

Times, 4.9.37.

Home News

BANISHING FEAR
OF WARLABOUR'S TWOFOLD
PEACE POLICY

POWERS WITH GRIEVANCES

FROM OUR LABOUR CORRESPONDENT

The National Council of Labour, which represents the General Council of the Trades Union Congress, the Labour Party, and the Parliamentary Labour Party, issues to-day a declaration on "International Policy and Defence," in which it outlines a twofold policy for peace. On the one hand it proposes that the Powers which entertain grievances should be invited to state their case and should be offered, through the League of Nations—as all nations should be offered—a new system of political security and of economic opportunity which will banish from international relations both the fear of war and all legitimate economic grievances." This new system must, however, "form part of a general settlement which will relax the present international tension and hold out prospects of an enduring peace." The other part of the policy requires that, through the League, the aggressors should be confronted "with an emphatic superiority of armed force."

As to the aggressors, the declaration says that only Germany, Italy, and Japan, "which are already committing aggressive acts in various parts of the world," seriously threaten peace at the present time, and it sees a possibility that these three Powers may form an alliance. The declaration insists that a British Government carrying out Labour's policy must be "strongly equipped to defend this country, to play its full part in collective security and to resist any intimidation by the Fascist Powers," and that such a Government, "until the change in the international situation caused by its advent had had its effect, would be unable to reverse the present programme of rearmament."

UGLY AND DANGEROUS

In its opening passages the declaration says:—

"The present international situation is very ugly and dangerous. There is grave risk of a general war in the near future. During the past two years there is good reason to believe that Europe has more than once been on the very brink of the precipice. The position was very critical when Germany reoccupied the Rhineland. It has more than once been very critical in Central Europe, when Germany was thought to be on the verge of an attack upon Czechoslovakia, or of instigating a Nazi rising in Austria. It was publicly declared by Leon Blum to have been very critical in the first weeks of the Spanish Civil War, and, as this war has continued, the danger of its spreading into a European conflagration has never been absent.

"All the Great Powers in the world are more heavily armed than ever before in time of peace, and all are increasing their armaments at an unprecedented speed. The end of this frantic arms race none can foresee, but history warns us that, unless it can be checked in time, the end will be war. This country is much more vulnerable than any other Great Power, both to air attack on its crowded centres of population and to attack by sea and air upon its shipping and overseas trade, a serious and prolonged dislocation of which would lead to the stoppage of large sections of our industry and the starvation of our people. The British Commonwealth, moreover, is exceedingly vulnerable to armed attack both upon its several parts and upon the sea communications between them. If involved in war against a strong combination of hostile Powers it would be confronted with a very grave situation. These considerations alone are sufficient to demonstrate the insanity of a foreign policy of isolation, and, if the British Commonwealth is to survive, the absolute necessity of some form of collective security."

disputes arising out of claims for treaty revision. Given a more favourable international atmosphere, such as a resumption of serious negotiations for disarmament would provide, the return of Germany and Japan to the League of Nations should be welcomed. The German demand for the formal separation of the Covenant of the League from the Versailles Treaty could be met without difficulty."

REFORM OF THE LEAGUE

On the subject of reform of the League, the statement says that to make all sanctions, even economic sanctions, "permissive" would be a most retrograde step and should be strongly opposed. "To make sanctions permissive and therefore unpredictable is to destroy them as an instrument for preventing war." Nor should any amendment or interpretation of the Covenant be permitted which would, in effect, give Germany a free hand to make war in Eastern or Central Europe. Improvement of Anglo-American relations and a non-aggression pact for all Pacific Powers are two other matters to which the statement attaches importance. In relation to Spain the statement says the Labour Movement adheres to the demand that the policy of non-intervention should be brought to an end; that the League of Nations should deal with what has become a clear aggression by the Italian and German Governments against the Government of Spain; that all non-Spanish combatants should be withdrawn from Spain; that belligerent rights should not be granted to the Spanish rebels; and that the British Government should actively protect British ships and their crews against piratical attacks by rebel warships or aircraft. "A victory for the Spanish rebels, involving the continuance of German and Italian influence and armed forces in Spain, in Spanish Morocco,



The Metropolitan Police football in connexion with the 50th anniversary Sports Association leaving Croyde. They wore uniform as they are to

and in the Spanish islands would be a very serious menace both to France and to this country."

STRONG DEFENCE

The statement concludes as follows:— "It is the conviction of the National Council of Labour that the 'next war' can be prevented, that the arms race can be stopped, and that the League of Nations can be made strong again, provided that a British Government soon comes to power which will base its policy on the declarations of the British Labour Movement. Such a Government must be in a position to make a powerful appeal to the Fascist States to agree to the abandonment of the arms race and the acceptance of a general disarmament treaty.

"Such a Government, in the present state of the world, must also be strongly equipped to defend this country, to play its full part in collective security, and to resist any intimidation by the Fascist Powers designed to frustrate the fulfilment of our obligations. Such a Government, therefore, until the change in the international situation caused by its advent had had its effect, would be unable to reverse the present programme of rearmament. Such a Government, however, would immediately re-examine the whole provision made for defence in the light of the international situation and the new foreign policy which it would inaugurate. The British Labour Movement, fully conscious of the dangers which to-day threaten our civilization, refuses to accept the doctrine of the inevitability of war, and will continue to exert all its influence to promote a durable peace based upon friendship and justice between nations and respect for international law."

GERMANY, JAPAN, AND ITALY

The statement goes on to say that the League of Nations, which should have provided collective security for all its members, has been seriously weakened by the events of the past few years. Germany and Japan have left the League and Italy's membership is only nominal. "These three Powers are showing themselves increasingly aggressive and truculent and increasingly cynical towards all treaty obligations and international law."

Having outlined the foreign policy of the two Labour Governments the statement says that since 1931 "there has been an almost incredible deterioration in international relations, in respect for international law, in the authority of the League of Nations and in the prospects of preventing war." For this change for the worse "the British Government carries a crushing burden of responsibility. It could have exercised great powers of leadership. It only led in running away from all its international responsibilities and opportunities." Reference is made to the Japanese aggression against China in 1931-32, to the failure of the Disarmament Conference, the destruction of democracy in Austria, the Italian attack on Abyssinia, and the statement adds that "in 1936 the Spanish military revolt broke out, instigated by German and Italian agents, and as the war has proceeded, Germany and Italy have intervened more and more blatantly on the side of the Spanish rebels. The British Government has done nothing in this struggle to vindicate international law."

For the time being, the statement proceeds, the League of Nations has been rendered ineffective.

POTENTIAL AGGRESSORS

"If we reject, as we should, the theory of an inevitable great war, and if at the same time we look facts in the face, we are driven to a double conclusion. Only Germany, Italy, and Japan, which are already committing aggressive acts in various parts of the world, seriously threaten peace at the present time. Moreover, there is a very real danger that they may threaten it in alliance with one another. Therefore our policy should be twofold. On the one hand, we should invite Powers which entertain grievances to state their case, and should offer, through the League, not only to these three potential aggressors, but to all nations, a new system of political security and of economic opportunity which will banish from international relations both the fear of war and all legitimate economic grievances. This new system, however, must form part of a general settlement, which will relax the present international tension and hold out prospects of an enduring peace. On the other hand, we must, through the League, confront the aggressors with an emphatic superiority of armed force."

After drawing attention to Labour's proposals (published last year with the title, "The Demand for Colonial Territories and Equality of Economic Opportunity") for securing equality of economic opportunity in access to markets and raw materials, the present statement says that for participation in these economic advantages there must be political conditions designed to safeguard peace. "By far the most important of these is a cessation of the arms race by international agreement and the negotiation of a general disarmament treaty including provision for international supervision. To give to any nation a freer access to markets and to raw materials, if such access is to be used to increase its armaments, does not seem reasonable. . . . Another condition should be a fresh acceptance of some form of peaceful procedure, by arbitration or otherwise, for the settlement of international disputes. It is desirable that this should cover