

eign Office is indubitable. It has never surrendered the idea of creating a bloc of vassal states to be used for the dismemberment and subjection of Germany, and as a base for attack upon Russia. That policy Mr. Colby abets, possibly without meaning to abet it, for he cannot stop the French Foreign Office from embroiling Europe, though he can stop Britain from pacifying Europe. The net effect of the Colby policy is to make time after Wrangel's failure in which a new intrigue for a new adventure can be engineered. Mr. Colby is a dupe in the hands of shrewder men.

## Democratic Control of the League

**N**O human institution is perfect in its first conception. Every political arrangement comes into existence through compromise: compromise between conflicting interests, between reason and unreason, between good and evil. But as running water purifies itself, so a living institution may gradually throw off the vices in its blood. The League is an imperfect institution. That is no reason America should let it perish, as it may if America holds aloof. Let America join the League and make of it what she wants it to be. Is not America the most powerful of existing nations? Then her vote for the improvement of the League will count for much more than one.

So runs the argument of those Americans who are unable to accept the League just as it stands as an adequate guarantee of international justice and peace, but yet believe that it is morally impossible for America to remain outside. It is a cogent argument. We believe that, with certain qualifications, it is compelling. The peace of the world is a vital concern of America, and we can conceive no effective way of assuring peace except through international organization for the purpose. We agree that in any working international organization America's vote would count for more than one. And we have confidence that America's ruling purpose would be to use that vote in behalf of justice and international harmony. But the best of intentions often come to grief for want of technical preparation. Are we prepared as a nation to exert the dominant role in international affairs that is proposed for us?

A wise man may repose perfect confidence in the goodwill and essential fairness of the American people. Some of us may go wrong, morally, but not the mass. No wise man will repose such confidence in any group of men who may happen to

make up the personnel of government. At one time our governors are competent and above reproach; at another time their unwisdom and corruption may cry to Heaven. Our domestic institutional scheme is, however, tolerably safe under even the worst pilots, because they know that they cannot swerve very far from the course without arousing the wrath of the people. We can expect to be governed well, fairly consistently, wherever public opinion is active and well informed. Where public opinion is lethargic or ignorantly biased, anything may happen. Our handling of the enemy property question, for example, was entirely out of harmony with the American spirit of fair play and with the traditional American policy. But American public opinion had never been brought to realize that a healthy scheme of international economic relations must rest upon the immunity from confiscation of innocent private property, even in case of war. Our handling of the question of free speech is another case in point. Public opinion in America is not alive to the danger of suppressing dissident sentiments and therefore has tamely permitted the government to go to extremes that not even the Kaiser's government dared to propose. We have reason for confidence in America where America is well informed and actively thinking. It is pure chauvinism to assert confidence in American justice and wisdom where interest and active public opinion are wanting.

Now, what reason have we for assuming that, as a member of the League, America would pursue policies that represent the goodwill of the American people and not the whim and prejudice of a governing group that may be wholly unrepresentative? That question, we believe, may be answered by another: How far is American public opinion interested in the concrete issues that will come before the League for settlement? If the American delegates to the League knew that any arrangements to which they might agree would be intelligently discussed before the people and that they would be held to account for any stupidities or iniquities they might commit, their action might be expected to make for peace and international understanding. But if they thought that American opinion was indifferent, formless, a free field for propaganda and chicanery, their action might be anything.

Suppose that we were now signatories to the Covenant. No doubt the application of Germany for admission to the League would already have come up for decision. The French delegates would have bitterly opposed the admission of Germany; the British would probably have supported it.

Where would our own delegates have stood? We submit that if what they really wished to do was to carry out the dictates of American public opinion, they would not know where to cast their vote.

For a great many Americans still feel the war spirit and would oppose anything Germany wishes, and a great many others feel that the war is over and ought to be left out of present practical considerations. But how many Americans have canvassed the advantages and disadvantages of German admission to the League, from the point of view of European reconstruction and permanent peace? If the matter were up for discussion our press would exhibit the influence of an active French propaganda against admission and an active British propaganda for it, together with an active pro-British and an active anti-British propaganda generated out of our own resources. But to what quarter would the average conscientious American turn for an unbiased account of the practical points really at issue?

The difficulty is not a new one. In spite of the democratic movement of the nineteenth century, every government has conducted its foreign affairs without reference to public opinion or democratic control. Alliances and understandings have been notoriously the prerogative of the chiefs of states. The people's will and the people's representatives have come into the equation only when such foreign policies ripened toward war. Our own Monroe Doctrine was promulgated by a chief of state, and wrought out into its present condition by chiefs of state who never admitted the desirability of consulting the representatives of the people. All that was perfectly natural in the epoch of unbridled nationalism. On domestic policies the people were necessarily of different minds, but on foreign policies they might be assumed to be of one mind, to aggrandize the power of the nation whenever opportunity presented itself. The foreign office might vary in vigor and foresight, but not in nationalistic purpose.

But with the organization of a real League, this simplicity of purpose disappears. If we send delegates to the League Assembly, they will be expected to take counsel in the interest not of America only but of the whole organized world. Opposing international influences and interests will be playing on them all the time. How can they be expected to act consistently as the conscience of America would direct, if there is no actively interested American public opinion to which they must hold themselves accountable?

But is it not a Utopian idea that we can ever have an informed public opinion on the issues before the League? The average American citizen

has his own living to make. He has already more than enough civic obligation in trying to see that the school board, the city authorities, the state and federal governments do their jobs properly. Must he also keep watch of our delegates to the League? Take such a problem as that of flood control on the Danube. That unhappy river has been divided into as many sections as there are nations that hate one another in that quarter of the world. Each nation resents being drowned out from above, but would like to drown out the nation below. The League ought to do something about it, of course. But if the plain American citizen has time to worry about any river, had he not better worry about the Mississippi?

There would be force in the objection if the public opinion requisite to intelligent control of our international organs had to be universal public opinion. We are making no such extreme demand. All that we are urging is that to be prepared to play a useful part in the League we ought to have in America a competent, disinterested nation-wide organization for the study of the concrete problems that must come before the League. There is an analogy in the citizens' associations that occasionally undertake to watch our state and city governments. It is hard for them to keep their skirts clear of political entanglements that make void their influence, but in so far as they do this, they are a potent arm of public opinion. In the matter of our international relations there would be very little reason for political entanglements that excite suspicion.

What we have in mind is primarily an organization of scholars, authorities on international law, history, political science, economics, together with laymen whose intellectual standing is a guarantee to the public that they will not be taken in a net of propaganda nor temper their judgment to the service of their partisan affiliations. We should not ask for anything so impossible as an infallible judgment from such an association. But we can get out of the American Economic Association or the Political Science Association or the American Historical Society sounder and more useful judgments on the subjects within their competence than we can get out of the casual judgments of the average man or the slapdash conclusions of the commercial press. Why should we not be able to get a sufficient basis of established fact to form a reasonable opinion as to whether the representatives who conduct our world interests are doing their work well or ill, if the Americans who take our place in international affairs seriously organized themselves adequately for the work?

## Must We Have a Panic?

**A**RE we in fact standing at the brink of industrial depression? Or is the present economic malaise merely a passing cloud over the sun of a prosperity that will soon blaze all the warmer for it? Nobody can say, with certainty. It is true that in the Middle Western manufacturing territory, which feels the economic pulse of the nation more distinctly than any other, factory after factory is going on part time or closing down altogether. It is true that the textile industry in all its stages is laying off men, and the textile industry more than any other reflects the immediate mood of the general public. Responsible financiers can be found in every city who profess optimism in their public utterances and privately advise their customers to take in sail. Responsible newspapers exhibit remarkable neglect of the news value of fifty thousand men laid off in one city, seventy-five thousand in another and of an army of the unemployed climbing rapidly toward the million mark. These are the familiar indications of approaching hard times. They are, to be sure, not infallible. Modern industrialism is too new a thing, as history goes, to admit of sure prognostication on the basis of established experience. Nevertheless, it would be an amazing fatuousness that refused to face the fact that our present economic condition contains serious elements that may become more serious.

But why borrow trouble? If a crisis is coming, it is coming; what is there to do about it? If we believed that there was nothing at all to do about it, we should follow the policy of the "responsible" newspapers in filling our space with comment on other things. Better to talk about Harding's fishing exploits, about the new theories of the bomb explosion, about the latest graft exposure, than about an inevitable economic winter that will darken the days of all of us. Eventually we shall all die, but the moral of that is, make merry now. As we see it, however, there is nothing inevitable about an industrial depression. It is the kind of evil that comes because men fail to take thought and action. There are, we believe, forces capable of warding off depression, if only they were properly organized and directed by a broad economic statecraft.

Certainly there are conditions affecting our economic life over which merely economic organization can not exercise adequate control. Cotton and wool, wheat and meat, copper and steel are all suffering under the decay of foreign markets, consequent upon the insane destruction of war and the equally insane obstructiveness of a bad peace. American materials clogging the warehouses; industrial Europe unemployed and shivering and

starving; agrarian Europe withholding available food supplies and refusing to produce to capacity for want of an equivalent in industrial products—all that would be unspeakably absurd if it were not so horribly tragic. We Americans have no right to a clear conscience on the matter. We lavished credits on Europe so long as we were at war, but as soon as the war was over we refused to do the acts of faith and far sighted reason necessary to establish peace upon a sound economic foundation. The eighteenth century economists in charge of our Treasury and of our credit system were dreadfully afraid that reconstruction credits to Europe might mean throwing good money after bad. They had no inkling of the fact that the difference between American industry functioning buoyantly under the stimulus of an active foreign trade and American industry shut out of foreign markets by chaotic rates of exchange may be measured statistically in tens of billions of dollars. One year of depression may cost America a sum of values exceeding our aggregate loans to our Allies. Half that sum, judiciously placed in Europe where it would most have stimulated production, might have staved off the crisis now menacing our industry. But there is no use in crying over spilt milk. In failing to set Europe on the road to economic recovery we missed the readiest means of keeping our own industry going. But there are other means.

For important as the foreign market is to an industrial nation like America, it is not a precondition of national prosperity, as it is for a nation in the position of England, for example. Two things are needed for industrial prosperity: efficient production, and consumers who are themselves efficient producers and therefore able to buy freely. Consumer-producers in England or France, Italy or Czecho-Slovakia, Germany or Russia, would furnish a market for our surplus products, but so also do consumer-producers at home. A demand for rails and locomotives from Montana is identical in its bearings on the steel industry with a demand for rails and locomotives from Russia. Railway building in Russia would create a demand for all manner of miscellaneous supplies; so also would railway building in Montana. In either case new sources of production would be tapped, to pay eventually for the railway and for the steady flow of supplies needed by the population served. In either case the first stage in the operation would be an act of faith, a grant of credit against the future productive power of the railway and the territory it opens up.

The blundering of our government has shut us out of Russia and the general work of European reconstruction. That is a misfortune; but is it