

Long Strides Toward Permanent Peace

On the first day of the fourteenth conference of the Inter-parliamentary Union held at London, July 23, the report of the Brussels commission, giving a proposed model arbitration treaty, was made. This model treaty is to be submitted to the next conference at The Hague. Some of the details of the proceedings of the London meeting will be found in another column of this issue.

Mr. Bryan offered to the model arbitration treaty, the following amendment:

"If a disagreement should occur between contracting parties which in the terms of the proposed arbitration treaty need not be submitted to arbitration, they shall, before declaring war or engaging in any hostilities whatever, submit the question to The Hague court or some other impartial international tribunal for investigation and report, each party reserving the right to act independently afterward."

On the following day, Mr. Bryan's amendment was unanimously adopted after being changed in phraseology so as to read:

"If a disagreement should arise which is not included in those to be submitted to arbitration the contracting parties shall not resort to any act of hostility before they separately or jointly invite, as the case may necessitate, the formation of the international commission of inquiry or mediation of one or more friendly powers, this requisition to take place, if necessary, in accordance with article VIII of The Hague convention providing for a peaceful settlement of international conflicts."

The Inter-parliamentary Union met in 1904 at the world's fair in St. Louis. At this St. Louis meeting, the union called upon the president of the United States to take the initiative in calling a new inter-governmental conference to take up the work left unfinished at The Hague conference in 1899. Under the instructions of the president, the American secretary of state sent, in October 1904, notes to representatives of other governments in line with the suggestion made at the St. Louis conference. Favorable responses were received from all the powers. The Russian government, while expressing its sympathy with the plan, suggested that the conference be postponed until after the conclusion of the war with Japan. As soon as peace was declared between Russia and Japan, Russia recommended to the president of the United States that the conference at The Hague, as proposed at the St. Louis convention, be called. It is to this conference that the model arbitration treaty will be submitted.

Mr. Bryan has long urged the adoption of the plan which, by the action of the London gathering, seems certain to be incorporated in an international arbitration agreement.

Writing in The Commoner, of February 17, 1905, protesting against the continuation of the war between Russia and Japan, Mr. Bryan said: "There has been killing enough on both sides to satisfy that absurd sense of honor which requires bloodshed. There never was a time when the Christian nations were under a more imperative duty to throw their influence on the side of peace, and the United States can well afford to take the lead because our relations with both Russia and Japan are such as to relieve us of any suspicion of selfish interest. And when peace is restored our nation should take the initiative in promoting a system of arbitration so comprehensive that all differences will be submitted to the arbitration court, reserving to each nation the right to refuse to accept the finding if it believes that it affects its honor or integrity. Such a system would make war a remote possibility."

While treaties were pending before the senate during the winter of 1905, and writing in The Commoner of February 24, 1905, Mr. Bryan said: "It is possible, however, to provide for the impartial investigation of any international dispute, leaving the final submission to arbitration to be a matter of treaty. The president might be authorized to enter into an agreement to submit any and every international dispute to The Hague court for investigation. When the court reports upon the facts and presents the real issue between the parties, then the parties can decide intelligently whether it involves a proper question for arbitration or affects the integrity and honor of either nation. Such an investigation would, in most cases, remove misunderstanding and bring about a reconciliation and public opinion would exert a powerful influence in harmonizing any differences which might be found to exist. Such a plan would

do more to promote peace than the plan embodied in the treaties submitted by the president. If such a plan had been in operation the Russian-Japanese war might have been prevented. It is quite certain that a preliminary investigation by an impartial board would have prevented most of the international wars of the last half century, and would be still more effective in the future."

In The Commoner of September 15, 1905, Mr. Bryan addressed an open letter to President Roosevelt. This letter was entitled "A Plan for Permanent Peace," and was as follows: "To President Roosevelt: Circumstances placed you in a position where, as chief executive of the nation, you were able to bring Russia and Japan together to effect an honorable peace.

"You performed your duty in a manner creditable to yourself and to your country. You have been hailed as a peacemaker and you realize how the peaceful victory thus achieved by you outshines your military exploits. Why not use the present opportunity to put on foot a movement for the establishment of permanent peace? Last winter you asked for authority to enter into agreements which would be in effect arbitration treaties and the senate (wisely, I believe) refused to surrender the treaty making power. But now if you had been intrusted with the authority asked you would have hesitated to submit a question involving the nation's honor and it is not always possible to know in advance what questions may be involved. Why not ask congress for authority to submit all international questions (when an agreement can not be reached by parties interested) to an impartial board for investigation and report. Investigation will, in nearly every case, remove the cause of complaint and reconcile the parties. Questions which a nation might be unwilling to submit to arbitration in advance could be settled by investigation by an impartial international board.

"It was a glorious thing to end the war between the Russ and the Jap but it would have been more glorious to have prevented the war and saved the frightful loss of life. The moral prestige which our nation now enjoys would in all probability enable it to lead a successful peace movement. The congratulations which you have received from the heads of European governments strengthen the chances of success. If the leading nations of the world would enter into an agreement to join in the creation of such a board and pledge themselves to submit all disputes to the board for investigation before declaring war the danger of war would be reduced to a minimum. Few men have had it in their power to do so much for humanity—will you improve the opportunity?"

In his speech before the American Society at London, July 4, 1906, Mr. Bryan said: "The Christian nations must lead the movement for the promotion of peace, not only because they are enlisted under the banner of the Prince of Peace, but also because they have attained such a degree of intelligence that they can no longer take pride in a purely physical victory. The belief that moral questions can be settled by the shedding of human blood is a relic of barbarism; to doubt the dynamic power of righteousness is infidelity to truth itself. The nation which is unwilling to trust its cause to the universal conscience or which shrinks from the presentation of its claims before a tribunal where reason holds sway, betrays a lack of faith in the soundness of its position. I venture to suggest that the world's peace would be greatly promoted by an agreement among the leading nations that no declaration of war should be made until the submission of the question in controversy to an impartial court for investigation, each nation reserving the right to accept or reject the decision. The preliminary investigation would in almost every instance insure an amicable settlement and the reserved rights would be a sufficient protection against any possible injustice."

The work for peace at London must give great encouragement to those who hope to live to see war become a thing of the past. In the light of the results of the London conference we may say, in the language used by Mr. Bryan some time ago: "We have reason to believe that the light of a better day is dawning, and that we are about to enter upon an era in which concession will assert its supremacy over brute force, and the crown of victory be awarded, not to the nation that has the largest army or the strongest navy, but to the nation that sets the best example and contributes the most to the welfare of the world. When Elijah was fleeing from the wrath of wicked Jezebel and believed all the prophets

to have been slain, the Lord commanded him to stand upon the mountain, and as he stood there, a mighty wind swept by him and rent the rocks asunder, but God was not in the wind; and after the wind came an earthquake, but God was not in the earthquake; and after the earthquake, a fire; but God was not in the fire; and after the fire, a still, small voice, and it was the voice of God. And so, today, throughout the world an increasing number, standing upon the heights, are coming to believe that God is not in the ironclads that sweep the ocean with their guns, that God is not in the armies that shake the earth with their tread, or in the fire of musketry, but in the still, small voice of justice that issues from tribunals like that instituted at The Hague."

THE PRIMARY PLEDGE

As this copy of The Commoner may be read by some one not familiar with the details of the primary pledge plan, it is necessary to say that according to the terms of this plan every democrat is asked to pledge himself to attend all of the primaries of his party to be held between now and the next democratic national convention, unless unavoidably prevented, and to secure a clear, honest and straight-forward declaration of the party's position on every question upon which the voters of the party desire to speak. Those desiring to be enrolled can either write to The Commoner approving the object of the organization and asking to have their names entered on the roll, or they can fill out and mail the blank pledge, which is printed on page 15.

Extracts from letters received at The Commoner office follow:

H. L. Taylor, New Dale, W. Va.—Enclosed find twenty signatures to the primary pledge.

Harry Howard, Latham, Mo.—Enclosed find my primary pledge. Yet, as my hobby is to attend democratic meetings, my signing it will be of little avail. I am twenty-one years old, and will cast my first vote in the coming election; but don't worry over me, for I have studied democratic principles since I was ten years old, more studiously than I have studied my school books, and I have tried not to neglect them. I am not washed with weeds, but am dyed in the purple. Have read almost every issue of The Commoner and consider it very instructive. Now as the people seem to be indulging in a little bit of unusual independent thinking, why can't one of the editors write an article urging these thinking ones to turn their thoughts and efforts toward controlling and making the parties what they want them to be, instead of looking upon them with suspicion and forsaking them? I am a strong believer in partisan politics, and can see no way for the cause of good government to be furthered, except through the organized efforts of the people. Anything else would simply mean confusion. Of course the interests of the party can not be above the welfare of the people generally, but every serious effort to reform a party to an extent advantages the interests of the people, and every expression of indifference is hurtful to their cause. Best wishes for the success of the democratic party.

G. B. Welch, Geneva, Neb.—I have often thought I would add a mite in aid of the staunch democratic principles for which we stand. A brother democrat inquired, "In what way would you name or express your present status?" I would give expression in the following: "Am a Jeffersonian democrat and a Lincoln republican," and the brother expressed his approval of the same. Our forefathers suffered, bled, fought and died that we might have freedom from oppression and will we sit still and let the oppressor tie our hands by legislation until we are in a worse state than was the African slave? This reminds me of old England's tactics. If she couldn't whip us by force of arms, she will undermine us by diplomacy or buying us off. I may be writing some old time facts, but the rational and fundamental truth remains the same; we all have an inherited right to the Almighty's domain (a portion) if we prove ourselves worthy citizens. I believe The Commoner an important factor to aid in purifying and upholding an elevated standard of honest government. I have already spoken of your excellent paper and will endeavor to spread its usefulness.