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Canada Reaffirms—But

**"Canada reaffirms adherence to the principles of the Covenant of the League of Nations,"
but "automatic commitment to the application of force is not a practical policy."**

Canadian Prime Minister at Geneva, Sept. 29, 1936

IN these words, spoken to the Assembly of the League of Nations, Mr. Mackenzie King makes plain Canada's position as a member of the League of Nations, and helps to clarify a confused situation. No one who cares for facts will say that Canada has fallen away from the fervour for peace which led her, after the Great War, to declare for collective action in place of the sword as an instrument of diplomacy. A free agent in her external relations, she was among the first to join the League, and her representatives have from the start taken a most helpful part and even a leadership in the activities of the League. In this her attitude has been in marked contrast with that of her great neighbour, the United States.

The contrast is full of meaning. Why is Canada a member of the League, while the United States holds severely aloof? Canadians have far more in common with their Republican neighbours than they have with any nation in Europe, far more even than with France, though France is the original motherland of three out of every ten of the Canadian population. Both Canada and the United States fought on the Allied side in the Great War. Both suffered heavily in human life and economic disturbance, and they might be expected equally to welcome any means of preventing a recurrence of this calamity. The American President was the prime author of the League idea. Yet the United States is further than ever from becoming a member of that body, while Canada has been throughout a hearty supporter and collaborator, and now, through her Prime Minister, she reaffirms her faith and renews her promise of help.

Canada joined the League just as she joined in the war, because to do so was the will of her people. In 1914 they were not content to rely on the Monroe additions totalled 34,780. Equally interesting is the statement that the past year has witnessed the erection of no fewer than 7,888 new houses and apartments. This expansion in building, it should be pointed out, is not State-aided; it is due to individual effort, and enterprise. The inference may be drawn that a city which keeps adding to its size and importance cannot be as poorly governed as some critics affirm.

George when, as Prime Minister, he suggested the co-operation of the Dominions in military action in the Near East. "Canada," says Mr. Mackenzie King, "reaffirms adherence to the fundamental principles of the Covenant," but "automatic commitment to the application of force is not practical policy." Experience has shown that the nations will not come into line when the moment for action arrives. "Universal acceptance of the Covenant must be the constant aim of those who hope for the termination of war as an instrument of national policy," and "in the evolution of the League emphasis should be placed upon conciliation rather than upon coercion." As matters stand at the moment, Canada's spokesman does not see that formal amendment of the Covenant is either possible or necessary, but "regional pacts and proposals show a closer approach to reality by linking obligations with a definite contingency and direct interest." To assist in this development, "the League Covenant should be detached from the Treaty of Versailles."

Here we see Canada persisting in her refusal to commit herself to European entanglements that do not directly concern her. She might or might not share in action against an aggressor: "there have been no absolute commitments either for or against participation in war or other forms of force." She must judge each case as it arises, and from the standpoint of her own people. Her sympathy is with the policy and attitude of the British Government, and the happenings of 1914-18 prove how far that sympathy may carry her.