

# A WORLD IN ARMS

## SHORTCOMINGS OF THE LEAGUE

### THE WAY TO A BETTER ORDER

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES

Sir,—May I suggest that some of the critics of the Government's decision to support at Geneva the proposal to abandon sanctions are labouring under at least four misconceptions.

(1) The League of Nations is not, as it was once hoped that it would be, a League of all Nations. The United States has never belonged to it and has time and again reaffirmed her refusal to belong to it; Germany and Japan have broken away from it; Russia has joined it for her own purposes, which are not our purposes; and Italy, though still a member of it, has been condemned for flouting the principles for which it stands. France has always regarded the League mainly as offering protection against Germany.

(2) Such a League of Nations, as it should have been realized from the first, could not make sanctions effective, for success depended on Italy being "sent to Coventry" by all the trading countries of the world. Japan, Germany, and the United States are three of the greatest trading nations; in combination they command greater and more essential economic resources than the British and French peoples, who are the only States in the League of major economic influence—moreover, France at least has always regarded sanctions without enthusiasm. Japan, Germany, and the United States also command far greater naval, military, and aerial forces than the British and French peoples, and force, in the last analysis, still rules human affairs.

(3) It is usually assumed that there is a large body of opinion in the world enthusiastically pledged to peace at any price. Those who study foreign newspapers must realize that that is not the fact. All the principal countries of the world are jealous and suspicious of their immediate neighbours and live under the fear of war. It is that fear of war which is responsible for the theory of the unitarian State: "We must make ourselves self-supporting and must be so strong in arms that we can either force our will on others or resist the attempt of others to force their will on us." Consequently international trade has shrunk, the exchanges are disorganized, and some nations find it difficult to buy even the necessities of life because it is an axiom that if you will not buy you cannot sell.

(4) We are not, as some people imply by their words, living in a Christian world, but in a world which pays even less lip service to the Christian religion than at any time since the Reformation. In such a world, a League of all Nations, as at present constituted, is as impracticable as was the Holy Alliance of the early years of the nineteenth century.

It is our task to work for a better order of things, but so long as force rules the world—and the world is more heavily armed than ever before—we cannot do without force if we are ever to lead in building up an effective system of collective security. Collective security means the collective use, in the last resort, of arms, and if the British Commonwealth, the one effective peace-loving league of nations, is unarmed, how can those nations hope to maintain their present sovereignty and their standards of life in a world which at present rejects British ideals or make their appropriate contribution to collective security? There is, indeed, no middle course between the pacifist ideal and our traditional policy of defence—such a scale of modern armaments as will give our officers and men a chance of fighting at least without the certainty of defeat, involving them in death. If we adopted the pacifist ideal and forswore all armaments, would the British peoples, open to unresisting attack, be serving the cause of civilization and of world peace?

I am, &c.,

ARCHIBALD HURD.

The Athenæum, Pall Mall, S.W., June 29

# LEAGUE REFORM

## II.—SECURITY AND ITS PRICE

### THE IMPLICATIONS OF ACTION

From Our League Correspondent

Those who are engaged in a study of the principles by which the League may be rendered more effective find themselves confronted by a vast array of questions, suggestions, proposals, and demands, directed to transforming a very human institution into the perfect peace machine, capable of running for ever at no expense to anybody. The over-enthusiastic—and perhaps also the Machiavellian—would reform the League out of existence, killing it by kindness. Many who talk about reforming the League mean extinguishing the League. Most of those who propose the abolition of Article XVI have never attempted to decide whether they want a League at all, or what they want it to be. The original framers of the Covenant were far more realistic.

Demand for a better League usually takes one of two forms: (1) that the Covenant is, too severe and should be made less so; and (2) that the Covenant is not strong enough and should be made more stringent. As thus stated the two seem incapable of being reconciled, but the problem of League reform is not to be posed in these simple terms. It is not really a question of strengthening Article XVI or of cutting it out of the Covenant altogether; Article XVI is an instrument that will fall easily into its place when the problems that surround it are solved.

### POLICEMAN AFTERWARDS

The primary function of the League is to conciliate, to be peacemaker first and policeman afterwards, if a policeman is wanted. If it is to act with any success in the former capacity its members must have clear views on the part they are going to play, and a definite understanding among themselves on the contribution they are prepared to make should conciliation be spurned or be unsuccessful. Therefore the question of putting naval, military, and air resources at the disposal of the League in the event of flagrant aggression will have to be faced, since it is obvious that no reform of the Covenant can be undertaken until it is clear that each State is prepared to fulfil its obligations in this respect. This will involve an examination of the risks the various States are willing to accept in respect of the minimum obligations in a regional system.

One of the principal accusations against the League in regard to the recent failure is that it required its member-States (acting in their collective capacity) to impose economic and financial restrictions in the laudable attempt to prevent aggression from being successful, but left them without assurance that, in the event of retaliation by the aggressor on any one of the sanction States, the full resources of the League would be available for support. The sole effort to organize mutual support was made by Great Britain in relation to possible attack in the Mediterranean. It is evident that, if the aggressor is prepared to use force, the members of the League must be prepared to call upon their own people to fight.

The so-called sanctions imposed upon the members faithful to the League considerable sacrifices of trade in a cause that was theirs only

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 ARCHIBALD HURD.  
 The Athenæum, Pall Mall, S.W., June 29

**MR. LLOYD GEORGE'S SERMON**

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES

Sir,—It goes very much against the grain for one to write this letter who, for exactly half a century, has enjoyed the friendship of the fellow-countryman mainly concerned in the matter. But the action of Mr. Lloyd George in making a service in a Welsh Nonconformist place of worship on a Sunday afternoon the occasion for the delivery of a party political speech, full of caustic and bitter reflections on a Parliamentary opponent, calls, I think, for an emphatic public protest.

As a lifelong Liberal and Nonconformist I felt pained—even ashamed—as I listened over the wireless at home last evening to the summary of his onslaught on Mr. Neville Chamberlain. Whether his personal attack was or was not deserved matters comparatively little, if at all, in this connexion. What does matter, and matter very much, is the fact that Mr. Lloyd George used a place of religious worship and a Christian meeting for the ends which Castle Street Welsh Baptist Church was made to receive at his hands last Sunday afternoon. I feel sure that the overwhelming opinion of my fellow-Nonconformists—might I not even say of all good Christians everywhere—will be strongly condemnatory of the conversion of any Christian service into a platform for party political purposes, and especially on what was wont to be known, and prized, as "The Lord's Day."

The offence—if such I may venture to call it—is the graver for being committed by a very distinguished statesman whose bad example others may be only too ready to follow if permitted to do so. It was not for such purposes that our churches and chapels were founded, and it is for us, by timely protest, to protect them from misuse.

I am, &c.,  
 ALFRED T. DAVIES.  
 Reform Club, S.W.1, June 29.

**THE OUTLOOK IN EUROPE**

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES

Sir,—It is surely obvious to all save those who still advocate the policy of an ostrich-like attitude in the North Sea—which for some reason they describe as "splendid" isolation—that, because of the aeroplane and because the Empire's main corridor runs through a European lake, we cannot afford to be other than European in our outlook, our policy, our responsibilities, and our commitments.

The events of the last year have proved beyond doubt that one nation's war is another nation's opportunity. If war breaks out in Eastern or Western Europe it will be as contagious as a medieval pestilence. Our vital interest must be to build up a European organization with some automatic, hair-trigger system of action which combines military measures from those States geographically close to the area of aggression, backed up by economic, financial, and perhaps air support, from all other League members. The French plan, realizing that the risks of a collective war are better than the certainty, even if delayed, of a war of alliances, embodies the most realistic and statesmanlike suggestions we have yet had. Some amendment of the Covenant along these lines has become an absolute necessity.

I am, &c.,  
 RICHARD PILKINGTON.

**1937 SOVEREIGNS**

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES

Sir,—Now that the question of the coinage of the new reign is under consideration, is it too late to hope that the Royal Mint will consider the issue of a strictly limited number of sovereigns? Such an issue would be of great value to collectors and also as a memento of the Coronation year. Unless this is done the custom of having the effigy of the reigning Sovereign on gold coins will come to an end.

I am, &c.,  
 C. L.  
 Jordans, Bucks,

people to fight.

The so-called sanctions imposed upon the members faithful to the League considerable sacrifices of trade in a cause that was theirs only as a part of collective security. It was difficult to secure a united front when the faithful saw the faithless or indifferent standing aside and reaping the economic harvest of unrighteousness. This emphasized the need of an all-embracing League as the only means of proving that aggression does not pay. The time-lag and the inability to push home the methods of prevention and penalty will have to be taken into consideration in any project for reform. It is admitted that the whole course of the Abyssinian conflict might have been very different had the Council or the Assembly been able to meet at once and take decisions before the catastrophe was upon them.

**THE ROOT OF THE CRISIS**

There is now full, if tardy, recognition that the problem of disarmament is at the root of this crisis in the League's existence. The circumstances in which the Disarmament Conference failed to reach a conclusion are still in the realm of controversy, but it is certain that the economic crisis played a large part in the failure. In less distressing conditions the conference might have won through. The Covenant never envisaged a disarmament conference. It named the Council, and the Council alone, as the body to formulate plans for the reduction of national armaments. Nor does the Covenant mention in any specific sense equality of rights as a basis for armaments. The introduction of the principle of *Gleichberechtigung* automatically took the disarmament problem out of the hands of the League and placed it in those of the Great Powers. Experiments in dictatorship and economic nationalism rendered any understanding between the Great Powers out of the question. The result was the German withdrawal from the Conference and the League, her subsequent rearmament, the destruction of the last dregs of confidence in Europe, and the resumption of the armaments race. Fresh measures of security will be necessary in Europe to take the place of Locarno, strengthened perhaps by regional agreements, and it will be necessary also to buttress security in Central and South-Eastern Europe. Before this is done it will not be possible to attack the disarmament problem anew or to create the atmosphere for economic appeasement. It is more than ever apparent that security must precede disarmament, and that a reduction of armaments is out of the question until a system of mutual guarantees has been devised. In the words of Mr. Baldwin: "You cannot be a sleeping partner in security."

Therefore readiness for military action is implied. Unless nations are properly equipped for war sanctions cannot be effectively applied, and if it comes to war every participator will have to go to the utmost lengths. It is now an accepted doctrine that there can be no neutrality in the old sense of the word, and that the minimum for League members will be an economic boycott of the aggressor. Those who are not with the League will be against it. A League capable of making its decisions effective is not practicable if countries can contract out of the collective obligation, and without collective obligation collective security is an idle dream. Nations will have to decide whether the risk is worth the collective support they stand to receive in the event of an attack and the prospect of a reduction in armaments which alone can follow security.

The question of bilateral pacts will also have to be examined. Agreements differing very little from the old military alliances tend to be formed. They may do lip-service to the Covenant, but they are really a weakening of the collective system.

There remains one element that cannot be provided for in any Covenant. The only real guarantee is that nations should desire not to wage war. Words, paragraphs, and articles, however tightly drawn, will not restrain an aggressor unless they are backed by the will of the nations to make them live.

Concluded

The first article appeared yesterday.