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Premier on Sound Ground at Geneva

Canada cannot obligate herself to use military or economic force in support of whatever decisions are reached by the League. Mr. King was well advised in making that quite clear in the speech that he delivered at Geneva on Tuesday.

An "automatic commitment" is, as he said, "not practical policy" so far as this country is concerned.

There is no doubt that the premier was quite right when he claimed that there is general concurrence in this view throughout the dominion. The large majority of Canadians feel that parliament, before agreeing to participate in the application of force, must consider the circumstances under which such action is being taken.

The adoption of that position does not mean that the dominion fails to recognize the value of a body like the League. It is simply due to a realization that cases may arise which are regarded at Geneva as justifying resort to force but in which the Canadian people would not consider they were warranted in giving their active backing to a step of this character. In that event their judgment must prevail.

Yet the covenant as it stands does commit each of the signatories, Canada being one of them, to do certain things automatically. Under article 10 they undertake not only to "respect" but to "preserve against external aggression the territorial integrity" of all League members. Article 16 says that, if any member resorts to war it disregards its covenants, it is deemed to have committed an act of war against all other members, "which hereby undertake immediately to the severance of all trade and financial relations."

Those undertakings have been by no means fully lived up to and, after the Ethiopian experience, they are likely to be for the most part disregarded unless and until the League becomes the world-wide body which it was intended to be by its founders. That being the case, the covenants should be changed in accordance with the realities of the situation that the League faces.

Mr. King pointed out that "Canadian public irrespective of party, opposed or sought to remove the status quo guarantees of article 10." It is hard to see how their maintenance under present conditions can be defended.

The premier also urged that "at this stage in the evolution of the League emphasis should be placed upon conciliation rather than upon coercion." The feeling is steadily becoming stronger that its present usefulness depends on following the advice that he gave and that has come from many others.