THE WORLD'S CHOICE at GENEVA

by Arthur Henderson

The President of the Disarmament Conference, who has just returned to Geneva.

that the world will slip back into the barbarism of war, and the settlement of disputes not by the peaceful methods to which the nations pledged themselves under the Pact of Paris, but by what has been described as the most ferocious and the most futile of all human follies.

We must, therefore, not be deterred, but endeavour to move steadily forward in the direction of our objective.

The agreement of the Five Powers, which was reached last December and gave new emphasis to the questions of equality and security, cannot be overlooked, though it may not be easy to secure its complete fulfilment at the present stage.

The provisions for the Control and Supervision of the Convention must be made effective. The machinery for carrying out a periodical and automatic inspection, and, when necessary, an investigation, must be rigid and of universal application.

A strong case can be made for setting up a Permanent Disarmament Commission as soon as the second ratifications by all the signatory Powers. The Permanent
securing without further delay those practical decisions for which we have been striving.

But whatever discouraging features the situation may present, and however irritating may have been the long delays which have marked the work of the Conference, it is to be hoped that the friends of disarmament will steadily refuse to allow themselves to be stampeded, or fall at the critical juncture, to keep in proper perspective every aspect of this great world problem.

It has to be admitted with frankness that much has happened since the Conference opened to shake the confidence of its strongest supporter, and this especially applies to the failure of the assembly to live up to its own important decisions.

The early weeks were full of promise. High expectations were aroused, and many decisions, especially those regarding the most aggressive weapons and the development of a European military system, were looked forward to with much hope and interest.

Mr. Peppercorn:

If you haven't got the price of a bed and a blanket, you're breaking the law, but if you have got the price, you can sleep under 50 haystacks for the law can't touch you.

I don't know just how much brass you must have nowadays to buy a day's provisions, but it is this problem we are all trying to solve. Among them are the influences of tradition, the disturbing effects of the economic crisis, the changes of government, and the deteriorations in the relations between neighbour States, due to one cause or another.

The departure from long-established traditions is most difficult to bring about; especially when the people have been steeped in ideas which have become part of their being.

To persuade people, subject from their earliest years to such propaganda and influence, to think of their security in other than terms of military preparedness involves a change of outlook that seems impossible to achieve.

The spirit of militarism has been injected into the youth mind by painting, poetry, and song, and by the erection of monuments glorifying war and those who have participated in war.

To persuade people, subject from their earliest years to such propaganda and influence, it is necessary to change their outlook completely until a policy or standard is reached.

Many factors must be kept steadily in mind, if we are to look at the problem objectively. Among them are the influence of tradition, the disturbing effects of the economic crisis, the changes of government, and the deteriorations in the relations between neighbour States, due to one cause or another.

Under the Convention, the military system of each State would no longer be the exclusive concern of that particular State, but the united concern of the High Contracting Parties, which had signed and ratified the Convention.

The provisions for the Control and Supervision of Disarmament must be made effective. The machinery of the Permanent Disarmament Commission as soon as the second ratifications by all the signatory Powers. The Permanent Disarmament Commission must be responsible for seeing that the provisions of the Convention are carried into effect, and that the machinery of control and supervision is established.

It should also report upon a scheme of penalties for infractions of the terms of the Convention. This work could be performed so as to come into operation simultaneously with the ratified Convention.

Finally, the General Assembly should determine to reach all the practical decisions necessary to secure a first stage Convention without any unreasonable delay.

Making every allowance for unforeseen circumstances, I repeat that it would not be in the world's interest to disarmament and the world needs disarmament.

It is essentially to be hoped that the Conference will rise to the greatness of its opportunity.