

INTERNATIONAL ANARCHY?

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FIFTEEN years ago that unparalleled group of countries, "The Allied and Associated Powers", converged on Paris to establish a just and lasting peace. Fifteen years ago, with the lessons of the war horribly fresh in their memories and with the phrases of Wilsonian idealism on their lips, the statesmen and the experts plunged into that welter of conflicting interests known as the Peace Conference of Paris, announcing their aim of peace on a basis of justice. Harassed by personal economic worries, the average Canadian is sure to be a little tired of the issues of 1919; the problems of 1934 are more than enough. Yet 1919 was never closer to the very life of this, and of all, countries than it is now, fifteen years after.

From whatever point of view one may approach them, the issues of war and peace are fundamental. If it be the economic problem that looms largest, it takes no elaborate exposition to show the relation between war and economic hardship. There was a day when a nation and its people could add to their real wealth by successful war, but that day has gone. Now one can only lose in some degree. There was a day when the conduct of even a protracted war might make little difference to the peoples of the belligerent countries. That, too, has gone. It can hardly be doubted that the civilian populations would be directly attacked in any future war; and if there be any who have not already pictured the ghastliness of such a war, they can find more than enough detail in any one of several books.

There would be heroism, there would be self-sacrifice, there would be unselfishness in any war (as in any important human activity), but these would in no way compensate for the sordidness and incomparable destructiveness caused by the harnessing of modern science to destroy life and property by gas, fire, germs and explosives. This modern world, with all its boasted progress, has made no more startling scientific advance than in the purely destructive agencies it has created. The Frankenstein of our day has conjured up a creature which threatens to destroy him; he sees his danger; and makes but halting steps toward the control which he still can exercise.

The economic depression of the last four years has obscured, without materially affecting, the basic question of world order.

Particularly in Canada, removed by a happy geographical chance from any of the scenes of present friction, the burdened mortal seeks to minimize the critical nature of the present situation in international affairs. Through no virtue of their own, Canadians find themselves in perhaps as favourable a position in regard to world affairs as the people of any country. Removed by many comfortable miles of ocean from Europe, from the Far East, and from South America, Canada has now as her only neighbour a great power which has long since abandoned any imperialistic attitude towards her. As a member of the British Commonwealth, Canada is able to exercise in world affairs far more influence than her wealth and population would otherwise allow; and yet by recent constitutional change, she is apparently freed from any responsibilities. In these various ways, Canada can, to a considerable extent, accept the advantages and avoid the disadvantages of the status of both great and small powers.

So much for the assets, and they add up to an impressive size. But the liabilities have been increasing, too, and the balance is not as uneven as might appear. Canada, we believe, is essentially a peace-loving country; and since she has no serious quarrels, and such a favourable position in the world, can she be taken as having an interest in the world issue of peace or war? The answer is that all countries are peace-loving. Conscious of the possible boomerang that a modern war might prove, no country would become involved in one except in the pursuit of what it considered to be its essential interests or rights. That is the crux of the situation. It happens, fortunately, that at present Canada has no essential interests to strive for in the sense in which some states in Europe and the Far East have. All foreign policy is the pursuit of the special interests of individual countries. Such policy may, or may not, be conducive also to the peace and prosperity of the world at large, but it is not from altruistic motives that foreign policy springs.

Canada has, like other countries, selfish interests to promote in relation to other countries, the most obvious of which is the ability to carry on an export trade in wheat, minerals and forest-products. Without such exports, Canada would have to be given a new internal economy. A sudden stoppage of exports would lead to confusion and a lowering in the standard of living. It is all too easy to imagine a state of affairs in which this necessary outlet would be stopped.

It is fruitless to examine the degree of selfishness in the foreign policy of this or that country; at bottom all foreign policies are

selfish, whether they be active or passive, aggressive or peaceful. Some countries may, at any given time, be pursuing policies which threaten the peace of the world. We resent this, we blame them, when what we should be doing is to study the causes of their aggressive attitudes, and—further—the means required to keep them in check. Each country, according to its lights, may be merely seeking "legitimate interests", but it is the clashing of the interests of one with the interests of another that brings friction and the danger of conflict. Germany demands equality, France security. Can it be said that one is wrong, and the other right? In the vast majority of cases there is no such simple answer as this; often it is the clash of two rights that creates the worst friction.

In the international, as in the national, sphere two factors are needed for peaceful life: examination into the rights of each case (judicial procedure), and restraint of the principals from the use of force (police). For a number of reasons, the most important of which are quite obvious, it is not easy to make what is superficially a logical transfer from national to international government. For present considerations it may be assumed that states have no intention of conceding any appreciable amount of their sovereignty. The problem, therefore, is to construct some machinery by which anarchy (i. e., lack of order) can be replaced by orderly relations between states. Or, to use the contemporary phrase, there is needed a "collective system", by which states would act together rather than individually.

Thus we are brought back to 1919. The idea of a permanent society of nations was, in 1919, centuries old. Even if we go back only to the Middle Ages we find thinkers, impressed by the appalling consequences to human life of anarchical relations between states, attempting to construct machinery for collective action. No great success in practice can be found, but it is interesting to find a French delegate to the Second Hague Conference in 1907 crying triumphantly, "La Société des Nations est créée". The war of 1914 was a lesson more vivid, more painful, than any previous one in the necessity of controlling the relations between states. Thus, very naturally, very properly, the idea of a league of nations was revived—not in any one country or by any one man, but spontaneously in several parts of the world.

The Covenant of the League was tied closely to the Treaties of Peace. Nowadays this is interpreted as an attempt to secure the *status quo*. It was probably not meant as such, but rather as following the Wilsonian principle that the new Europe and the new international relations were integrally connected. It is all

too well known that the Conference of Paris failed to live up to the standard that had been set for it, and the signs of that failure are written all over the Treaties of Peace. Yet the treaties fade: reparations have disappeared, inequality in armaments is in process of disappearing, and many of the temporary clauses, trial of the Kaiser, military occupation, etc., are gone if not forgotten. The territorial settlement, while on the whole not nearly as bad as it has sometimes been painted, requires to be reconsidered and perhaps modified. The treaties have produced irritants, as they were bound to do, and the world cannot afford to allow the continuance of any irritants that can be removed:—for they spell trouble over an area of unknown extent.

While the treaties fade, the other problem of 1919 becomes more and more distinct: is it possible to establish collective action in international affairs in place of the anarchy that is a danger to all? The League has done less than optimists, and more than pessimists, thought it could do. It stands badly shaken by the events of the last three years, but it stands. Around it have been built up a series of general and special agreements which complete the structure of the "collective system"—the Pact of Paris, the General Act, the Four-Power Pact, etc. There is nothing sacrosanct about the League—except the principle for which it stands, and that principle is of fundamental importance to Canada as to all other countries. The failure of the League would mean nothing more or less than that the forces of nationalism had proved stronger than the forces of internationalism. The League is only the barometer of international action, and a ready means by which the states, if they wish to do so, may enforce order and international decency.

Some states have consistently supported the League, others have given it less steady support, and still others have been its enemies, while a few have never been members. In each case the states concerned have acted according to interest rather than to principle. Of the great powers, France belongs to the first class; England and Italy to the second; Germany and Japan to the third; and the United States and Russia to the fourth. France sees in the League one means of preserving the *status quo* in Europe; England is torn between her interests in Europe and her old desire for isolation; Italy seeks to play the part of a leading great power; Japan left the League because it opposed her imperialistic designs; the United States saw more danger than safety to herself in it; and Russia has so far played apart from the capitalistic states.

Apart from short periods when there were no outstanding disagreements between states (and usually at the same time press-

ing domestic problems), history knows of only three methods of preserving peace: (1) The domination of one state, (2) the balance of power, (3) collective action. Of these the first can succeed only after a series of wars, and carries with it the seeds of its own destruction; the second is precarious and liable to produce war as well as peace; and the third has hardly been tried. This essay is concerned not with the causes of wars, which are many, but with means of controlling international relations so as to replace trial by combat with judicial or quasi-judicial procedure. It is assumed here that war (i.e., organized fighting, whether declared as war or not) is one of the supreme evils. There is war in South America and there is war in the Far East. There is also possibility of war in Europe. The League has failed to stop these wars. But it is well to remember that other means have equally failed. The forces of national diplomacy have made no more headway than has the League. The Four-Power Treaty and the Nine-Power Treaty have been broken just as decisively as the Covenant (or as the Treaty guaranteeing Belgian neutrality).

The Far East is a long way from Halifax, but is it far from Vancouver? Would a war between Japan and the United States lead to the use of British Columbia as a battlefield? How would a more widespread war in South America affect Canadian economic interests there? How would any war involving the naval powers affect Canadian trade? All these questions leave aside both principles and morals, and refer only to selfish interest. And that, perhaps, is the best ground on which the collective system can be defended. Not necessarily at any given moment, but over a long period, the interest of any state is to support international order, and to look to collective machinery, however that may be organized. No state can be so strong that it has nothing to fear from its neighbours, or can afford to invite hostility by ruthless aggression. Spain, France and Germany had all to learn that lesson. Does it mean nothing to Japan? And no state is so placed that it can assume, always, complete immunity from world disorder.

The place of Canada in the League has been a curious one. The fact that Canada, with the other Dominions, became a separate member of the League has been hailed as the mark of sovereignty (although erroneously, as India is also a member); and her entrance into the League coincided with the period in which Canada began to take some part in formulating and pursuing her own foreign policy. There has, therefore, been some confusion in Canada between enthusiasm for the League, *qua* League, and as the vehicle

for carrying the Dominion into equality in world affairs. In spite of this confusion, however, there has been a genuine belief in the League in Canada, and it may be taken that the country as a whole approves of it. When the actual policy of Canada in the League is considered, however, the story is less clear. There are few countries which have more to gain from a completely successful League than has Canada. She is, territorially, a saturated country; but her territory is highly vulnerable. With a small population and large area, she has a primary interest in the maintenance of the *status quo*. Further, as a country dependent for prosperity on world trade, she must look to freedom of the seas. There are, however, two factors which complicate Canadian policy: (1) Though vitally concerned for the *status quo* in North America, she is not, as are some European countries, "exposed", and is therefore not anxious to commit herself to sweeping guarantees. (2) Canada to some extent shares the view of the United States in regard to the guarantee of the *status quo*, and seeks (even if sometimes unconsciously) to further United States general policy at Geneva. From these two factors has arisen the Canadian opposition to Article X in particular, and to guarantees in general.

It seems quite clear that the trend in all continents is away from any concession of sovereignty, and that the path to a super-state is closed. It is, however, conceivable that nationalism may be controlled in its external expressions, even if its technical limits are not curtailed. It is in this direction that an effective collective system must be sought. Success can be achieved only if the great majority of states put their best work into League business. Unless the Italian proposals lead to a general re-consideration of the text and re-interpretation of the Covenant (and it is unlikely that this will happen), it is probably safer not to probe too far into the present or future state of sanctions. What one hopes to see in Canada is a more realistic conception of the League as "an instrument of national policy." So far, the issues before the League have been treated lightly by the press, almost ignored by parliament, and given only passing notice by the Governments. This, of course, is to some extent merely a reflection of the general lack of interest in foreign affairs in Canada, which is an unfortunate heritage of the days of colonial status. It has not yet been generally realized that sovereignty is much more than a national ornament.

The present condition in world affairs bears an unhappy resemblance to that existing between 1908 and 1914. The same general refusal to recognize the seriousness of the issue, a few

voices crying in the wilderness, a few statesmen struggling to reconcile national interests with peaceful relations! There is one significant difference: that there does exist machinery by which national ambitions could be checked, and international rivalries regulated. The basic fault lies not with the statesmen (though many of them are quite inadequate), but with the peoples. The theory of the "pacific peoples" is a half-truth. They are pacific in the sense that they don't want war, but not in their efforts to avoid it; and are often war-like in the demands they make. Peace will not come without effort. "Seek peace *and* ensue it". The pressure for international order must come from below within each country, and from the individual countries in a collective system. The League has many weaknesses, but the chief one is that its component parts are lukewarm. Revise it by all means, call it by another name; move it to another city, if necessary,—but make it real: and, as Old Bill wisely remarked, "If you knows of a better 'ole, then go to it!"