HENDERSON SEES HOPE FOR SUCCESS AT GENEVA

Believes Critical Stage Near; Important Decisions and Practical Results Imperative


ARTHUR HENDERSON

President of the World Disarmament Conference, in a speech at a luncheon sponsored by the International Consultative Group at Geneva, Feb. 6, 1938, on the anniversary of the presentation of petitions before the Extraordinary Session of the Disarmament Conference, Feb. 6, 1932

May I express to you my sincere appreciation of your kindness in having organized this honour to me in my capacity as President of the Conference for the reduction and limitation of armaments.

You are, rightly, in my opinion, taking this opportunity of presenting me with a joint statement which not only refers to some of the difficulties of the Conference, but which also takes note of the substantial movement of opinion in support of the ease for disarmament.

ADMITS WIDESPREAD DISAPPOINTMENT

Your statement concludes on a note with which I fully agree. It says that further delays may really prove dangerous, and that the Conference, with all speed, should agree upon the terms of a Convention to include substantial immediate reductions, with an effective limitation and with supervision.

You have reminded us that it is now more than a year since the Conference entered upon its task, and you call our attention to the fact that millions of men and women are bitterly disappointed at the delay that has taken some quarters frictions and frustrations of their legitimate hopes.

This is a position I cannot challenge, for I frankly admit that the Conference has not fulfilled its early expectations, but has caused vast multitudes to be profoundly perturbed as to its final result.

This, indeed, comes vividly before my mind as I remember that today we celebrate that never-to-be-forgotten Saturday when the voice of the people was heard in a striking manner, and when silent, but eloquent, appeals were presented in the name of many millions who, though absent in body, were present in spirit.

It is not my intention to occupy your time by dwelling upon the slow progress of the past twelve months.

There are splendid records of its available in “Disarmament” and other publications.

But there is one point to which I would briefly direct your attention.

It has become fashionable to refer to the Conference as a failure and in consequence the Bureau (the steering committee) for not bringing it to an early and

PUBLIC OPINION WILL SUPPORT DISARMAMENT

The next thing I want to say is this: if the Governments will now make these decisions which are needed, if they will show this spirit of cooperation and compromise which is required, then I am confident they can rely upon the public opinion of their countries to support them.

You spoke in your declaration of the progress of opinion since the Conference began.

I am in entire agreement.

I am aware that, in their essentials, the views you hold have been accepted by the vast, indeed I would say by the overwhelming, majority of mankind.

I am fully conscious, as I have said, of what is happening in the Far East and in South America.

I am well aware that, to a superficial observer, it might seem that in many ways the tide of narrow nationalism is at the flood.

Yet I say without hesitation—and I speak as one who has been a Minister of the British Crown knowing full well the gravity of the decisions which Governments must take—I say without hesitation that there exists today a large proportion of opinion throughout the world which will support the Governments in any measure of armament reduction, however drastic, upon which they may agree.

I hope then, the Conference is now beginning a new phase—the phase of definite decisions. And in this new phase I attach, as I have said, immense importance to the spirit in which our work is done.

CONFERENCE HELPING TO BUILD NEW WORLD ORDER

I would like to add something further to that remark.

I have sometimes wondered whether in recent months we have all kept clearly before our minds the real purpose for which the Conference has met.

It has not met simply to save a little money on our national budgets. It has not met simply to stabilize or reduce the present differences of military power between some States and others.

We are not here to talk in terms of competing parties or to balance so-called strategic advantages against each other.

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I am sure all their purpose, the

store belief in the mutual good faith of the nations assembled in Geneva.

And that can best be done, as I have tried to argue, both by a conscious and sustained effort of good will, and by keeping our supreme purpose continuously before our eyes, by negotiating with the deliberate conviction that the success of the Conference is the supreme interest of every single nation in the world.

Second, we must draw up a Treaty that will make both Governments and peoples understand that the League of Nations is a living institution, a real and vital guarantee for international

1,000 Young People

Cable Geneva for Drastic Arms

Over a thousand young people of America, representative of 18 groups and others, joined in sending telegrams to Arthur Henderson, President of the World Disarmament Conference, on February 2, the first anniversary of the opening of the conference.

The cables expressed the disapproval of American
some quarters selections are cast upon the Bureau (the steering committee) for not bringing it to an early and definite success.

I admit neither the charge of failure nor the responsibility of the Bureau.

POLITICAL CHANGES LARGELY RESPONSIBLE

I admit that a comparatively long time has been occupied without any such result. Have we no patience of the public, and of many of the true friends of peace and disarmament, has it served us right? I remind you that the numerous changes in Governments, the protracted and tragic situation in the Far East, and the war between certain South American States, have been important factors in the repeated delays, which we have had to face.

I do not put these points forward in any sense as a justificaion for our position, but merely to show that they should not be entirely overlooked.

And there is another observation I should like to make in this connection.

If our Conference has not made more rapid progress to that success which you and I knew it would, let us not be discouraged, but rather let us see that the delays, and is there another side to the case, and that silence should not be accepted as evidence of progress over.

PREPARATORY PERIOD

Now let me turn from the past to the future.

Administrative inquiries are often used for retrospective examination, but we can use this occasion better if we try to look ahead.

I think that we should say about the future:

In my view, we have now reached the critical stage of the Conference.

Important decisions leading to practical results must now be taken.

The period of exploration, of preliminary examinations, of examination by experts, of general discussion, should now be at an end.

The Conference has accumulated a vast store of useful material dealing with every aspect of the problem.

A great amount of useful preparatory work has been accomplished.

We have before us plans, proposals, studies, memoranda, expert studies, and even some of our work the draft articles of a Treaty.

In the face of this we must turn to our hand a mass of raw good material which requires to be assembles and co-ordinated into a comprehensive and practical Convention.

PARTNERSHIP MUST GO

But if we are to make a Conference of such a scale, we shall need from every delegation a readiness to set aside its own true interests and the particular interest of the Conference as a whole.

We shall need a spirit of partnership, of solidarity, not of obstinate adherence to one set of proposals against another; we shall need a spirit of cooperation, not a spirit of competition, not a spirit of non-aggression, not a spirit of aggression, not a spirit of negotiation, not a spirit of war, but a spirit of peace, a spirit of cooperation.

CONDITIONS OF SUCCESS

I say peace is vital. What then are the conditions and the measure of success?

Let me put three points before you:

1. Agreement. It is essential that Governments and delegations should make a great effort at mutual cooperation, a great effort at mutual education, a great effort at mutual understanding, a great effort to create a spirit of confidence and a spirit of understanding.

2. Confidence. You say—and rightly—that opinion has gone forward in the last twelve months.

Yes, but confidence has gone back.

I am afraid that it is a melancholy fact. I am afraid that it is a fact that the confidence that was shown in the sanctity of the Covenant and the Full of Paris, less confidence that right now we shall 2018, than there was in 1930.

It is our most urgent task to restore confidence, to bring back trust, to re-