Relation of Disarmament

Even if the proposed Disarmament Conference should disband, leaving things as they are, it would be worth holding. The failure would compel explanations. We would know better why we arm at all. There is nothing more nebulous on earth now than the reasons given for the United States' spending hundreds of millions a year for an army and navy. If we get nothing more out of the Disarmament Conference than materials for making a clear and trustworthy summary and classification of the reasons for this expenditure, we shall have made a substantial gain. We shall then know how large a part of the argument for armaments is based on superstitition, tradition, fear, gree - how small on wise foresight, providing against real dangers.

If the Disarmament Conference succeeds in bringing about any degree of limitation, it will be because each of the nations interested frankly and publicly puts all its cards on the table, analyses its fears and suspicions and explains any desires it may have to expand. If each nation comes to the Conference with an honest intention to demonstrate clearly to its confreres the soundness of what is in its mind, and with a willingness to abandon its position if convinced that it is

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fears are groundless or its desires dangerous to the peace of the world, we shall certainly see a substantial disarmament.

To cut armaments and leave the reasons that are now keeping nations in arms indefinite and undisturbed is small insurance against war, for armaments are the tools and not, to any appreciable degree, the causes of wars. Moreover, they are tools easily extemporized. Witness the experience of England, of France and particularly of the United States in the recent Great War. There will not be full frankness in dealing with the thoughts that are now actuating the various nations unless there be a very large degree of open discussion, open voting. There must of course be frequent executive sessions. Committee work must in the nature of things be carried on for the most part before closed doors, for it is a work of preparation, sifting, classifying, expediting business. But the great business of presenting and meeting the reasons for armaments now in the minds of the nations concerned, should be carried on in the open, if we are to get real and permanent results.

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