

A Canadian delegation is participating in the Disarmament conference, which was opened at Geneva on the 2nd of February. I join with you in the prayer that the representatives of the nations there assembled may reach an understanding which will put beyond peril the cause of enduring world peace.

I am sure, Mr. Speaker, that is a paragraph in the speech from the throne with which not only all hon. members of this House of Commons but the people of Canada generally will be in complete accord. The people of Canada are most anxious to have this great Disarmament conference do something for the security and peace of the world. In my view, if my right hon. friend will permit me to say so, the paragraph is splendidly worded, and expresses the sentiment cherished by this nation as a whole.

I should like to say a word regarding the meeting of the disarmament conference. It would seem the very irony of fate that there should be meeting at the League of Nations at the present time representatives of the different countries charged with a consideration of the great problem of disarmament while in another part of the world we are witnessing hostilities having many of the features of international conflict. Some have said that this means the League of Nations has failed to function, that it has not done what was expected of it. As there always are dismal prophets in all parts of the world, there are those who are saying that this seeming failure means the beginning of the end of the great movement for which the League of Nations stands. Also there are those who say that in view of what we are witnessing to-day in the orient, we have the strongest reason why the disarmament conference should not make the headway which otherwise we would have hoped it would make. In other words they say that if we are to have adequate protection, instead of nations disarming there ought to be more arming. I do not agree with either of those views. I do not think that the League of Nations has failed; I do not think the cause of disarmament is any less real to-day than it has ever been, and I wish to give my reasons.

The principle upon which the League of Nations is acting is that before hostilities take place between countries there should be an investigation; that the public should be fully informed of the causes and merits of a dispute under some inquiry judicially conducted; that before any part of the world is thrown into a state of turmoil, nations should be in a position to judge as to the right and wrong of the great questions in-

volved. In other words the view of the League of Nations is that in international affairs reason rather than force should prevail.

In 1907 this parliament enacted what is known as the Industrial Disputes Investigation Act. That act laid down principles which are identical with those which constitute the basis of the practice of the League of Nations. I am not suggesting that those present at the League of Nations had that act before them, but I do say that the principle of investigating industrial disputes before there are lockouts or strikes and in the first instance of obliging parties in industry to submit to an investigation so that the public may be fully informed as to the right or wrong of the situation is the principle laid down in that act, and that it is a principle identical with that which constitutes the basis of a large part of the work of the League of Nations. I remember very well after that act was passed that in the provinces of Alberta and British Columbia its provisions were disregarded at the outset on one or two occasions. The act became law at the time of mining troubles in the west. The miners at the time did not realize the full significance of the measure. They misunderstood its purpose and aim and arrayed themselves in defiance of it. It was not long however before they discovered that having violated a law of the land they had, to a considerable degree, lost the sympathy which might otherwise have been theirs. More important than that however was the fact that they discovered, when they began to study the act, that after all there was a more excellent way of obtaining justice, namely that of basing their case on its merits, knowing as Burke has said that "justice is the common concern of mankind," and that the public when it understands the right and the wrong of a situation may be relied upon to see that justice prevails. What has been the result? That act has been on the statute books of this country now for nearly twenty-five years, a quarter of a century. Conformity with its provisions has become part of the accepted practice of those engaged in the large industries to which the provisions of the law apply. Parties to the industries concerned do not think of lockouts or strikes until the public have been fully informed as to the right and wrong of situations which have arisen.

Take what has been happening within the last few months with respect to the question of rates of wages, hours of work and the degree of employment of the men on the great railway systems of Canada. Before the time of the statute there were lockouts and