

March 1919.



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# ? LEAGUE OF NATIONS ? OR ? HOLY ALLIANCE ?

BEING

THE DRAFT OF A LEAGUE OF NATIONS  
SIGNED by the ALLIED & ASSOCIATED POWERS

TOGETHER WITH

SUGGESTIONS

OFFERED BY

THE WOMEN'S INTERNATIONAL LEAGUE

*(British Section of the International Committee of Women  
for Permanent Peace).*

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## FOREWORD.

THE first draft of a League of Nations has emerged from the long Conference of Allied and Associated Powers, and has been given to the world for study and criticism. The idea of a League of Nations is repulsive to many and powerful bodies of people all the world over; to others—and the Women's International League is of these—the idea inspires the one hope of the world. Therefore, it is our aim to keep the idea alive, and to consider these or any other proposals solely from the point of view of those desiring that the idea should become a living force for the constructive co-operation of humanity.

The idea, put forward by many thinkers in many lands, and accepted simply by the great mass of working people, has been adopted and clothed in appropriate language by President Wilson, first among the heads of world States, and by him pressed upon the Allied and Associated Governments. These have, with more or less willingness, declared their adhesion to the principle; but it is clear from the draft now presented that they have forced President Wilson consciously or unconsciously to accept conditions which are entirely at variance with the idea of co-operation between the peoples, and are directed to perpetuating the domination of the weak by the strong. The fact that "the weak" are now our late enemies should not blind us to the fact that the draft League, if it remained substantially unamended, would be an instrument not of justice, but of domination.

We believe, however, that it can be amended, and made the beginning of an instrument for world co-operation. In this belief we have offered the following criticisms to the Conference sitting at Versailles. We do not profess that they are anything but an outline of some of the most important points.

We thought that it was wiser to concentrate on the main issues of democracy and international impartiality, and on making suggestions tending to a more elastic constitution, rather than to attempt to cover all the ground in detail. It must not, either, be supposed that, because we do not point out exactly how unsatisfactory are the articles dealing with restriction and control of the manufacture of arms, we are not acutely aware of the defects of these articles; but we believe that the emphasis we lay upon the equal admission of the Neutrals, the Central Powers, and Russia, is the right emphasis, and that such an equal admission would satisfactorily amend the now manifestly inequitable provisions in Articles 8 and 9, and would prevent a one-sided disarmament, which would prove merely a repetition of old mistakes. The compulsory disarming by the victor of the vanquished is nothing new; *universal proportional disarmament* is required by a League of Nations.

Lastly, it may well be argued that a totally different scheme would have been preferable. This may be so. There are many and diverse schemes before the world, and each of us prefers his or her own. But this is the scheme put forward by the Conference at Versailles, and we have held it a more fruitful form of criticism to take the scheme offered and endeavour to suggest how it could be turned to good account, rather than to condemn alike what is good and bad in it.

Any scheme which gives scope to the forces of Internationalism and Democracy will be good. Any scheme which thwarts these forces will be bad.

H. M. SWANWICK.

14 Bedford Row,  
March 1919.

SUGGESTIONS  
ON  
THE DRAFT AGREEMENT FOR A  
LEAGUE OF NATIONS  
OFFERED BY  
THE WOMEN'S INTERNATIONAL LEAGUE.  
(*British Section of the International Committee of Women  
for Permanent Peace.*)

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THE Women's International League—whose desire, ever since its foundation at The Hague Congress of Women in 1915, has been to see established a League of Nations for the settlement of disputes by means other than war—submits, in response to the invitation to discuss the draft signed by the fourteen Allied and Associated Powers, the following comments:—

A. GENERAL AGREEMENT.

The W.I.L. rejoices that in this draft a number of principles have been broadly laid down:—

1. The abandonment of the absolute sovereign rights of States and the recognition that the world is one (Preamble and Article 11).
2. Open discussion of disputes (Article 15).

3. The establishment of machinery for Arbitration and Conciliation (Articles 12, 13, 14, 15.)

4. The reduction of armaments and the consideration of the restriction of the private manufacture of arms (Articles 8 and 9).

5. That Powers which administer countries inhabited by peoples "not yet able to stand by themselves" shall do so as "a sacred trust of civilization," and that "securities for the performance of this trust should be embodied in the constitution of the League."

6. The establishment of a Permanent Labour Bureau.

7. The granting of "freedom of transit and equitable treatment of the commerce of all States members of the League."

8. The abolition of Secret Treaties (Article 23).

9. The abrogation of obligations inconsistent with the terms of the covenant (Article 25).

10. Provision for the revision of "treaties which have become inapplicable and of international conditions of which the continuance may endanger the peace of the world" (Article 24).

11. The recognition (Article 22) that the League has important functions to perform in the furthering of constructive international co-operation.

The universal recognition and practice of these principles would be the longest step the world has ever made towards international co-operation, but the draft in its present form makes such universal recognition and practice impossible. For this reason, we suggest amendments as follows:—

## B. CRITICISMS.

I. MEMBERSHIP Many points with regard to membership are not clear, but it appears that there are to be recognized three categories of States (Article 7):

1. The original signatories, who include all and only the Allied and Associated Powers;

2. States to be named in the Protocol (but not yet named), and therefore, presumably, to be invited to modify this draft *before it is ratified* and becomes an operative covenant;

3. States to be admitted with the assent of not less than two-thirds of the States in the first two categories. This will be, presumably, *after the ratification of the covenant* and when amendments will be exceedingly difficult to introduce, since unanimity on the part of the Executive Council and a three-fourths majority of the States belonging to the League are required (Article 26). A heavy handicap against this third category.

**The first requirement for a League of Nations which is to establish and administer Courts of Arbitration and Conciliation is that it should be trusted by all the world to be administered impartially for the benefit of all the world. This will not be unless membership of the League is, from its inception, open without distinction to all self-governing States which express (a) their desire to become members, and (b) their willingness to perform the duties of members.**

It is to be hoped that when the "invited" States consider the draft, they will recommend and carry an amendment to it making provision for the invitation of all such States as come under conditions (a) and (b), but we must regret that the victorious Allies did not themselves insert such a provision, since this would have helped to create an atmosphere of confidence and conciliation, without which the League will not be an instrument of Peace. The draft as it stands would seem to offer a prospect of the repetition of the historic blunder of the early nineteenth century, which, under the name of an alliance for world peace, witnessed the inauguration of fresh struggles for a Balance of Power.

The animus against the disrupted and conquered Central Powers becomes more striking when we consider how little there is to fear from them. We calculate that the numbers of self-governing States eligible for membership could be roughly divided as follows: Seventeen Allied and Associated States and Dominions; thirty-four European, American, Asiatic, and African Neutrals; Russia (an indeterminate factor at present) and four Central Powers. Taking into account, further, the exhausted and diminished condition of the Central Powers, their omission can be interpreted only as a sign of exaggerated and groundless panic or of a determination to use the League, not as an instrument for the co-operation of the world, but for the continued oppression of our late enemies. (*See note.*)

NOTE.—It is obvious that there are many ways of determining what constitutes a "Self-governing State." The above calculation is based on the representation at The Hague Congress, with modifications, as follows:—*Seventeen Allied and Associated Powers and Dominions*: United States, Great Britain, France, Italy, Japan, Belgium, Greece, Portugal, Rumania, Czecho-Slovakia, Serbia (with Montenegro?), Poland, Brazil, China, Canada, South Africa, Australia (with New Zealand?).

*Seven European Neutrals*: Denmark, Holland, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, Spain, Luxemburg.

*Nineteen American Neutrals*: Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Columbia, Cuba, Dominica, Ecuador, Guatemala, Hayti, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Salvador, Uruguay, Venezuela, Costa Rica, Honduras.

*Three African Neutrals*: Morocco, Liberia, Abyssinia.

*Five Asiatic Neutrals*: Persia, Afghanistan, Thibet, Nepaul, Siam.

*Russia* must obviously be admitted, but it seems impossible at present to say into how many "self-governing States" what was the Russian Empire may be broken, or what the attitude of the Governments of these States will be towards the Allied and Associated Powers and the Central Powers respectively.

*Four Central Powers*: Germany (possibly strengthened by the addition of German Austria, but more than correspondingly weakened in three or four other directions), Hungary, Bulgaria, and Turkey (diminished to vanishing point).

Since (Article 21) "freedom of transit and equitable treatment of commerce" and since (Article 19) "equal opportunities for trade and commerce" in countries administered under the mandatory system are to be necessarily granted only to Members of the League, it is obvious that any device for keeping any country out of the League brings with it the possibility of penalizing the trade, the finance, and the industry of the excluded country; e.g. if Germany be excluded, it would be possible for (say) the British to deny all trading facilities and all export of raw materials to Germany from any part of the British Dominions or from any country which they may have a mandate to administer (such as Mesopotamia, Samoa, or the African colonies lately belonging to Germany). Germany would not only have lost her colonies, but might be denied any chance of purchasing supplies from them. The penalty for an infraction of the laws of the League would be imposed upon her, *although she might have broken none and had been forcibly prevented from becoming a member of the League*. This must lead to the most strenuous efforts on the part of Germany to make alliances outside the League.

It is not clear (Article 3) how long the Executive Council is to remain half-formed, but if the intention is to form it as soon as the States in the second category have joined the League and the covenant has been ratified, it is clear that the penalty of permanent exclusion from the Executive Council is laid upon States in the third category.

Lastly, with regard to the Neutrals, it is a regrettable circumstance that more attention was not given and more respect shown to the needs and contribution peculiar to the Neutral Powers, whose problems and whose power to help or hinder are vitally affected by this neglect. The Neutrals have been treated as if to be neutral was only a degree less criminal than to be a defeated enemy. The draft bears, in nearly every Article, witness to the fact that the Neutrals had not the weight which they should have had, if an impartial document were desired.

## II. CONSTITUTION.

(1) BODY OF DELEGATES.—The functions of this body (with one exception) are so vague that full criticism must wait. The Body of Delegates (for whom we hope a more inspiring name may be found) is the only body which is in the least likely to be democratically appointed, and we are sorry that it should have no organic relation with the Executive Council and (with the one exception) no function except to talk.

The very important exception occurs when it may be called upon (Article 15) to make a recommendation upon a non-justiciable matter in dispute. Whether this recommendation is to be made by a majority and if so by what majority, is not specified.

(2) EXECUTIVE COUNCIL OF NINE.—To this Council, the Allied and Associated Powers have nominated a permanent majority of five of their own number (Article 3). It is probable that these five Powers would have been placed upon the Executive in any event; it would, therefore, have been reasonably safe, and would have created a much better impression, if they had refrained from nominating themselves. But we would go further and say that eleven would have been a better number than nine, because this would not have given the Allied and Associated Powers an assured majority on the Executive at the outset.

It may be hoped that in course of time the balance will readjust itself and the world cease to think in terms of existing alliances. But a good beginning makes an enormous difference in creating that spirit of universal confidence in and loyalty to the League, without which the machinery will remain mere machinery.

Since the Executive Council is to have such important functions as (1) determining of military equipment in the various countries, members of the League, (2) considering the private manufacture of arms, (3) formulating plans for a Court of Arbitration, (4) inquiring into disputes, (5) proposing steps to be taken to give effect to the arbitration awards, it is absolutely essential that the Executive Council should from the beginning bear the highest character for impartiality.

## III. GENERAL PROVISIONS.

(1) MANDATORY POWERS (Article 19).—If the object of introducing the Mandatory principle is the welfare of the inhabitants of the regions in question, there seems no reason why all regions "inhabited by peoples not yet able to stand by themselves" should not come under the mandatory system.

(2) REDUCTION OF ARMAMENTS (Article 8).—It is obvious that no reduction of armaments imposed by a majority of the Allied and Associated Powers upon their late enemies will be regarded by the latter as an act of impartial justice, and it is, in fact, in the highest degree improbable that it would be such an act.

(3) ENFORCING COVENANTS.—Small or poor States and those at a distance from the scene of dispute should (Article 16) have special terms granted them, so that they may not be ruined.

(4) PERMANENT LABOUR BUREAU (Article 20).—The success of this branch of work will depend entirely upon whether the workers, including women workers, are given their due representation and upon whether those countries which have established Socialism are freely admitted to carry their full weight in council.

(5) AMENDMENTS TO THE COVENANT.—The Article relating to amendments to the covenant (Article 26) makes it too difficult for the League to change with a changing world, and this may bring it into disrepute and cause defections. This evil would be greatly enhanced if any countries were excluded until the covenant were ratified. These countries would then be invited to come into a cast-iron scheme partly devised to keep them in an inferior position.

## IV. OMISSIONS.

We regret that no mention has been made of:

- (1) The principle of the self-determination of peoples;
- (2) The acceptance of the principle of the open door for trade and industry;
- (3) The freedom of the seas;
- (4) The universal abolition of Conscription;
- (5) The duty of Mandatory Powers to encourage the gradual emancipation from sex slavery of women within the countries which they administer by mandate.

### C. SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS.

1. Membership of the League of Nations should be open to all self-governing States which express their desire to become members and their willingness to perform the duties of members.
2. There should be an organic connexion between the Body of Delegates and the Executive Council, which should be composed of representatives from at least eleven (instead of nine) States. The Body of Delegates should be enlarged and democratically elected, and should nominate the States which appoint the Executive Council. Some provision should be made for the possibility of changing these States from time to time.
3. The Executive Council should not be appointed until every self-governing State has had full opportunity to become a member of the League.
4. Provision should be made for varying degrees of responsibility for international action involving coercion, to meet the varying capacities of smaller Powers and their nearness to or remoteness from the scene of dispute.
5. The mandatory principle should be applied impartially to all regions "inhabited by peoples not yet able to stand by themselves," and one of the tests of good government should be whether it is preparing the inhabitants to "stand by themselves," with a view to granting them self-government at the earliest possible moment.
6. It should be the duty of Mandatory Powers to encourage the gradual emancipation from sex slavery of women within the countries which they administer.
7. On the permanent Labour Bureau, the workers—men and women—must have adequate representation, and countries which have established Socialism must be freely admitted.
8. Amendments to the covenant should take effect when ratified by no less than three-quarters of the States whose representatives compose the Executive Council, as well as by three-fourths of the States whose representatives compose the Body of Delegates.
9. In making awards on matters of nationality, the first consideration should be the desires of the inhabitants.
10. It should be recognized that permanent peace can be established only when all peoples have free access to the raw materials of industry and equal trading opportunities.
11. The seas should be free to the merchant navies of all countries in war as in peace, except in so far as they might be closed by order of the League of Nations, and any infringement of this law should be treated as an offence against the League.
12. Compulsory military service should be abolished by covenant among all nations members of the League.



