

World Peace

Mr. Heaps' Motion
COMMONS

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Jan. 27th, 1938.

League of Nations. He and those of his group who advocate that we should be members of the League of Nations say that the league must have force behind it if it is going to effect its ends. What does that mean? It is an expression we hear from different sources. I think the hon. member (Mr. Douglas) who sits behind my hon. friend used the expression the other day that he wanted "a league that had teeth in it," a league that would be able to do something. What does that mean? It means force. And yet many in my hon. friend's group, including the member to whom I referred, take the view that Canada should be neutral no matter who the belligerents may be. That is all very well; they would have a league that has force behind it, but they are quite eager to see that other nations are the ones to supply the force and that we are to continue to enjoy security and to be kept entirely out of the situation.

Mr. DOUGLAS: Would there not be economic force.

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: Economic force! We have had enough experience to know that economic force sooner or later means military force. We had an object lesson of that last year. May I say to my hon. friend who has just interrupted me that if he and I could control world forces there might not be trouble for anybody, because we know exactly what we would do; but surely we must all realize that forces which are not only beyond the control of individuals, but beyond the control of nations and of continents, are operating in the world to-day. The condition in Europe is not the result of a desire for war on the part of any English speaking community. It is not the result of any such desire on the part of the French republic or on the part of many other nations that I could mention. We have yet to discover that it is the desire of any nation. But the danger is there and we know that we are facing it. In those circumstances let us not begin to tell other countries what they should do until we tell them what we ourselves are prepared to do in helping to meet the emergency. When it comes to the League of Nations and its reliance upon force as the means of attaining its ends, we get right into the very situation from which my hon. friend who has moved this resolution would like to take us away altogether. Force begets force. If we are to rely for peace upon force, let us squarely face the situation and realize that we as well as other nations must be prepared to make our contribution in terms of force.

[Mr. Mackenzie King.]

But, Mr. Speaker, I do not want to enter to-day into a discussion of League of Nations affairs, nor do I wish to go over ground that was traversed in a previous debate. My purpose in rising this afternoon thus early in the debate is simply to point out that the specific suggestion which is made in my hon. friend's resolution constitutes in reference to it the one thing which the government is called upon to consider. The substantive portion of the resolution reads:

That, in the opinion of this house, the government of Canada respectfully suggest to the president of the United States the desirability of convening a world conference for the securing and maintenance of peace.

In other words, this country is to suggest to the United States the calling of a world conference to secure and maintain peace. Now, irrespective altogether of what views we may entertain as to the effectiveness of a world conference to achieve the end in view, it must be apparent that there are great considerations of national policy that must be taken into account by any country that would enter at this time upon the calling of a world conference for such a purpose, and those considerations, it seems to me, are a matter for consideration by that country alone. It is not the business of one country to tell another what its policy should be. I think that must be apparent. It is inconceivable that the president of the United States, with the interest he has taken in world affairs, with the concern he has already shown for the maintenance of peace, has not had under his own consideration and that of his colleagues the very question my hon. friend has suggested. But whether he has or has not, that is his own affair. For us to suggest that a conference should be called would be simply to embarrass the president in the reply which it would be necessary for him to make. At most he could say that the subject was one to which he would be glad to give consideration. I am not sure that if he were considering the matter favourably a suggestion to the United States from another country would help him to attain the object he had in view.

Let me say a word with regard to world conferences. I am not sure that a world conference would achieve any good end at the present time and it might make things a great deal worse. It seems to me, our generation has gone a little mad on the question of conferences. A conference is often a very convenient way of appearing to be doing something while in reality very little may be achieved. The more I see of conferences

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