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LABOR AND THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS.

Interview With Lieut.-Colonel Stewart Murray, Labor Department of the League of Nations Union.

Will the League of Nations, in its present form, really constitute an effective means for preventing future wars and guaranteeing popular peace? That is a question now being asked, not only by people generally, but by many who at first had high hopes that the League of Nations would substitute some reliable guarantee that the terrible experiences of the last few years will not be repeated, at any rate within the lifetime of this and the next two generations. Much has happened since the armistice of November, 1918, to cause grave doubts to arise, and to make it clear that no League of Nations can guarantee the future peace of the world unless it develops from a quad League of Governments into a real League of Peoples.

The League of Nations Union is a "British organization founded to promote the formation of a World of Free Peoples for the Securing of International Justice, Mutual Defense and Permanent Peace." Excellent, but how is it proceeding to do it? Its president is Viscount Grey of Fallodon; its honorary presidents, Lloyd George, Arthur J. Balfour, and H. H. Asquith; among its vice-presidents the only active representative of Labor is J. R. Clynes. Not a very "popular" body at first sight, is it? But it has a Labor Department, so this is at least a clear recognition that the workers must be encouraged to accept the principles of the League of Nations if the Covenant is later on to be worth the paper on which it is written. And prominent in that Labor Department is Lieutenant-Colonel Stewart Murray, well known to Harry Quelch, Fred Knox, James Macdonald, Robert Smith, George Carson, and other living and departed workers in the Labor movement. Hence this interview.

I met Lieutenant-Colonel Stewart Murray at the office of the League of Nations Union at Buckingham Palace, by which time the Union had already declared policy towards Labor, inasmuch as it was now making a direct appeal to the organized workers for support.

"You will find our Labor policy fully set out in the great manifesto signed by well-known Labor leaders (published in these columns in February). Resolutions in favor of the principles of the League of Nations Union have been passed by the British Trades Union Congress and the Labor Party Conference. But, while the ideas of the League of Nations is passively accepted by almost everybody, our main difficulty just now is to get that passive consent changed into active interest, because nearly everyone is absorbed in domestic questions. How to get the rank and file of Labor wholeheartedly with us and to join the League of Nations Union, which is helping to carry out the Labor policy of the League of Nations, that is our task.

"The Propaganda for the Workers.

"Are you doing any propaganda work with that object?"

"There is the manifesto I have already mentioned, which has been widely circulated; there was the resolution passed by the Trades Union Congress at Glasgow last September; nearly a thousand well-known trade union leaders.

"Yes, that is all right so far as it goes, but it does not go much beyond a resolution of the Trades Union Congress and the personal opinions of well-known trade unionists. The thing is, what is being done to reach the mass of the workers, without whom you cannot say you have a popular movement behind the

League of Nations has been so generally accepted indicates a most hopeful approximation of labor conditions between East and West. That such the League of Nations has done already. So far, as domestic political affairs are concerned, the League does not interfere with them in the slightest degree. The people of the various nations can do just as they please.

What is the Alternative to the League of Nations?"

"You must bear in mind that we have only just begun to approach the question from the Labor side," replied Lieutenant-Colonel Stewart Murray. "The whole of the Trades and Labor Councils of Great Britain have been communicated with, and we have now over a hundred of those councils who have promised us their support, including London, Leeds, Sheffield, Manchester, Newcastle and Gateshead, Birmingham, Bradford, Carlisle, Cardiff, Nottingham, Leicester and Sunderland. I mention some of the largest. Now we are going to approach the trade unions and the co-operative societies with a view to holding a series of conferences of the League of Nations."

The Constitution of the Union.

"What about the constitution of the League of Nations Union? Frankly, your list of people would, I fancy, make a more general and generous appeal if it did not appear to be made up of people who are certainly not wage-earners or representatives of wage-earners."

The constitution of the League is as democratic as we can possibly make it. Every branch manages its own affairs entirely, and sends representatives to the Central Council, which must meet at least twice a year, and often more frequently. Branches can appoint representatives in proportion to their numbers. These meetings of the Central Council settle the affairs of the Union, its policy, elect the Executive Committee, and act as the national channel for putting the great issues concerning the League of Nations before the people."

Similar Movements Elsewhere.

The League of Nations Union is a British organization, and similar societies working in other countries."

"Yes, work such as we are carrying on is being done in each of the countries belonging to the League of Nations. At a recent conference in Brussels it was decided to work together and have periodical international conferences of bodies supporting the League of Nations. Each of these unions will follow the lines of the British organization, if the British people come heartily into the union, and by this means we shall obtain a method necessary to turn the present League of Nations into a real League of the Peoples of the World."

"But, the United States are standing out. What of that?"

"Well, that is very regrettable, and it means that, as long as America stands aloof, the response of Britain is bound to be greater."

Labor Suspicion of the League of Nations.

"Now"—I confess I hesitated a moment—"now there is undoubtedly a feeling in Labor circles that the League of Nations, constituted as it is at present, is out for the status quo more than anything else—that is to say, that apart from securing the world's peace, as far as it can be secured, there is no desire on the part of the League of Nations to alter things socially and politically. Is that so?"

"No, now can that be alleged when the Labor Office of the League of Nations gives the greatest outlet for progress throughout the world that Labor has ever had?" retorted Lieutenant-Colonel Murray. "Take the East for instance. Japan has accepted all the regulations of the Labor Office; so also has India and China. True, there will be a number of nations who are not, but the fact that the Labor regulations of

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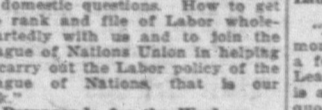
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