

MR. BALDWIN ON SECURITY

QUESTIONS FOR THE LEAGUE

AN APPEAL TO EUROPE

Mr. Baldwin addressed a mass meeting of the Central Women's Advisory Committee of the National Union of Conservative and Unionist Associations yesterday at the Albert Hall. Lady Hillingdon presided.

Mr. BALDWIN said:—In the last few months, each of which has brought with it its own special load of anxiety, a great deal of discussion has taken place in Parliament, in the Press, and in the country generally about the League of Nations and the part which it has played in the dispute between Italy and Abyssinia. For the first time, in my judgment, there has been a much clearer appreciation of what is meant by the League of Nations and of what is involved by membership of that League. Much as I deplore the circumstances which have led to so much discussion, I am glad that our people have been obliged, and have been able, to devote their consideration to the issues that have arisen and, indeed, that may arise in the future both for us and for other members of the League. Through the speeches I have made during the last three or four years there has run a line of thought which has been based on my own acute realization of the difficulties inherent in any attempt to put into practice, and to enforce, the beliefs and the ideals and the desires of the framers of the Covenant of the League.

Let us be clear as to what those ideals are. They are expressed in the opening words of the Covenant. Those objects are still the aim of our foreign policy. If Europe is to be preserved they must be the aim of the foreign policy of all nations. Nobody questions that. Where the questions begin is in determining what are the best practical means of achieving an aim which we all have in common.

The United States, to our regret, is not a member of the League and in the last year two great Powers, Germany and Japan, have both retired from it. It is no use overlooking or underestimating the difficulties created for this country when sanctions are under discussion so long as those three great Powers are outside the League. Even if you consider only economic sanctions, how can they be rapidly effective if three countries such as those remain aloof? I would say here that probably at the autumn meeting of the League the members of the League will have to consider among many other things what, if any, changes are necessary in the League, and I hope that any changes that may be found helpful in inducing those nations which are outside the League to come into it, if any such changes can be seen to be feasible, I hope indeed they will be considered with all sincerity and with every desire to make the League at last what it was hoped to be in the beginning—a universal League. (Cheers.)

AN EXPERIMENT

I have always said that the famous Article XVI, the sanctions article, was a new departure for us and for other nations. It is an experiment in international politics. I always said it was experimental, that we would try it out to the very end as far as other countries would accompany us, that its results would have to be carefully watched, and if it failed of its object it would have to be re-examined by all the Powers interested. But I never held that any failure that might be proved to accompany this first experiment meant the end of the League system. Not at all. We have with other nations been, as it were, trying to blaze a trail these last months. We have been trying to find a working alternative to war as a means of settling disputes. It has, we know, failed to achieve all that was hoped, and, I repeat, that is not the end. It does not follow that because of a failure on the first attempt the whole machinery is to be scrapped. (Cheers.) Nor does it mean for a moment that those who conceived this ideal were mistaken in putting forth the ideal. If you find that an instrument will not do what you want, it does not mean that your desire is impossible of achievement. What it does mean is that you and all those who used that instrument without success must sit down and examine the instrument, modify, strengthen, alter it, embody in it, if you can, such changes as will make it effective for your purposes. (Cheers.)

tial part of collective security, and in the long run—and on occasion perhaps the short run—they cannot be avoided.

WORKABILITY OF AUTOMATIC SANCTIONS

Let me remind you once more that in this present dispute we were prepared, if necessary, to go the whole length that sanctions would have laid upon us if the other Powers in the League were also ready to accompany us. (Cheers.) Now, one of the questions which we and the other Powers will have to think about in this connexion relates to the workability of what are generally called automatic sanctions. By that I mean arrangements under the Covenant whereby, given a declaration by the League that an aggression has been committed, all the other members of the League are called upon automatically to apply sanctions. I have already reminded you of what sanctions ultimately mean, and it does seem to me that an automatic arrangement of this kind is almost always bound to create a difficulty for a group of States acting together. Each of these States is necessarily a sovereign State in itself, and the representatives of each State are answerable to their own public opinion, and the degree to which various States are likely to be affected by any particular action will vary between very wide extremes. That shows how difficult it is going to be to get the necessary measure of common agreement, and you will see that has exactly happened during the autumn and winter at Geneva.

I am quite sure, again looking back over the past year, that the earlier that consultation can take place among the nations the better. If war is once allowed to begin and the aggressor is named, the process becomes infinitely more difficult. Hence the importance of getting all the nations into the League, and then it may be possible to get a larger measure of agreement in developing what I might call the conciliatory functions of the League. In this modern age of rapid inter-communication between nations, I should count a good deal, if we could exercise time, upon the influence of the collective opinion the States in general would have at Geneva upon the potential aggressor.

It might well be the case that the States, if they find that their attempts at conciliation are ineffective, and do not provide the necessary deterrent, and if they decide that the occasion is one coming within the scope of the Covenant as we now know it, would then feel convinced that action, even of the kind we have recently taken—economic and financial sanctions—and, again, if backed up by further sanctions—was justified. I believe that reflection will show that a situation developing on lines like that would make an appeal to the peoples in different countries affected very much stronger than any appeal that could arise from the automatic application of sanctions.

COLLECTIVE SECURITY

OTHER NATIONS MUST PLAY THEIR PART

I do not know whether there are still people who hold out to us the prospect of pursuing a policy of isolation. Does any responsible person believe that we can remain indifferent, any more than France or Germany can, to the fate of any of our neighbours? The problem we have to attack now is to re-examine in the light of the past the whole question of sanctions and of collective security. The conclusion which may be arrived at will be a conclusion of the utmost importance to the future of Europe. What nations have to ask themselves is this: Are the nations of Europe ready to play their part in collective security, because in collective security there is no question of a limited partnership? You cannot be a sleeping partner in collective security. (Cheers.) Nor, on the other hand, does collective security mean that all the work is to be done by the British Navy for nations that do not look after themselves. (Cheers.)

If there were any possibility of a Socialist Government coming into power in the near future I should be terrified by the light-hearted way in which some of their leaders speak of war. (Hear, hear.) There seems to be an idea abroad, among some of the more enthusiastic supporters of the system of the League of Nations, that this country in conjunction with the League should enter light-heartedly into war. They do not realize that when war starts to-day, wherever it starts, no man can see where it will finish or where it will go; and in my view wherever, whenever, and however war is started it can be no question of a limited liability. Every country that goes into it is into it with every man and woman in that country. (Cheers.)

THE INTERNATIONAL MIND

Remember this, when you speak of collective security—and it is right I should point out the

do what you want, it does not mean that your desire is impossible of achievement. What it does mean is that you and all those who used that instrument without success must sit down and examine the instrument, modify, strengthen, alter it, embody in it, if you can, such changes as will make it effective for your purposes. (Cheers.)

Meantime, I need not tell you that I am not disposed, and I do not intend, to accept blame for what has happened. (Cheers.) It is all very well for those who do not hold positions of responsibility to say airily that we should have gone on alone. That is not the basis of a collective League of Nations. In fact, as is well known, we did more, much more, than anybody else. That is true from first to last throughout this unhappy dispute. Any doubt that may have existed as to whether we would be prepared to take action under Article XVI was removed by Sir Samuel Hoare's speech at Geneva last September, which was made after full and careful consideration by the Government. It was made plain that we would be ready to go with other nations in imposing and maintaining sanctions. The effect of that speech in revivifying the League and in stimulating it into a real effort to try out this machinery was admitted at the time, and to a point it was successful. I leave it to you to try and imagine what the situation would have been at Geneva had that speech never been made. And we alone took subsequent effective action of the kind which must be contemplated as part of the sanctions policy.

We moved our Fleet, we moved other forces, we incurred heavy expenditure amounting to many millions, and we played an active part at every stage of the sanctions discussions though we stood to lose greatly in trade and in other ways. I repeat what is well known to you to show how we have tried to be a good League member, acting from no personal feeling but from a desire to fulfil, so far as lay in our power, our obligations under the Covenant of the League. All these efforts failed to prevent war and they failed materially to affect the progress of hostilities. There must be many lessons to be drawn from this, and we and the other nations will have to do a great deal of hard thinking in the next two or three months.

AIMS FOR THE FUTURE

OUR OWN SAFETY FIRST

It would be folly to ignore our recent experience and what ought to determine the line of our own thoughts on this matter. What are the objects that we all have in mind? Speaking here to a British audience, can I be blamed if I put as the first object the safety of our own land and of the Empire? (Cheers.) But let me correct that word that runs so easily from our lips—our own land. That would have been true up to a few years ago, but, when you think of war and preserving people from it, it is not only our own land, it is our people, our men, our women, and our children. Next after that—and, if you like, part—of course, I put the peace of Europe and the peace of the world.

But our recent experience has made it plain beyond all doubt, not only to the Government but to the people, that we shall be entirely ineffective as regards these objects unless we have taken steps to secure the first, and that is the safety of our own land and people and of the Empire. It was that consideration that led the Government to decide that it was inevitable to provide plans for remedying deficiencies that had accumulated in our defence preparations, and it was for that that the people gave their verdict last autumn. Now that we have won a General Election on that question, in all this great programme that is being unfolded before the country there has never been a word of protest from the people of this country because they know that it has got to be.

It is no good spending time making up your mind whether you will or will not take part in effective action in support of the League unless you are in fact and in truth in a position to take action if action should be decided on. Nor is it any good to talk about economic and financial sanctions as if they were things apart, capable by themselves of overcoming the resistance which their very application would call forth. That is not, of course, to say that such sanctions may not be useful and important in the policy of deterrence which was one of the main reasons which led to the establishment of the League itself, but what it does mean is that such sanctions are unlikely to succeed unless the countries concerned are prepared to run the risk of war. In fact, military sanctions are an essen-

wherever, whenever, and however war is started it can be no question of a limited liability. Every country that goes into it is into it with every man and woman in that country. (Cheers.)

THE INTERNATIONAL MIND

Remember this, when you speak of collective security—and it is right I should point out the difficulties in accomplishing what we want to accomplish—that from the moment it goes into a war of aggression the aggressor is ready for war and nobody else is. Let me also remind you that in democratic countries Governments cannot go to war in the name of the League or of anybody else without the consent of their people, and are we quite sure in our own minds that the nations of Europe will march for any less threat than what they can themselves consider to be a threat to their own security? It may be that we have yet some long way to go before Europe as a whole has that international mind that will make the cause of one the cause of all.

These things have to be examined, and the statesmen of each country will have to satisfy themselves as to the answers they may get from the examination before they commit their peoples to what may lie before them. There is another thing. There is not a small country of Europe that has made any preparations to defend itself. What guarantee have we in fulfilling the Covenant of the League if it came to that last arbitration of war that many countries would be found engaged? It might well be that only one or two or three may be left to carry the whole burden; and it must be collective, or its equivalent, or the whole idea of the League is at fault.

These are the problems we have to examine, and they may not be capable of solution in a moment. It may well require much education. There has, I know, been much discussion, much explanation, and much education on this topic in this country. I do not think there has been very much in any other country, and much has to come if there is to be collective security. I have said so often in the course of last summer and autumn that we will try out collective security as far as we can all go together, and I will not despair even if after this first occasion it fails. We will try again to see where our scheme has gone wrong and where we can accomplish it. To that I pledge my word, but whether success will attend our efforts will lie in the lap of the gods. I have but one object to work for, apart from the well-being of our own people—and that is something on which their well-being depends—and that is the peace of our own people and the peace of the world. (Cheers.)

Before closing his speech, amid loud and prolonged cheering, Mr. Baldwin thanked the members of the Conservative women's organizations throughout the country for their loyalty and enthusiasm, and for their work during the General Election.

On the motion of Mrs. R. P. CROOM-JOHNSON, seconded by Lady Betty Trafford, a resolution was carried unanimously congratulating the National Government on the great strides which have been taken towards national recovery since its formation, and pledging it the utmost support in dealing with the many anxious problems which beset us at home and abroad.

LORD HALIFAX AND CHRISTIAN COLLEGES OF INDIA

LORD HALIFAX, Chancellor of Oxford University and former Viceroy of India, addressing a meeting at Oxford on Tuesday in connexion with the Christian Colleges of India Appeal, said that India was, by her geographical position, the bridge between the Middle East and the Far East, and, because of her contact with this country, the bridge between the Great East and the Great West. As such she would exercise an increasing influence on the future relationship between the coloured and non-coloured races of the world. It was because of her position that the influence of the Christian colleges would be of such vast importance. The Christian conception of moral law and the value of human personality was being challenged in many different ways. That was one reason why dictatorships and democracies which depended on human personality were such awkward bedfellows. Democracy could only exist by a true appreciation of the value of human personality, and it was because of this that Christianity and democracy should have close alliance.

An eighteenth-century house built upon arches is to be demolished to widen an approach to the market square at Winslow, Bucks.