BRIAND PROPOSES ETERNAL PEACE WITH US

AN IMPORTANT MESSAGE TO THE AMERICAN PEOPLE WHICH DR. BUTLER FEARS HAS ESCAPED FULL ATTENTION

To the Editor of The New York Times:

Is it possible that the American people failed to hear the extraordinarily important message addressed to them through The Associated Press on April 6 by M. Briand, Minister of Foreign Affairs in the Government of the French Republic. If not, what answer do they propose to make, and how long will they permit M. Briand to be kept waiting for that answer?

On April 6, 1927, the tenth anniversary of the formal entry of the United States into the World War, the Foreign Minister of France made a public proposal to the American people that is quite without parallel in our history. He formally and openly proposed a treaty between the United States and France that would definitely renounce war as a remedy for real or fancied wrongs as between France and the United States. This is a proposal to “outlaw” war that has every merit of practicability and practicality. For some reason which it is hard to understand, the importance of this notable declaration appears not to have been understood, much less appreciated, in the United States.

This epoch-marking offer was not made confidentially through ordinary diplomatic channels, but was contained in a public declaration and appeal to the people of the United States in a formal statement given to The Associated Press. “France is willing,” says M. Briand in that statement, “publicly to engage itself with the United States to put war as between the two countries outside the pale of the law.”

Any one who knows what is the practice of the French Government in respect to public Ministerial declarations of any kind will realize that this is no irresponsible or merely rhetorical appeal. M. Briand deals here not with general theories of world peace or with plans that can only be brought to pass in a distant future; he proposes a definite step to be taken at once, and he is still waiting for evidence of understanding on the part of the American people. No French Minister ever speaks
in terms like these unless he has previously gained the full support of the Cabinet of which he is a member. It is French governmental practice not to make pronouncement on an important question of public policy until that pronouncement has been accepted by the Government of the day. When a French Minister makes a declaration of policy such as this, it is the Government of France which is speaking.

Why should not the American people assten to use every means at their command to assure the Government of France that they have heard, that they do understand, and that they will act in accordance with this progressive and constructive policy? The adhesion and cooperation of other powers would, of course, be secured later on, but the first thing is to act, and unless the American people are both physically and morally deaf, they will hear and will act quickly.

One who reads M. Briand's statement will see how clearly he sees the limitations under which the present negotiations for disarmament are being carried on. Those limitations arise chiefly from questions of procedure or method, and yet they reflect the great fundamental differences which every such negotiation must face. Disarmament, as M. Briand truly says, can only follow from the existence of a will to peace among the nations of the civilized world. Let France and America, he cries, demonstrate that, as between themselves at least, that will exists and will be finally and formally recorded in public act.

Here is a translation of the full text of the vitally important paragraph in M. Briand's statement of April 6:

For those whose lives are devoted to securing this living reality of a policy of peace the United States and France already appear before the world as morally in full agreement. If there were need for those two great democracies to give high testimony to their desire for peace and to furnish to other peoples an example more solemn, still France would be willing to subscribe publicly with the United States to any mutual engagement tending to outlaw war, to use an American expression, as between these two countries. The renunciation of war as an instrument of national policy is a conception already familiar to the signatories to the Covenant of the League of Nations and of the Treaties of Locarno. Every engagement entered into in this spirit by the United States toward another nation such as France would contribute greatly in the eyes of the world to broaden and strengthen the foundations on which the international policy of peace is being erected. These two great friendly nations, equally devoted to the cause of peace, would furnish to the world the best illustration of the truth that the immediate end to be attained is not so much disarmament as the practical application of peace itself.

The fact that this statement is addressed to the American public instead of formally to the Government at Washington rather increases than lessens its importance. The method adopted by M. Briand is fitting and proper in these democratic days to ascertain whether the will to peace really exists among the people of the United States and the people of France with reference to their mutual relations. The appeal was primarily not to governmental action, but first of all to those moral forces which, when roused, stir and compel governmental action.

This question is now squarely before the people of the United States. If those moral forces to which M. Briand makes appeal do not really exist among us, or, if existing, they cannot secure such direction of our policies as shall realize these ideals, then in international relations we shall have reached a stage which no American who understands his country's traditions and who realizes his country's ideals can look upon without shame and sorrow.

M. Briand's mind is thoroughly practical. He does not ask the Government of the United States to accept the covenant of the League of Nations; he does not ask the Government of the United States to accept the principles of the pact of Locarno; he does not ask the Government of the United States to adhere to the protocol for the establishment of a Permanent Court of International Justice. All that he asks is that the people of the United States shall take their own way to express the fact that in no case will they employ war to enforce their policies with reference to France.

We have been celebrating, and finally and justly celebrating, the tenth anniversary of the entry of the United States into the World War. Where and how could we find a more fitting tribute to the memory of those whose lives were given in that stupendous struggle than by making a solemn compact with that nation most severely stricken by that war, for the formal and definite renunciation of war itself as an instrument of policy?

M. Briand, speaking the voice and expressing the soul of France, has called out to us across the ocean. What answer is he to hear? What evidence is he to have that these noble words have been heard and understood?

New York, April 23, 1927.

Nicholas Murray Butler

ENDING WARS ONE BY ONE

President Butler's letter, printed on this page today, does not exaggerate the remarkable nature of the peace offer made to the United States by France. It was contained in a state-