CONSTITUTION
OF THE
LEAGUE of NATIONS

in February 1919

Souvenir of
President Wilson's visit to Boston
February, 1919
At the second plenary session of the Interallied Peace Conference in the French Foreign Office, Quai d'Orsay, Paris, January 25, 1919, the following resolution was adopted unanimously:

The conference, having considered the proposals for the creation of a league of nations, resolves that:

It is essential to the maintenance of the world settlement which the associated nations are now met to establish, that a league of nations be created to promote international obligations and to provide safeguards against war. This league should be created as an integral part of the general treaty of peace and should be open to every civilized nation which can be relied on to promote its objects.

The members of the league should periodically meet in international conference and should have a permanent organization and secretaries to carry on the business of the league in the intervals between the conferences.

The conference therefore appoints a committee representative of the associated governments to work out the details of the constitution and the functions of the league and the draft of resolutions in regard to breaches of the laws of war for presentation to the peace conference.

The delegates constituting the commission were the following:

United States—Woodrow Wilson and Edward M. House;
Great Britain—Lord Robert Cecil and General Jan Christian Smuts;
France—Léon Bourgeois and Ferdinand Larnaude, dean of the faculty of law of the University of Paris;
Italy—Premier Orlando and Vittorio Scialoia;
Japan—Viscount Chinda and K. Ochiai;
Belgium—Paul Hymans;
Brazil—Epitácio Pessos;
China—Wellington Koo;
Serbia—Milenko R. Vesnich;
Portugal—Jaime Batalha Reis.

Delegates representing Czecho-Slovakia, Greece, Poland and Rumania were subsequently added.
CONSTITUTION OF THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS

Report read at the plenary session of the Interallied Peace Conference, Paris, February 14, 1919, by

WOODROW WILSON,

President of its Commission on the League of Nations, delegate of the United States.

Mr. Wilson—Mr. Chairman: I have the honor—and assume it a very great privilege—of reporting in the name of the commission constituted by this conference on the formulation of a plan for the League of Nations. I am happy to say that it is a unanimous report, a unanimous report from the representatives of 14 nations—the United States, Great Britain, France, Italy, Japan, Belgium, Brazil, China, Czecho-Slovakia, Greece, Poland, Portugal, Rumania and Serbia. I think it will be serviceable and interesting if I may, with your permission, read the document as the only report we have to make.

PREAMBLE

In order to promote international co-operation and to secure international peace and security by the acceptance of obligations not to resort to war, by the prescription of open, just and honorable relations between nations, by the firm establishment of the understandings of international law as the actual rule of conduct among Governments, and by the maintenance of justice and a scrupulous respect for all treaty obligations in the dealings of
organized peoples with one another, the Powers signatory to this covenant adopt this

Constitution of the League of Nations:

I.

Executive Organs

The action of the high contracting parties under the terms of this covenant shall be effected through the instrumentality of a meeting of a Body of Delegates representing the high contracting parties, of meetings at more frequent intervals of an Executive Council, and of a Permanent International Secretariat to be established at the seat of the League.

II.

Body of Delegates

Meetings of the Body of Delegates shall be held at stated intervals and from time to time as occasion may require, for the purpose of dealing with matters within the sphere of action of the League. Meetings of the Body of Delegates shall be held at the seat of the League or at such other places as may be found convenient, and shall consist of representatives of the high contracting parties. Each of the high contracting parties shall have one vote, but may have not more than three representatives.

III.

Executive Council

The Executive Council shall consist of representatives of the United States of America, the British Empire, France, Italy and Japan, together with representatives of four other states, members of the League. The selection of these four states shall be made by the Body of Delegates on such principles and in such manner as they think fit. Pending the appointments of these represent-atives of the other states, representatives of (blank left for names) shall be members of the Executive Council.

Meetings of the Council shall be held from time to time as occasion may require and at least once a year at whatever place may be decided on, or, failing any such decision, at the seat of the League, and any matter within the sphere of action of the League or affecting the peace of the world may be dealt with at such meetings.

Invitations shall be sent to any power to attend a meeting of the Council at which such matters directly affecting its interests are to be discussed, and no decision taken at any meeting will be binding on such powers unless so invited.

IV.

Majority Vote

All matters of procedure at meetings of the Body of Delegates or the Executive Council, including the appointment of committees to investigate particular matters, shall be regulated by the Body of Delegates or the Executive Council and may be decided by a majority of the states represented at the meetings.

The first meeting of the Body of Delegates and of the Executive Council shall be summoned by the President of the United States of America.

V.

Permanent Secretariat

The Permanent Secretariat of the League shall be established at (blank), which shall constitute the seat of the League. The Secretariat shall comprise such secretaries and staff as may be required, under the general direction and control of a Secretary General of the League, who shall be chosen by the Executive Council; the Secretariat shall be appointed by the Secretary General, subject to confirmation by the Executive Council.

The Secretary General shall act in that capacity at all meetings of the Body of Delegates, or of the Executive Council.
The expenses of the Secretariat shall be borne by the states members of the League in accordance with the apportionment of the expenses of the International Bureau of the Universal Postal Union.

VI.

DIPLOMATIC IMMUNITIES

Representatives of the high contracting parties and officials of the League when engaged in the business of the League shall enjoy diplomatic privileges and immunities, and the buildings occupied by the League or its officials or by representatives attending its meetings shall enjoy the benefits of extra-territoriality.

VII.

MEMBERSHIP

Admission to the League of states not signatories to the covenant and not named in the protocol hereto as states to be invited to adhere to the covenant requires the assent of not less than two-thirds of the states represented in the Body of Delegates, and shall be limited to fully self-governing countries, including dominions and colonies.

No state shall be admitted to the League unless it is able to give effective guaranties of its sincere intention to observe its international obligations, and unless it shall conform to such principles as may be prescribed by the League in regard to its naval and military forces and armaments.

VIII.

REDUCTION OF ARMAMENTS

The high contracting parties recognize the principle that the maintenance of peace will require the reduction of national armaments to the lowest point consistent with national safety and the enforcement by common action of international obligations having special regard to the geographical situation and circumstances of each state; and the Executive Council shall formulate plans for effecting such reduction.

The Executive Council shall also determine for the consideration and action of the several Governments what military equipment and armament is fair and reasonable in proportion to the scale of forces laid down in the program of disarmament; and these limits, when adopted, shall not be exceeded without the permission of the Executive Council.

The high contracting parties agree that the manufacture by private enterprise of munitions and implements of war lends itself to grave objections, and direct the Executive Council to advise how the evil effects attendant upon such manufacture can be prevented, due regard being had to the necessities of those countries which are not able to manufacture for themselves the munitions and implements of war necessary for their safety.

The high contracting parties undertake in no way to conceal from each other the condition of such of their industries as are capable of being adapted to warlike purposes or the scale of their armaments, and agree that there shall be full and frank interchange of information as to their military and naval programs.

IX.

PERMANENT MILITARY COMMISSION

A permanent commission shall be constituted to advise the League on the execution of the provisions of Art. VIII and on military and naval questions generally.

X.

GUARANTIES AGAINST AGGRESSION

The high contracting parties shall undertake to respect and preserve as against external aggression the territorial integrity and existing political independence of all states members of the League. In case of any such aggression or in case of any threat or danger
of such aggression, the Executive Council shall advise upon the means by which the obligation shall be fulfilled.

XI.

ACTION IN CASE OF WAR OR THREAT OF WAR

Any war or threat of war, whether immediately affecting any of the high contracting parties or not, is hereby declared a matter of concern to the League, and the high contracting parties reserve the right to take any action that may be deemed wise and effectual to safeguard the peace of nations.

It is hereby also declared and agreed to be the friendly right of each of the high contracting parties to draw the attention of the Body of Delegates or of the Executive Council to any circumstance affecting international intercourse which threatens to disturb international peace or the good understanding between nations upon which peace depends.

XII.

DISPUTES TO BE SUBMITTED TO ARBITRATION OR INQUIRY

The high contracting parties agree that, should disputes arise between them which cannot be adjusted by the ordinary processes of diplomacy, they will in no case resort to war without previously submitting the questions and matters involved either to arbitration or to inquiry by the Executive Council and until three months after the award by the arbitrators or a recommendation by the Executive Council; and that they will not ever resort to war as against a member of the League which complies with the award of the arbitrators or the recommendation of the Executive Council.

In any case under this article, the award of the arbitrators shall be made within a reasonable time and the recommendation of the Executive Council shall be made within six months after the submission of the dispute.

XIII.

ACCEPTANCE OF AWARDS

The high contracting parties agree that whenever any dispute or difficulty shall arise between them which they recognize to be suitable for submission to arbitration and which cannot be satisfactorily settled by diplomacy, they will submit the whole matter to arbitration. For this purpose the court of arbitration to which the case is referred shall be the court agreed on by the parties or stipulated in any convention existing between them. The high contracting parties agree that they will carry out in full good faith any award that may be rendered. In the event of any failure to carry out the award the Executive Council shall propose what steps can best be taken to give effect thereto.

XIV.

INTERNATIONAL COURT

The Executive Council shall formulate plans for the establishment of a permanent court of international justice and this court shall, when established, be competent to hear and determine any matter which the parties recognize as suitable for submission to it for arbitration under the foregoing article.

XV.

DISPUTES NOT SUBMITTED TO ARBITRATION

If there should arise between states members of the League any dispute likely to lead to rupture, which is not submitted to arbitration as above, the high contracting parties agree that they will refer the matter to the Executive Council; either party to the dispute may give notice of the existence of the dispute to the Secretary General, who will make all necessary arrangements for a full investigation and consideration thereof. For this purpose the parties agree to communicate to the Secretary General, as promptly as possible, statements of their case with all the rele-
vant facts and papers, and the Executive Council may forthwith direct the publication thereof.

Where the efforts of the Council lead to the settlement of the dispute a statement shall be published indicating the nature of the dispute and the terms of settlement, together with such explanation as may be appropriate. If the dispute has not been settled a report by the Council shall be published, setting forth with all necessary facts and explanations the recommendations which the Council think just and proper for the settlement of the dispute.

If the report is unanimously agreed to by the members of the Council other than the parties to the dispute, the high contracting parties agree that they will not go to war with any party which complies with the recommendations, and that, if any party shall refuse so to comply, the Council shall propose measures necessary to give effect to the recommendations. If no such unanimous report can be made, it shall be the duty of the majority and the privilege of the minority to issue statements indicating what they believe to be the facts and containing the reasons which they consider to be just and proper.

Mr. Wilson—I pause to point out that a misconception might arise in connection with one of the sentences I have just read: "if any party shall refuse so to comply, the Council shall propose measures necessary to give effect to the recommendations." A case in point, a purely hypothetical case, is this: Suppose there is in the possession of a particular power a piece of territory or some other substantial thing in dispute, to which it is claimed that it is not entitled. Suppose that the matter is submitted to the Executive Council for recommendation as to the settlement of the dispute, diplomacy having failed, and suppose that the decision is in favor of the party which claims the subject matter of dispute, as against the party which has the subject matter in dispute. Then, if the party in possession of the subject matter in dispute merely sits still and does nothing, it has accepted the decision of the Council, in the sense that it makes no resistance; but something must be done to see that it surrenders the subject matter in dispute.

In such a case, the only case contemplated, it is provided that the Executive Council may then consider what steps will be necessary to oblige the party against whom judgment has been given to comply with the decisions of the Council.

The Executive Council may in any case under this article refer the dispute to the Body of Delegates. The dispute shall be so referred at the request of either party to the dispute, provided that such request must be made within 14 days after the submission of the dispute. In a case referred to the Body of Delegates, all the provisions of this article and of Art. XII relating to the action and powers of the Executive Council shall apply to the action and powers of the Body of Delegates.

XVI.

Sanctions

Should any of the high contracting parties break or disregard its covenants under Art. XII, it shall thereby ipso facto be deemed to have committed an act of war against all the other members of the League, which hereby undertakes immediately to subject it to the severance of all trade or financial relations, the prohibition of all intercourse between their nationals and the nationals of the covenant-breaking state, and the prevention of all financial, commercial or personal intercourse between the nationals of the covenant-breaking state and the nationals of any other state, whether a member of the League or not.

It shall be the duty of the Executive Council in such case to recommend what effective military or naval force the members of the League shall severally contribute to the armed forces to be used to protect the covenants of the League.

The high contracting parties agree, further, that they will mutually support one another in the financial and economic measures which may be taken under this article, in order to minimize the loss and inconvenience resulting from the above measures, and that they will mutually support one another in resisting any special measures aimed at one of their number by the covenant-breaking state, and that they will afford passage through their territory to the forces of any of the high contracting parties who are co-operating to protect the covenants of the League.
XVII.

Disputes with Non-Members

In the event of disputes between one state member of the League and another state which is not a member of the League, the high contracting parties agree that the state or states not members of the League shall be invited to accept the obligations of membership in the League for the purposes of such dispute, upon such conditions as the Executive Council may deem just, and, upon acceptance of any such invitation, the above provisions shall be applied with such modifications as may be deemed necessary by the League.

Upon such invitation being given the Executive Council shall immediately institute an inquiry into the circumstances and merits of the dispute and recommend such action as may seem best and most effectual in the circumstances.

In the event of a power so invited refusing to accept the obligations of membership in the League for the purposes of such dispute, and taking any action against a state member of the League which in the case of a state member of the League would constitute a breach of Art. XII, the provisions of Art. XVI shall be applicable as against the state taking such action.

If both parties to the dispute, when so invited, refuse to accept the obligations of membership in the League for the purpose of such dispute, the Executive Council may take such action and make such recommendations as will prevent hostilities and will result in the settlement of the dispute.

XVIII.

Trade in Ammunition

The high contracting parties agree that the League shall be intrusted with general supervision of the trade in arms and ammunition with the countries in which the control of this traffic is necessary in the common interest.

XIX.

Control of Colonies and Territories

To those colonies and territories which as a consequence of the late war ceased to be under the sovereignty of the states which formerly governed them and which are inhabited by peoples not yet able to stand by themselves under the strenuous conditions of the modern world, there should be applied the principle that the wellbeing and development of such peoples form a sacred trust of civilization and that securities for the performance of this trust should be embodied in the constitution of the League.

The best method of giving practical effect to this principle is that the tutelage of such peoples should be intrusted to advanced nations who by reason of their resources, their experience or their geographical position, can best undertake this responsibility, and that tutelage should be exercised by them as mandatories on behalf of the League.

The character of the mandate must differ according to the stage of the development of the people, the geographical situation of the territory, its economic conditions and other similar circumstances.

Certain communities formerly belonging to the Turkish Empire have reached a stage of development where their existence as independent nations can be provisionally recognized subject to the rendering of administrative advice and assistance by a mandatory power until such time as they are able to stand alone. The wishes of these communities must be a principal consideration in the selection of the mandatory power.

Other peoples, especially those of Central Africa, are at such a stage that the mandatory must be responsible for the administration of the territory subject to conditions which will guarantee freedom of conscience or religion, subject only to the maintenance of public order and morals, the prohibition of abuses such as the slave trade, the arms traffic and the liquor traffic, and the prevention of the establishment of fortifications or military and naval bases and of military training of the natives for other than police purposes.
and the defense of territory, and will also secure equal opportunities for the trade and commerce of other members of the League.

There are territories, such as Southwest Africa and certain of the South Pacific Isles, which, owing to the sparseness of their population, or their small size, or their remoteness from the centers of civilization, or their geographical continuity to the mandatory state, and other circumstances, can be best administered under the laws of the mandatory state as integral portions thereof, subject to the safeguards above mentioned in the interests of the indigenous population.

In every case of mandate, the mandatory state shall render to the League an annual report in reference to the territory committed to its charge.

The degree of authority, control or administration to be exercised by the mandatory state shall, if not previously agreed upon by the high contracting parties in each case, be explicitly defined by the Executive Council in a special act or charter.

The high contracting parties further agree to establish at the seat of the League a mandatory commission to receive and examine the annual reports of the mandatory powers, and to assist the League in insuring the observance of the terms of all mandates.

Mr. Wilson—Let me say that before being embodied in this document this was the subject matter of a very careful discussion by representatives of the five greater parties, and that their unanimous conclusion is the matter embodied in this article.

XX.

INTERNATIONAL LABOR BUREAU

The high contracting parties will endeavor to secure and maintain fair and humane conditions of labor for men, women and children both in their own countries and in all countries to which their commercial and industrial relations extend, and to that end agree to establish a League Permanent Bureau of Labor.

XXI.

FREEDOM OF COMMERCIAL TRANSIT

The high contracting parties agree that provision shall be made through the instrumentality of the League to secure and maintain freedom of transit and equitable treatment for the commerce of all states members of the League, having in mind, among other things, special arrangements with regard to the necessities of the regions devastated during the war of 1914-1918.

XXII.

INTERNATIONAL BUREAUS

The high contracting parties agree to place under the control of the League all International Bureaus already established by general treaties, if the parties to such treaties consent. Furthermore, they agree that all such International Bureaus to be constituted in future shall be placed under control of the League.

XXIII.

REGISTRATION AND PUBLICATION OF TREATIES

The high contracting parties agree that every treaty or international engagement entered into hereafter by any state member of the League, shall be forthwith registered with the Secretary General and as soon as possible published by him, and that no such treaty or international engagement shall be binding until so registered.

XXIV.

REVIEW OF TREATIES

It shall be the right of the Body of Delegates from time to time to advise the reconsideration by states members of the League of treaties which have become inapplicable, and of international conditions of which the continuance may endanger the peace of the world.
XXV.

**ABROGATION OF TREATIES**

The high contracting parties severally agree that the present covenant is accepted as abrogating all obligations *inter se* which are inconsistent with the terms thereof, and solemnly engage that they will not hereafter enter into any engagements inconsistent with the terms thereof. In case any of the powers signatory hereto or subsequently admitted to the League shall, before becoming a party to this covenant, have undertaken any obligations which are inconsistent with the terms of this covenant, it shall be the duty of such power to take immediate steps to procure its release from such obligations.

XXVI.

**AMENDMENTS TO COVENANT**

Amendments to this covenant will take effect when ratified by the states whose representatives compose the Executive Council and by three-fourths of the states whose representatives compose the body of delegates.

**MR. WILSON**—It gives me pleasure to add to this formal reading of the result of our labors that the character of the discussion which occurred at the sittings of the commission was not only of the most constructive but of the most encouraging sort. It was obvious throughout our discussions that, although there were subjects upon which there were individual differences of judgment, with regard to the method by which our objects should be obtained, there was practically at no point any serious differences of opinion or motive as to the objects which we were seeking. Indeed, while these debates were not made the opportunity for the expression of enthusiasm and sentiments, I think the other members of the commission will agree with me that there was an undertone of high respect and of enthusiasm for the thing we were trying to do, which was heartening throughout every meeting.

It was because we felt that in a way this Conference did intrust unto us the expression of one of its highest and most important purposes, to see to it that the concord of the world in the future with regard to the objects of justice should not be subject to doubt or uncertainty; that the co-operation of the great body of nations should be assured in the maintenance of peace upon terms of honor and of international obligations. The compulsion of that task was constantly upon us, and at no point was there shown the slightest desire to do anything but suggest the best means to accomplish that great object.

There is very great significance, therefore, in the fact that the result was reached unanimously. Fourteen nations were represented, among them all of those powers which for convenience we have called the great powers, and among the rest a representation of the greatest variety of circumstances and interests. So that I think we are justified in saying that the significance of the result, therefore, has the deepest of all meanings, the union of wills in a common purpose, a union of wills which cannot be resisted, and which, I dare say, no nation will run the risk of attempting to resist.

**LEAGUE OF SIMPLE STRUCTURE**

Now as to the character of the document. While it has consumed some time to read this document, I think you will see at once that it is very simple, and in nothing so simple as in the structure which it suggests for a League of Nations—a Body of Delegates, an Executive Council and a Permanent Secretariat.

When it came to the question of determining the character of the representation in the Body of Delegates, we were all aware of a feeling which is current throughout the world. Inasmuch as I am stating it in the presence of the official representatives of the various Governments here present, including myself, I may say that there is a universal feeling that the world cannot rest satisfied with merely official guidance. There has reached us through many channels the feeling that if the deliberating body of the League of Nations was merely to be a body of officials representing the various Governments, the peoples of the world would not be sure that some of the mistakes which preoccupied officials had admittedly made might not be repeated. It was impossible to conceive a method or an assembly so large and various as to be really representative of the great body of the peoples of the world, because, as I roughly reckon it, we represent, as we sit around this table, more than twelve hundred million people. You cannot have a representative assembly of 1,200,000,000 people; but if you leave it to each Government to have, if it pleases, one or two or three representatives, though only with a single vote, it may vary its
representation from time to time, not only, but it may originate
the choice of its several representatives. . . .

**Variety of Representation**

Therefore, we thought that this was a proper and very prudent
concession to the practically universal opinion of plain men, every-
thing that everyone wanted, the door left open to a variety of re-
presentation, instead of being confined to a single official body with
which they could or might not find themselves in sympathy.

And you will notice that this body has unlimited rights of dis-
cussion—I mean of discussion of anything that falls within the
field of international relations—and that it is especially agreed
that war or international misunderstandings, or anything that may
lead to friction or trouble is everybody's business, because it may
affect the peace of the world.

And in order to safeguard the popular power, so far as we could,
of this representative body, it is provided, you will notice, that
when a subject is submitted it is not to arbitration, but to discus-
sion by the Executive Council. It can, upon the initiative of either
of the parties to the dispute, be drawn out of the Executive Coun-
cil to the larger forum of the general Body of Delegates; because
through this instrument we are depending primarily and chiefly
upon one great force, and this is the moral force of the public
opinion of the world—the pleasing and clarifying and compelling
influences of publicity; so that intrigues can no longer have their
covers, so that designs that are sinister can at any time be drawn
into the open, so that those things that are destroyed by the light
may be promptly destroyed by the overwhelming light of the uni-
versal expression of the condemnation of the world.

**Vehicle of Life, not Straitjacket**

Armed force is in the background in this program, but it is in
the background; and if the moral force of the world will not suffice,
the physical force of the world shall. But that is the last resort,
because this is intended as a constitution of peace, not as a league
of war.

**Labor given New Status**

That is the significance of the provision introduced concerning
labor. There are many ameliorations of labor conditions which
can be effected by conference and discussion. I anticipate that
there will be a very great usefulness in the bureau of labor which
it is contemplated shall be set up by the League. Men and women
and children who work have been in the background through
long ages, and sometimes seemed to be forgotten, while Govern-
ments have had their watchful and suspicious eyes upon the
maneuvers of one another, while the thought of statesmen has been
about structural action and the larger transactions of com-
merce and of finance. Now, if I may believe the picture which I
see there comes into the foreground the great body of the laboring
people of the world, the men and the women and the children upon
whom the great burden of sustaining the world must from day to
day fall, whether we wish it to do so or not; people who go to
bed tired and wake up without the stimulation of lively hope.
These people will be drawn into the field of international consul-
tation and help, and will be among the wards of the combined
Governments of the world. There is, I take leave to say, a very
great step in advance in the mere conception.

**Treaties must be Published**

Then, as you will notice, there is an imperative article concern-
ing the publicity of all international agreements. Henceforth no
member of the League can claim any agreement valid which has not been registered with the Secretary General, in whose office, of course, it will be subject to the examination of anybody representing a member of the League. And the duty is laid upon the Secretary General to publish every document of that sort at the earliest possible time. I suppose most persons who have not been conversant with the business of foreign affairs do not realize how many hundreds of these agreements are made in a single year, and how difficult it might be to publish the more unimportant of them immediately, how uninteresting it would be to most of the world to publish them immediately; but even they must be published just as soon as it is possible for the Secretary General to publish them.

Then there is a feature about this covenant which, to my mind, is one of the greatest and most satisfactory advances that has been made. We are done with annexations of helpless people, meant, in some instances by some powers, to be used merely for exploitation. We recognize in the most solemn manner that the helpless and undeveloped peoples of the world, being in that condition, put an obligation upon us to look after their interests primarily, before we use them for our interests, and that in all cases of this sort hereafter it shall be the duty of the League to see that the nations who are assigned as the tutors and advisers and directors of these peoples shall look to their interests and their development rather than to the interests and desires of the mandatory nation itself.

There has been no greater advance than this, gentlemen. If you look back upon the history of the world you will see how helpless peoples have too often been a prey to powers that had no conscience in the matter. It has been one of the many distressing revelations of recent years that the great power which has just been, happily, defeated, put intolerable burdens and injustices upon the helpless people in some of the colonies which it annexed to itself, that its interest was rather their extermination than their development; that the desire was to possess their land for European purposes, and not to enjoy their confidence in order that mankind might be lifted in these places to the next higher level.

Now, the world, expressing its conscience in law, says there is an end to that, that our consciences shall be settled to this thing. States will be picked out which have already shown that they can exercise a conscience in this matter, and under their tutelage the helpless peoples of the world will come into a new light and into a new hope.

Sympathy In It

So I think I can say of this document that it is at one and the same time a practical document and a human document. There is a pulse of sympathy in it. There is a compulsion of conscience throughout it. It is practical, and yet it is intended to purify, to rectify, to elevate.

And I want to say that so far as my observation instructs me, this is in one sense a belated document. I believe that the conscience of the world has long been prepared to express itself in some way. We are not at the time discovering our sympathy for these people and our interest in them. We are simply expressing it, for it has long been felt and in the administration of the affairs of more than one of the great states represented here—so far as I know, all the great states that are represented here—that humane impulse has already expressed itself in their dealings with their colonies, whose peoples were yet at a low stage of civilization.

We have had many instances of colonies lifted into the sphere of complete self-government. This is not the discovery of a principle. It is the universal application of a principle. It is the agreement of the great nations which have tried to live by these standards in their separate administrations to unite in seeing that their common force and common thought and intelligence are lent to this great and humane enterprise. I think it is an occasion, therefore, for the most profound satisfaction that this humane decision should be reached in a matter for which the world has long been waiting and until a very recent period thought that it was still too early to hope.

Many terrible things have come out of this war, gentlemen, but some very beautiful things have come out of it. Wrong has been defeated, but the rest of the world has been more conscious than it was ever before of the superiority of right. People that were suspicious of one another can now live as friends and comrades in a single family, and desire to do so. The miasma of distrust of intrigue, is cleared away. Men are looking eye to eye and saying, “We are brothers and have a common purpose. We did not realize it before, but now we do realize it, and this is our covenant of friendship.”
Additional copies may be obtained from

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BOSTON