

(Nov. 15, 1935)

## Vital Happenings in Europe To-day

BY HON. CARL JOACHIM HAMBRO.

PRESIDENT A. L. BISHOP:—Members of the Canadian Club, I think much of the enthusiasm of this turnout is a true indication of your approval of our distinguished guest of today. This is the first time in the history of the Canadian Club that we have had a European statesman, occupying the position of head of his government, with us as a guest. Mr. Hambro has been, since 1926, president of the Norwegian Parliament. Notwithstanding the very onerous duties imposed on him, he finds time to occupy himself with many other fields of endeavor, being identified with the League of Nations since its inception. He has been spokesman for the nations other than the great powers and, at one time, was president of the League itself. When one realizes that France, Britain, Italy and Russia constitute but four of the fifty-eight adherents to the League one realizes he can speak with the voice of authority for the permanent members of the League. It gives me very great pleasure to introduce to you the Hon. Mr. Hambro.

MR. HAMBRO:—Mr. Chairman, gentlemen, it is a very great pleasure indeed and a great privilege to be allowed to address an assembly like the present gathering in the Canadian Club. As a representative of one of the small northern nations it is indeed an unusual pleasure to be among Canadians. For years we have co-operated most heartily with the Canadians in the League of Nations. We have had a feeling for a good many years, and I know it is reciprocated, that between the Dominion delegates and the delegates from the northern countries, there is a feeling of sympathy and understanding. We have been very often fighting for

the same ideals. And when it has been possible in the fifteen years of League existence to arrive at the same degree of what we call democratic control in League affairs, it is because the northern countries of Europe and the Dominion delegations have carried along those lines.

At one very important vote in the assembly seven years ago, where a great reform was carried by a very modest majority in the Fourth Committee of the League, it was carried by eight to five. The five that voted against a certain proposal of control were the five great powers and the eight that voted for were the northern countries and the British Dominions. It was a reform of some importance and we have had a feeling that whenever there has been a moral issue—a principle involved—that it would be perfectly natural and perfectly easy for us to meet and understand the Canadian delegates and the delegates of South Africa, New Zealand and Australia. We have a sort of tie between us. I will not go so far as one of my friends from New Zealand did at a private meeting where he said that years of League experience had taught him a lesson that the only completely white nation in the League were the Scandinavians.

But we have certainly had some conception of what the League ought to be and might be. And when we talk of the League of Nations today I think it is well to bear in mind—when we criticize the slow work of the League as we do very often—that the League as it stands today has very little real power at its disposal.

In 1920, at the start, distinguished statesmen and politicians who met at Versailles had the idea that what they called public opinion was sufficient to prevent any future wars and that conception set its mark on the whole covenant of the League. It would have been a wonderful idea if people all over the world had the conviction that all the newspapers of the world were edited only and solely for philanthropic and humanitarian interests—and that no private interests of any kind ever influenced the editorial attitude of any paper, and if all journalists of the world were writing only unbiased and uncolored facts. Now, in some countries they are not. I happened to be a journalist myself

and, on one occasion, I felt it my duty to state at the League that the press gallery had far greater influence on world opinion than the assembly on the floor and that leading statesmen and politicians have less real power today because they do not have that grip on public opinion and public imagination which is necessary if they shall wield real power.

One man was rather skeptical in 1920. Sir Bernard Partridge in a well-known cartoon in the *London Punch* visualized the future of the League. He showed a tremendously big snake coiled up ready to spring. In front of the snake sat a little rabbit with a white tie and the words, "League of Nations." The snake was looking with an angry, unforgiving eye. But the rabbit tried to look calm and remarked, "My offensive equipment being practically nil it only remains for me to fascinate him with the power of my eye." And, as some of you may have remarked, that fascination has not always been strong enough to hinder international strife. But the League today is very different from the League in 1920. There has been a gradual and constant development, making the League more universal and more democratic than it was at the start.

It started with a council of nine—five representatives of the principal allied and associated powers and four other members. And those four members at the start were not elected but appointed for an indefinite period on the Council. Today we have a council of fifteen—five representatives of the great powers and ten elected by the League of Nations Assembly. And the number of States adhering to the League is larger than it has ever been. Fifty-eight States are members and the three States that are not members—Japan, Brazil and the United States—adhere to the labor organization, Japan to the Permanent Court and the United States, although the American public very often do not know it, participates in more than half of the work done by the League itself in the secretariat. And gradually all those States, being members of the League, have come to understand that if they unite they will have some power. In League affairs unanimity is required except on matters of procedure. Unanimity can be a very useful instrument

in the hands of even a delegation of a very small country and, on some occasions, it has been the great good fortune of the Scandinavian countries to stop things that ought not to have been done. We are in a singularly fortunate geographical position in Sweden and Norway where there are no frontiers to defend. We had no axe to grind and we had got nothing from any of the Peace treaties and public opinion in our countries demanded that we should stand for ideals and not for national interest and in that attitude we feel that we have always been supported by the British Dominion delegations.

Now to give you an idea of League activities in a short talk is hardly possible, but I want to remind you that the League started its work not in the political field but in the humanitarian field. The need of the world in 1920-21-22 for medical aid, for new ideas to prevent plagues, cholera and other diseases spreading over the world, forced the League into that field of activity. Some of you may remember the epidemic of flu in 1917 and 1918 and what it cost the world. That would give you a slight indication of what it would have cost the world if the League had not stopped the invasion of epidemic diseases in 1920-21 and '22. Between 1916 and 1924 a large proportion of the Russian population died from malaria, typhoid, cholera and the plague. In 1920 there were still left in the camps of Siberia half a million prisoners of war from Asia Minor and one and a half million refugees were driven out. More than half of them were suffering from epidemic diseases. Three hundred thousand were driven out from Bulgaria and the rest of the Armenian population was driven out. In those years the health section of the League started its work and with the co-operation of practically all nations the invasion of diseases was stopped and the refugees from Asia Minor—more than 650,000 got medical treatment through League agencies and through League Committees refugees were settled. Loans were given them under the guarantee of the members of the League—and they became useful citizens and on the first day of the repayment of loans, ninety-four per cent. were paid back. And the six per cent. outstanding has since been paid back. But the refugee problem is a prob-

lem of today, unfortunately, as it was a problem in 1920. Dr. Nanson at that time received a title from the League which, to my mind, is the finest title any man has received in modern times. He was created High Commissioner of Prisoners and Refugees. And through his office, 430,000 prisoners of war were repatriated to twenty-seven different countries. Even today, we have probably something like 2,000,000 of refugees on the hands of the League. We have Jewish refugees, Armenian, Syrian and Russian. They constitute a great problem—an economic and social and also a health problem, for were it not for the aid given by the League the greater part of them would be absolutely destitute.

Fifty-one nations have agreed to look upon what is called the Nanson passport as a sufficient document of identification and justification. If it had not been for the Nanson office and the Nanson passports, those people would have had to spend the rest of their lives in jails all over the world or they would have been sent back to Russia and other countries where they would probably have lost their lives. This is the wonderful work that is continuously going on.

We have daily health work exercises through the great institute for tropical diseases in Singapore which sends health forecasts to all parts of the civilized world telling of the outbreak of tropical and epidemic diseases and giving advice to authorities in any parts of the world.

We have the central institute for the study of leprosy in Brazil and the central institute for the study of infantile paralysis in the Argentine. We have linked up with that wonderful work the control of narcotics—one of the most fascinating things that has been accomplished. It has been accomplished through the co-operation of practically all states of the world. And today—under the section of the League dealing with social questions and the central bureau on opium of the League—there is control of the production and sale of all opium, cocaine and heroin which is nearly complete. The idea has been that that production will correspond to what is declared by experts to be necessary for medical and scientific purposes. Since the ratification of

the China convention, the output of the great refining factories of Switzerland which is the centre of the traffic has been reduced by seventy-five per cent. That is striking evidence in support of the theory that production of articles which are found by universal consent to constitute a danger to mankind can be controlled and can be eliminated.

We have all the work that is being done for the minorities that is a real work for the prevention of conditions that might lead to war. I give you only one of the many hundreds of petitions that have come in to be discussed by the minority section of the League and settled. The Jews living in that part of Germany that comes under the minority section of the peace treaty — Silesia — complained to the League that the German Government in 1933 had initiated action against them and that they were under the protection of the minority treaties. As a result the persecution of the Jews in Silesia was stopped. In other parts of the world there is no such clause. You all know how the Jew has been treated when unprotected. At one time the Italians proposed that all the world should come under that section.

We have mandated territories under the control of the League and if any one in those territories has a complaint he can come before the Mandates Commission of the League and after it has been examined and discussed, the high commissioners and the governors are called before the committee to explain and, in certain cases, to defend themselves and, sometimes, are severely criticized. We have the Memel question, we have the Danzig question, in the hands of the League. I think some of these questions ought to be settled in the very near future. Sometimes the League has not lived up to its principles and obligations, but there is one article in the League Covenant which all those who have their hands clean should remember and that is Article 19. Article 19 declares that: "The Assembly may, from time to time, advise reconsideration by members of the League, of treaties which have become inapplicable and the consideration of international conditions whose continuance might endanger the peace of the world."

This Article makes it possible for delegates to discuss conditions whose continuance may endanger the peace of

the world. Up until now the Assembly has never put Article nineteen on its agenda. It might have been wise for leading statesmen to put it on the agenda because no work of universal peace can be entirely successful unless peace is based on justice and equity. If you study the history of the past centuries or any centuries you will find that peace has never been what is called lasting peace. I know of only one such peace if you might call it one. After the revolution in South America with the help of General Sucre, friendship was cemented between Ecuador and Peru. Both called in General Sucre in whom they had confidence and asked him where the border line should run. He took up the map and showed them where it ought to be. Peru refused to accept this and their army invaded Ecuador and defeated Ecuador. Ecuador sent again for Sucre, who after he had driven out the invaders and defeated them, insisted that the boundary should lie exactly where he had placed it before the invasion. Since then there has been peace.

Statesmen and politicians who met at Versailles were not in a frame of mind to make a just peace. As Winston Churchill says in his "Recollections," "Men who can win war can never conclude peace and men who can conclude peace would not be able to win a war." So, unfortunately, these two forces were not co-ordinated.

The problem before the League of Nations today was well represented in a cartoon by Mr. Low, published in the British press in September. In this cartoon he shows a "great statesman" of a great country dressed up like a black warrior with a shield and spear and round him some soldiers executing a dance of war and crying, "On to Ethiopia;" and before him stands a white lady, very lean and haggard—the angel of peace—holding a document signed by the "distinguished statesman," but he looks at it disdainfully and says: "White lady mistaken; big chief can write, not read."

And the real problem for the League is not a national problem nor a political problem but it is a moral problem. You might call it a problem of education. Will it be sufficient in future that leading statesmen of great countries are people who write or shall it be demanded that they be edu-

cated in such a way that they are able to read documents they have pledged their countries to by their signatures?

Any one of us may criticize men at Geneva and we very often do, but there is one thing that it would be hardly fair to accuse them of—the diplomats and ministers of foreign affairs—and that is simple-mindedness.

When sometimes it is stated in the newspapers that one single country or one or two statesmen are rushing the League and forcing it to take action, you may be all perfectly convinced that the idea is entirely false. At no time has it been possible to rush the League into action. The men going there may lack certain talents, but I think they have never been found lacking in the talents of distrust and suspicion. The mere fact that it has been possible to get more than fifty nations unanimously to take action is almost a miracle. The essential thing was that action should be taken. You may believe me, if there had been any possibility of finding a compromise at Geneva that compromise certainly would have been found. When such a committee as the League committee arrive at an unanimous decision and all the states—members of the League—unanimously adhere to it, it is a new thing in the history of mankind. It is a thing of real importance.

Now in many countries they discuss what they call neutrality. Neutrality in itself does not mean anything. Those who have read the article by Stimson in the November issue of the *Forum* will see it put in a convincing way by a man who is an authority. In many states—even states which are members of the League—the question of neutrality is often predominant. It came up in our parliament six months ago and we decided at that time—it was before this conflict—to put an embargo on all exports of arms, implements and munitions to any country in the war area or on the brink of war except where war had been declared, under competent authorities on the League of Nations, by a country in defence against an aggressor. And, at that time, some distinguished men in our country demanded that we should declare absolute neutrality. I venture to refer these people to the story of a certain man who came down from Jerusalem to Jericho and was attacked by robbers and

nearly slain. And along came a pharisee whose neutrality was complete. He would not take sides—neither with the robbers nor the man nearly slain. He stepped aside. Maybe he was willing to applaud the good Samaritan if he should succeed. And in political life—if you have foresight—very often to keep neutral is only evidence of moral cowardice. Certain interests might be hurt, if you took sides. But the art of living consists in taking sides all along the line.

Now this question of sanctions is not a new question. Under the original Article 16 it was first proposed that the State that went to war should have to pay a heavy fine to the League of Nations, and next it demanded severance of diplomatic, political, economic and commercial relations with the recalcitrant states.

Now in 1920 President Wilson thought that was too drastic and so it was passed in its present form and declares that the state which has broken the covenant has *ipso facto* committed an act of war against all members of the League and they are bound to take action against the aggressor. When the Locarno Treaty was discussed and signed, Article 16 came up for consideration. Some statesmen pointed out that Article 16 was dangerous. It might provoke war if states took action. The Treaty of Locarno, signed by Stresemann, Mussolini, Briand and Chamberlain, said Article 16 must be understood to mean that each state—a member of the League, is bound to co-operate loyally and faithfully in support of the Covenant and in resistance to any act of aggression, to an extent which is compatible with its military situation and takes its geographical position into account.

It is not beyond the limits of human imagination that some great power some day may take what is called special policing measures against some small state.

Now in September and October when, according to the resolution of 1921, a blockade became very imminent, the British Navy became very popular in Geneva. And they conferred a new name upon it. It was called the most valuable annex of the Covenant.

It has been usual in political life to define politics as the art of the possible. It is a very narrow definition, and the

statesman who rests content with trying to do only what is possible at the moment will not be remembered by posterity. That is more true in international than national relations. Only the statesmen, that feel it is their duty to their own country and to mankind to strive to make possible tomorrow that which seems impossible today, will be remembered.

COL. BISHOP:—I think, Mr. Hambro, the applause you have heard expresses the genuine interest with which your address has been listened to and is a true tribute to the able and convincing and delightfully humorous chat you have given us today. We are indeed deeply grateful and it gives me very great pleasure to extend to you a vote of thanks for coming here and being our guest today.