

LNU 1871516

# PEACE or WAR ?

## A NATIONAL DECLARATION ON THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS AND ARMAMENTS

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*National Declaration Committee, 15, Grosvenor Crescent, S.W.1*

### PREAMBLE.

**C**ERTAIN members of the Executive Committee of the League of Nations Union are anxious that the following observations should be circulated with the Ballot Paper and the Notes on the Five Questions. The Declaration Committee have agreed to circulate them but they adhere in all respects to what is said in the Notes. The Committee desire to point out that those who agree with the contentions in the blue paper should answer "Yes" to questions 1 and 2, and that with regard to questions 3 and 5 the differences of opinion are mainly questions of emphasis. As the green paper has already stated, abolition of national military and naval aircraft should be accompanied by an agreement by all nations to control civil flying. It is agreed that this is a necessary condition for the abolition of military aircraft. As to 5, the argument stated in the blue paper is partially stated in the green paper. As to question 4, the objections urged are undoubtedly substantial, but the Declaration Committee believe that they will not prove insurmountable in practice.

### OBSERVATIONS.

If the Declaration is to be of real value, it is important that the vote should be an informed one, that is to say, that the voter should bear in mind all considerations for and against the proposals, and reach a balanced judgment of them. It seems therefore desirable to put forward for consideration some aspects of the various problems which have not been included in the green "Notes on the Five Questions."

### QUESTION I.

Nothing need be said with regard to this question, which is a perfectly simple and straightforward one, and with regard to which the arguments are well known to everybody in this country.

## QUESTION 2.

This question, also, has been so freely ventilated during the last two years that there can be no one who is not in a position to record his vote without further information.

## QUESTION 3.

No thoughtful person would answer this question without a clear explanation of what is proposed in regard to the control of civil aviation. Abolition of military air forces and control of civil aviation are not separate problems, but one and the same. It would be impossible to abolish air forces without a strict international control of civil aircraft, for without this additional measure, the nation with the largest civil force would dominate the air.

## QUESTION 4.

This is an exceptionally complex subject, the difficulties of which are obscured in the question. No explanation is offered of how the object is to be obtained. The alternative of control of the international trade in arms is not even mentioned. The question is framed to secure a particular answer, not to invite a reasoned verdict.

In our opinion this is emphatically a question which ought not to have been put without mentioning the various issues which arise out of it. We mention only one or two of these considerations.

- (a) The absence from this question of any definition of the armaments concerned.
- (b) The immense extension of national arsenals which would at once become necessary, and the increase to taxation this would involve.
- (c) The impossible position in which small nations without armament factories would be placed, and their consequent dependence on the foreign governments upon which they would have to rely for their means of defence.

## QUESTION 5.

This, again, is a question which cannot be answered simply yes or no. Much must depend on the circumstances of the particular cases, on the provocation given, on the universality or extent of the support available, and the likelihood of the economic boycott proving effective. The difficulties of an economic blockade are immense, and its consequences not easy to foresee, but one thing is certain: no one ought to vote for economic and non-military measures unless he is prepared to support them if necessary by military measures. Such a blockade might be treated as an act of war by the country against which it was directed. No one should incur this risk unless he is prepared to face the possible consequences.

To answer (a) with a yes, and (b) with a no would be to adopt a policy of bluff while openly proclaiming that it was bluff and no more.

These are, in our opinion, some of the main considerations which must be borne in mind by those who are taking part in this Declaration, and unless they are given their full weight, we believe that the vote would be valueless.