Summary of a Report submitted to the XXVIII.
International Peace Congress

by

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The Writer draws attention to the truly catastrophic consequences which will result if the Disarmament Conference of 1932 fails to succeed. The Conference will be a failure if it does not lead to immediate and considerable reduction of armaments, and if it does not succeed in establishing the principle of equality for all nations in the matter of disarmament, equality both in theory and in practice.

In the first place a breakdown of the Conference would be a disaster for the League of Nations itself.

In the second place, such a breakdown would have particularly calamitous reactions in the States which lost the World War. Whatever confidence they may at present have in the League of Nations would disappear entirely, and the movement now existing in Germany and tending towards that country's withdrawal from the League and to its liberation from the armament restrictions provided for in the Treaty of Versailles would make great headway. The pacifists would be crushed and the arguments that the Allies had not kept faith when the armistice and peace treaties were signed, and that therefore Germany was not bound by her treaty obligations, would predominate. The consequence would be no prospect of peace in Europe for many years to come.

Thirdly, the breakdown of the Disarmament Conference would increase the general lack of confidence all round and it would prejudice the efforts which have already been made towards conjuring the universal economic crisis and world distress. America will not give financial assistance if Europe does not disarm.

When drafting our demands on the Conference, we should take care to remain within the limits of possibility. All organisations which with peace aims should come to an agreement on certain fundamental principles, and they should present a united front so that those principles may triumph. Pacifist propaganda must not be weakened by lack of unity within the camp.
The International Federation of League of Nations Societies, the British National Council for Prevention of War, the Permanent Delegation of the Coordination Committee in France and doubtless other organisations have adopted certain resolutions which are almost unanimous in the matter of what they intend asking of the Disarmament Conference. Briefly these demands are as follows:

1. Subject to subsequent development of the peace guarantees, the Conference shall recognise that the present state of security of the nations lays upon it the obligation to proceed, not merely to a theoretical limitation, but to considerable practical and effective limitation of armaments.

2. The totals of the armaments budgets shall immediately be reduced by one quarter.

3. The principle shall be established whereby all Powers without distinction (whether victors or vanquished in 1918, or neutrals) shall be placed on a footing of absolute equality;

4. Such equality shall not signify a rearming for the Powers whose armaments by virtue of the Peace treaties are subject to restriction, but a reduction of armaments for the other Powers.

5. War material and effective for war on land, on sea and in the air shall be limited, either directly or indirectly, by budgetary means.

6. War engines which are prohibited by the Peace treaties shall be generally prohibited.

7. War by means of asphyxiating gases and by means of microbes shall be entirely and unconditionally prohibited, and peace-time preparation of such methods shall be absolutely prohibited.

8. Private enterprise in the industry of armaments shall be nationalised in every country.

9. An international permanent disarmament committee shall be set up and wide powers shall be conferred on it to take decisions on doubtful or litigious points which may arise in connection with the application of the Disarmament Fact; it shall also decide questions concerning the control to be exercised for the observance of the rules laid down.

10. In order that the cause of disarmament may advance and with a view to facilitating such progress, the system of guarantees under international law for the maintenance of peace must be developed.

COMMENTS ON THE DEMANDS.

1. OBLIGATION TO DISARM. Here the Writer refers to Art. 8 of the Covenant of the League of Nations and to the Introduction to Part V. of the Peace Treaties as commented on in the Note of June 16th 1919. Further, stress must be laid on the development of the guarantees under the Covenant, the Statute of the Permanent Court of International Justice, the Treaty of Locarno, the Kellogg Pact and the General Act.

2. If the Conference adopts the British proposal tending to budgetary limitation, a number of doubtful points are bound to arise. Here a task awaits the International Permanent Disarmament Committee. The Writer refers to his own Limitation of Armaments.
Proposal made in 1913 (the only pre-war one of its kind) which was based on budgetary limitation and which dealt with the manner of solving inevitable disputes.

3. EQUALITY OF STATES. In the long run it will be impossible to maintain different systems of the victorious and vanquished States. The principle of equality was admitted unanimously, and without debate, at the Conference of the Federation of League of Nations Societies. We should demand a formal recognition by the Disarmament Conference of this principle and also insist on a start being made in the matter of carrying out the principle.

4. EQUALITY MUST BE OBTAINED BY MORE GENERAL DISARMAMENT. Article 55 of the Draft elaborated by the Preparatory Disarmament Committee must be superseded. Limitation of effective and war material must be made along the lines laid down in the Peace treaties, that is to say, by direct limitation. If, as seems likely, the Disarmament Pact provides for indirect budgetary limitation, then it must be made to harmonise with the limitation method set up by the Peace Treaties.

5. LIMITATION OF LAND, NAVAL AND AIR FORCES. Direct limitation of all categories, including trained reserves, is desirable, but it would appear, judging by the deliberations in the Preparatory Disarmament Committee that this will not be possible, and if indirect budgetary limitation alone is attempted, it will be necessary to ensure the introduction of the principle of direct limitation of certain armaments (naval and air armaments, if it is not possible to obtain total suppression of the latter category).

6. COMPLETE PROHIBITION OF WAR ENGINES PROHIBITED BY THE PEACE TREATIES. This demand contains the recognition of the most formal principle of equality of all States. Even if the Conference does not attain all that is here implied, it should at least take a step in the direction of applying the principle by prohibiting, for instance, all air war engines and lay down definite figures to cover limitation of the remainder of these armaments.

7. POISONOUS GASES AND MICRONEES. The Preparatory Disarmament Committee made a distinction between these two categories. The former was to be entirely suppressed, the latter subject to reciprocity. The Writer considers such discrimination scandalous, both should be done away with.

8. NATIONALISATION OF THE TRAFFIC IN ARMS. This demand is based on Art. 8, Para. 5 of the Covenant of the League. Those who are interested in the traffic are interested in the outbreak of war.

9. INTERNATIONAL PERMANENT DISARMAMENT COMMITTEE. The part to be played by this body was not decided to under Paragraph 2. The members would have much the same independence as the Judges at the Hague Court. Those who claim they favour disarmament while objecting to control, must be suspected of lacking in good faith. Appeal cannot be made to "sovereignty of States," such sovereignty must be restricted in the new international order.

10. GUARANTEES FOR THE MAINTENANCE OF PEACE. It is necessary to insist on the further development of these guarantees if the work of disarmament is to be brought nearer to perfection. We should demand that, in virtue of the principle laid down in Art. 19 of the Covenant of the League, a procedure be set up admitting of the revision of (by pacific means) of treaties which have become inapplicable.

Military security has been transferred to the field of league. Military security is always one-sided, and will always lead to rivalry in the manufacture of armaments.

The Writer concludes by recalling that it is generally recognised that the sanctions under the Covenant are not applicable. Opinions differ as to what should replace them. It would seem advisable to leave this question aside for the moment and not to insert in our demands the recommendation put forward by the Coordination Committee concerning a force to be placed at the disposal of the League of Nations. That might lead to lack of unity in the ranks of pacifism. It would be superfluous to ask the 1932 Disarmament Conference to decide that question.