic union. In Australia the Commonwealth Government was proposing with the consent of the States to have increased powers. It had been found that the Commonwealth of Australia was not enough of a super-State. Geneva was not a super-State, and it was because people had assumed that it was a super-State that they had been continually disappointed.

To a large extent the critics of the Government's foreign policy used the League in order to belabour the Government. There was also a danger in those who tried to make people believe that we could defend ourselves. At present what they wanted to do was to build the foundations for international cooperation and not attempt to put the roof on until the foundations were adequately secured.

#### LORD HALIFAX'S REPLY

VISCOUNT HALIFAX said that he believed that if a League of Nations, laying no obligations on its members, could really bring the whole civilized world into fruitful consultation with hope of a happy conclusion, responsible men, members of all Governments in every country, would rapidly go to Geneva to do their best to bring so eminently desirable a consummation into effect. He asked himself, however, whether even a reasonable basis for such a supposition existed. He would be far from denying the importance of economic, financial, and colonial factors. The founders of the League realized their probable significance and equipped the League with