

United States Leads Again

The United States again takes the lead. General Pershing, speaking for the American Advisory Group, recommends to the American delegates the exclusion of all chemicals in warfare. It is intimated that this does not represent a unanimous opinion among high military authorities, but it will appeal to common sense and to common humanity. While war at its best is little better than war at its worst, every friend of peace will go just as far as possible towards suppressing brutality and this means the elimination, step by step, of everything which has for its purpose the destruction of life. It is mortifying to the American conscience to have to admit that this nation's vote was cast in the last Hague Conference against the exclusion of poisonous gas. Captain Mahan, one of the highest naval authorities, controlled the policy of the American delegation and threw the influence of this nation upon the side of this method of warfare. The American boys who suffered the torture that poisonous gas inflicts will find little comfort in the thought that their nation shared responsibility for its continued use.

It may be assured that the American delegates have already been consulted and that they will soon propose this prohibition to the conference and it is also safe to predict that the conference will adopt the suggestion. Thus a new victory will be won for peace.

The magnitude of this revolution in methods of warfare will be better understood when it is remembered that chemical combinations have contributed the most deadly additions made in recent years to the instruments of war. The titanic power, or better the Satanic power, of these new inventions have tremendously increased the horrors of the battlefield. The new gases and liquids not only spread death among combatants, but, when they get beyond control, are as destructive among non-combatants. If, as General Sherman said, war was hell sixty years ago, by what term can its wickedness be described today!

By all means exclude as much of the cruelty of war as possible—the more the better, and at once. The Advisory Board should be applauded for giving this advice; General Pershing will not suffer as a military man for this contribution toward the outlawing of barbarous and inhuman methods.

W. J. BRYAN.

CHINA GAINING RECOGNITION

The agreement reached by the Nine Powers to give up postal privileges in China will greatly delight the Chinese people and greatly encourage the government at Peking. The presence of post offices conducted by foreign governments has been more than a mortification; it has been a real injury to the home government. China has had competitors in a matter which in other countries is a government monopoly. The agreement to withdraw these postal privileges is in harmony with the spirit of this Conference; it is additional proof that the key-note struck by Secretary Hughes on the first day of the session is to run through the entire proceedings.

While China is securing numerous concessions it must be remembered that she had a large number of grievances.

One of the most obnoxious limitations against which she protests is the restriction placed upon her custom duties. One of her early treaties restrains her from levying a tariff of more than 5 per cent on imports. Of course, she never entered into any such treaty voluntarily—no nation would of her own volition make any such surrender of her taxing power. As soon as this treaty was published, all the other nations, great and small, claimed the same privilege under "the most favored nation clause." That is, they demanded the same tariff concessions given to the most favored nations. This provision in her treaties has greatly hampered China in the raising of revenues and has made it difficult for her to secure the money necessary to satisfy creditors and to pay interest on obligations.

If the spirit thus far manifested continues to dominate the Conference, there will be a modification of this restriction. In fact, China may expect a removal of all discriminations that interfere with her legitimate aspirations.

The question of land armaments seems to be in a state of suspended animation. It awaits news from Germany or the announcement of some form of assurance which will allay the fears of France.

The association of nations plan grows apace.

Ex-Senator Sutherland, who is close to the American Delegation, explains that the form of cooperation favored is not in line with the Covenant of the League of Nations. It does not contemplate the exercise of force; the finding, if such there be, will not be binding on the nations. Its influence will be moral rather than physical. Its value will be measured by the extent to which the Conference generates the world disposition towards peace, mentioned by Secretary Hughes.

The treaties negotiated by the United States with thirty nations were built upon the same plan. They provided for the investigation of ALL questions of every kind of character that defied diplomatic settlement and they pledged the nations to a year's time for investigation and report. But they expressly reserved to the contracting parties the right of independent action at the conclusion of the investigation. This reservation of independent action was omitted from the Covenant of the League of Nations. Article 10, which was substituted for this reservation was largely responsible for the opposition to the Covenant as presented. President Harding could hardly be expected to propose a plan containing any provision resembling Article 10 but he can, with entire consistency, offer a plan in harmony with the thirty treaties, because the Senate unanimously endorsed these treaties. The thirty treaty plan offers the line of least resistance and is consistent with the general purposes of the Conference.

W. J. BRYAN.

EXPERTS UNDER DIRECTION

The experts of the United States and Great Britain seem to think that the naval facts support the sixty per cent proportion offered to Japan, but the naval experts of Japan seem to arrive at a different conclusion; in their judgment naval facts seem to support a seventy per cent proportion. The world should not be alarmed at a failure of experts to agree. It is a poor controversy that cannot find experts to support both sides. In an insanity trial the alienists are usually divided. One group see insanity in every movement of the accused; the other group see conclusive proof that the accused was rational when the deed was done. Even health experts do not always agree. When Chicago wanted to send her sewerage down the Canal and through the Illinois river into the Mississippi, St. Louis objected. St. Louis experts showed that the health of St. Louis was in danger, while the experts from Chicago demonstrated that the flowing water purified itself before it reached St. Louis, and some insisted that the Mississippi river was even improved.

Don't bother about the experts. The important question is what is desired by the governments that employ the experts. Let the governments agree to what is DESIRED, and the experts can get together and show how it can be accomplished most easily and most quickly.

What a thing discussion is—especially in the open. If Secretary Hughes had confidentially communicated his disarmament proposition to the other powers and they had made private answer the world would still be in darkness and in doubt as to the outcome of the conference, but an open statement to the world brought an immediate response, and the world turned about and faced toward peace. It used to be that great crowds gathered to witness the launching of a new battleship. As the "most destructive craft ever built" (as each new ship was described) plunged into the water for the first time a shout of joy went up from the watching multitude. What a change has taken place! They will soon begin the scrapping of battleships and larger crowds will assemble and the shouts will be louder still when the first hammer's blow announces that the smashing has commenced. The pathway that leads from the lowest plane to which man can fall up to the highest plane to which man may rise is thronged with travelers, some ascending, some descending. The question we ask is not just where the traveler is, but in what direction he is going. Those who are starting from the bottom will some day meet and pass those who are starting from the top. So there is a pathway leading from the abyss of war to the summit of peace. The question is not so much just where a nation is on that incline, but whether it is ascending or descending. The world descended until it could look down into the abyss of universal bankruptcy. It seems to be turning and this conference will mark a change in direction. The conference deliberations will not take the world to the top, but it seems now certain that the upward progress will be great enough to make a world rejoice in the belief that war will be put on the road to ultimate extinction.

W. J. BRYAN.

Lessons in Imperialism

The arms conference has given the delegates and foreign newspaper men a chance to become acquainted with the American attitude on international questions. Our visitors see a nation that regards world peace as not only possible, but very desirable. They observe no evidence of an armed force. While they will see more men in uniform in Washington than anywhere else, they are not numerous even in the nation's capital, and their manners do not impress the observer with the idea that they play a prominent part in the nation. Outside of Washington the visitors scarcely see a soldier, and they hear very little of the things that pertain to war. They are returning home with a vision of what is possible when the government is in the hands of the masses and receives its inspiration from those who produce the wealth of the richest nation in the world.

The people of the United States are also learning something, and what they learn will tend to increase their devotion to peace and their opposition to anything imperialistic. They see that all the questions that give any trouble at the conference grow out of imperialism. It is only where the doctrine of self determination, so insistently recommended by President Wilson, is ignored that trouble arises. Although the conference has been in session less than a month, outlying possessions and outlying commercial interests have already twice clouded the skies. Great Britain and France, who were mutually dependent upon each other in the recent war, have found themselves at outs—not a serious altercation, but enough to indicate graver possibilities. Then there was a flare-up between France and Italy—not fatal to friendship, but irritating. The acute questions of the Orient grow out of spheres of influence forced upon weaker nations and the occupancy of territory which must be held, if at all, by force. America finds that there is one tree in the garden, the fruit of which is forbidden, if the nation would avoid international complication, and that tree is imperialism. Because our people are increasingly impressed with the dangers that follow in the wake of imperialism they are increasingly opposed to any sort of alliance that will make us share, in an armed way, in the controversies that continually arise because of conflicting financial interests. The Association of Nations proposed by President Harding will contain no provision that will involve us in other peoples' quarrels, unless our congress, acting with entire freedom, shall consider it a proper cause for declaration of war. The conference aside from its direct results, which now promise to be very great, will impress two lessons—one upon the visitors and one upon this country. Those who come from abroad will see what a nation can be when it contents itself with the development of its own country, and our people will learn what troubles come when a foreign government throws the net of its authority over a people who are helpless (or supposed helpless), as a fowler throws a net over birds.

W. J. BRYAN.

THE FULLNESS OF TIME

The Bible phrase, "The fullness of time," extends into the field of politics and conveys a very important idea. Reforms do not come until the time is RIPE for them, just as fruit cannot be gathered until it is matured. The question may be asked, "Why did not the Paris Conference do the work that this Conference is doing?" Simply because it was held in the midst of the war harvest. The fruits of peace were not then ripe. One side was victorious and the minds of those who led the triumphant hosts were laboring under the pressure of the memories of that awful struggle. Bloodstains could be seen everywhere and tears were still flowing. The gaping wounds made by the great conflict still stirred the hearts of those who participated in the conference and the vanquished were in no better mood for the consideration of the problems that came with peace. Even in America, the war left an aftermath of militarism that found expression in an attempt to fasten upon this nation a system of universal compulsory military training that would have cost—horrible nightmare—seven hundred millions of dollars a year.

But all is changed now; the reaction against war is in full swing. Those who breathe threatenings and slaughter have retired into the background and the evangels of a better day are appearing in all lands. When men are excited,