

DO PEDDRE WANT THE LEAGUE!

The people of this country give a pretty fair ^{imitation} indication of the Sphinx. You may think you know what they will say when the time is due for them to open their mouths and speak, but the truth is, a good part of the country is always mistaken. At the present moment, for instance, as far as actual evidence goes one man's ^{notion} ~~claim~~ of what the country really thinks about the Peace Treaty and the League of Nations is about as good as another's. He leans toward the opinion that it thinks with him. Precise proof is most difficult to dig up. I speak from experience for I spent ten weeks of the last summer trying to find out opinion in five great Western states. It was a fairly close contact for I was speaking daily - every day in a different town and speaking on the Peace Conference and the League as I saw them through four months sitting on the side line in Paris. I was trying to give my audiences some idea of the machinery there and for my reason for believing though the men at the Conference ^{and not} showed themselves supermen, they did prove themselves very creditable fighters and that they had turned out in the League the most practical scheme we've yet had for ^{wide} world organization and one that carried with it both the obligation and the machinery to correct itself and its treaty when wither proved defective.

I was speaking on the most democratic of professional platforms - the Chautauque Circuit. There was no biased organization of any sort behind me, ~~and~~ I was free to talk as I wished and my audiences to heckle, leave or applaud. They did very little of any of the three. They listened and often as I met them afterwards, generally accidentally, they frankly expressed their views. From this

kind of contact I came out with several rather strong notions how the people in this territory at least are thinking.

They think much more about the League than about the Treaty. The Treaty ends the war, but the League proposes to prevent further wars and that is what they have at heart. The Treaty may be good or bad, few of them seem to know or be concerned as to that, but the League:- "It's a good scheme"; "It's the only way"; "It's common sense". - how often I have heard this conclusion from all sorts of men and women. If they little or none of the millennial optimism which lays hold of some natures when they talk of the League, they have nothing of the contemptuous doubt which effects others.

But you can not be among them long without suspecting that they believe in a League rather than in the League. The fact is they have been educated to the idea, but not to the thing we now have before us. Mr. Taft and the fine organization behind him has been talking the country into the notion for some years now. But we mustn't forget that for years before Mr. Taft and his colleagues became active a great number of individuals went about the land "voices crying in the wilderness". Among our Chautaugua directors this summer for instance was a Mr. Reed of Roseburg, Oregon, who ten years ago used ^{up} a great lump of his earthly substance in running a newspaper in Portland, advocating a League of Nations. He not only did this unworldly thing, but he used to go through the country hiring halls at his own expense preaching his doctrine. Mr. Reed can certainly be forgiven if he looked with derision upon those of us who are now paid to present to the public the idea that ten years ago he couldn't persuade the public to listen to when he paid! But

who can tell how much of the matter-of-fact way the Northwest take the League is due to such forerunners as he.

The disinterestedness that has been behind the Eastern Crusade has helped no doubt in fixing the idea in the minds of people as a moral obligation. There is no ~~doubt~~ I concluded that they looked on it as a duty, something we went into because we ought - not for our own sakes, but for the world's sake - a sort of Big Brotherhood in Nations.

This notion of the League as a duty makes it impossible for them as a rule to treat it as a partisan matter. It shocks them find either party trading on it. It is soiling something that they have been accepting as a big ideal that we must try to realize.

But whether they were of the stuff to be shocked at the partisan use of the notion or not, I think that pretty much everywhere they were ashamed of the way they were being represented in the Senate. It was not the ~~fact~~ of opposition which disgusted them so much as its quality. They were keen enough to see as a rule that it wasn't a solid well-considered front that their Senators were putting up; that they had from the start been jumping now at this stand and now at that, in an effort to find something that didn't give way in their hands, and they hadn't done it. They were ashamed that their men were not showing up well.

When it came to the League there was much less certainty. They often seemed to me a good deal alarmed lest what we were getting into were ~~not~~ a League to make wars instead of a League to keep the Peace. A speaker soon finds what his audiences takes hold of

hardest. I found that many of my hearers regarded almost as news simple explanations of provisions that are on the very face of the Covenant. The opposition has been much more successful in ^{awakening} ~~ans-~~ wering their doubts about its working than the advocates in showing them how it really does work. The truth is the backers of the League of Nations have not done their part in demonstrating their machine. They have sold the general idea, but they are in danger of having the sale cancelled because they haven't followed up their generalities by getting down to cases and proving that it is made to go.

The fact that the League provides for an international Congress made up of representatives of different nations, that they meet regularly and discuss all sorts of ~~new~~ world affairs as our Congress does national affairs - the first and most obvious feature of the League - was news to many. The arrangements for bureaus and commissions to handle co-operatively world problems and activities struck others as news. "They didn't know this" they would tell me. They hadn't been made to see the League functioning. They had not conceived it definitely as a body which discussed, investigated, made decisions, struggled to settle disturbances and to bring different countries into line for this or that improved procedure. All this interested them for it showed them there was a machinery devised for the purpose of doing things they understood in ways they understood.

They were always most attentive to any attempt to show what members of the League were obligated to do before they went to war. The attacks on article X seems to have given rise to a confused

notion that it is a pledge to fight immediately when any where is attacked by another nation. That the berated article provides merely that the Council of the League take a case of aggression up and give its opinion as to what should be done - and that ~~it~~ advice has no binding power on any nation as far as going to war is concerned, that nobody had ever told the majority of my audiences, I am sure.

The provision for putting the facts in a dispute before a committee of the League for examination - the obligation to wait upon their ~~discussion~~ decision, the way the decision and the reasons for it go to the world so that an informed public opinion has an opportunity to put in its restraining bar - the obligation to wait three months ~~later~~ after this decision is given in. - ~~all~~ this hindering and moderating action seemed quite new to many, and few of them had, I think, grasped the force in economic pressure - the real power the League has in its hands - the power to cut off an unreasonable or treacherous member from trade.

One of the weaknesses of the presentation has evidently been reassuring the public about injustices or errors that may have occurred in planning the Treaty. I was amazed at the number of people who said to me "Why, I didn't know they could correct or change anything, I thought everything was settled for good and all".

When I came to sense this I never failed to quote article X~~ix~~ which has always seemed to me one of the saving clauses - the provision that if a treaty is 'inapplicable' - which I take it to mean unworkable, - or if any existing international relation is in danger of bringing about war the League obligates itself to consider the trouble ~~with it~~.

What shall we do about it?

Look at it in any way you will and there is nothing that people, who believe that war is the most stupid and fruitless occupation that human beings practice, do about the present barbaric exhibits of the world. There is nothing we can do to stop the Japanese; there is nothing we can do to stop the Spanish. The most humane and the most civilized things that human beings can do today is to let them destroy themselves. True, if a runaway car is coming down the hill you may out of mercy and alarm for the occupants jump on the running board if you can catch it. But what good would that do? You better be at the bottom for the inevitable crash. There better be one whole person to help the inevitable sufferers.

Taking sides and throwing oneself into the melee will do nothing to stop it. Talk does nothing to stop it. There is but one real long range contribution to make, and that is to find out why we didn't stop it before it began. Why were we so blind, we who had believed in and encouraged the League of Nations? Or if not a League of Nations had had our on continual defeat. Why were we not getting at and doing something about the causes of all this?