

DISARMAMENT CONFERENCE

By
The Honorable Claude A. Swanson,
United States Senate,
American Delegate, World Disarmament
Conference, Geneva, Switzerland.

While the Disarmament Conference did not accomplish all desired ~~aims~~ and was disappointing in many respects, yet its substantial achievements give great promise for success when it reconvenes in January. When one considers there were more than fifty nations represented at the Conference, with diverse interests and with varied needs for defense, it is indeed gratifying that so much should have been accomplished. It was the first world disarmament conference ever called, it had no precedents, no beaten or tried paths to direct its course. It assembled under adverse circumstances, with a conflict between China and Japan in the Orient and with many political complications in Europe. During the course of the conference there were two elections in Germany, one election in France with three changes of Government, and there were also changes in the Governments of many other states which delayed and impaired to a large extent the work of the General Disarmament Conference. However, it decided definitely to abolish chemical and bacteriological warfare, which is a great boon to humanity. It absolutely prohibited air attack on the civil population under any circumstances, and directed the Bureau of the Conference to prepare plans for the complete abolition of all bombardment from the air. It has committed itself to this abolition provided means can be devised to make it effective. The difficulty in this regard appears to have been on account of the

difficulty in controlling or regulating civil aviation so as to prevent its conversion for bombing purposes in the event of hostilities. The solution sought lies in the realm of regional agreements in Europe for the control or regulation of civil aviation. The Bureau was directed to prepare concrete plans for the accomplishment of this and thereby secure complete abolition of bombing.

The Conference agreed to limit the size of tanks and to abolish the large tanks, which, on account of their great destructive power, are fast becoming mobile fortresses. It also provided for the limitation by number and caliber of land artillery. This action in regard to tanks and heavy artillery will not only result in great savings in expenditures, but will also tend to promote peace because it materially reduces the power of attack and relatively increases the power of defense.

The Conference pledged itself to a ~~xxx~~ substantial reduction in land, air and sea armaments and recognized the underlying principles of President Hoover's plan. If this specific promise is complied with at the second session of the Conference, a further substantial reduction in armament expenditures may be expected. I believe this agreement can be carried out provided the matter is forcefully and aggressively fought for at the second session. The Conference agreed to a strict limitation and a real reduction of effectives. This is the first time that many of the nations represented have ever agreed to reduce the size of their land forces.

The Conference requested that the five Great Naval Powers signatory to the Washington and London Treaties for the Limitation of Naval Armaments confer and endeavor to reach an agreement for

the further reduction and limitation of naval armaments. It also requested the smaller Naval Powers to meet and reach an agreement for the limitation and reduction of their naval armaments. It directed the Bureau to prepare a treaty which would combine these agreements into a world treaty for the reduction and limitation of naval armaments. Negotiations are now pending with the various interested nations for the accomplishment of this purpose, which, ~~will~~ when achieved, will not only result in great savings in expenditures, but will be of incalculable value in preserving the peace of the world.

The Conference directed its Bureau to make a special study of the trade in and the private and state manufacture of arms and implements of war, ~~and~~ to properly control these, and to draft regulations which would give results in preserving world peace. It provided for the establishment of a permanent disarmament commission in order to aid in the execution of the Convention and prepare for further measures of disarmament. It provided for the continuation of the work of the National Defense Expenditure Commission in order to determine whether or not some system of limitation of expenditure was practicable in order to further limit and reduce the cost of armaments.

11 An encouraging feature of the Conference was that those who voted against the resolution which summarizes the work of the Conference, did so not because the resolution went too far, but because it did not go far enough. Those nations opposed to the resolution were impatient and disappointed because the Conference took a recess without achieving all that they desired. The American Delegation was disappointed that the American plan proposed by President Hoover was not accepted before the recess was taken, but we realize that this plan can be put into

effect only gradually and by successive stages. We had a fine American train loaded with a very comprehensive plan, but under the circumstances we were compelled to run that train on an European track and compelled to run it slowly for safety. I hope that when we return the track on which this train will run at the second conference will be Americanized and that it can run with greater speed and safety. In addition, I believe that political conditions in Europe have improved since the conference met and that the contacts existing for six months among the leaders of the nations represented have promoted a better understanding and more good will which augurs well for future results.

The Lausanne Agreement, I believe, settles definitely the amount of reparations which Germany is expected to pay, and thus reparations disappear as a disturbing factor in Europe and the world. While I was in Europe I did not discuss the indebtedness of Europe to America, as it was not within the scope of my instructions. I positively refuse to express any opinion on this subject, as I do not think it is wise or proper for me to do so. The Lausanne Agreement was followed by the Franco-British Agreement for consultation and cooperation upon all important European questions which may arise in the future. This agreement has been accepted by Italy, Belgium, Germany and other European nations and may be expected greatly to improve political and financial conditions in Europe, as well as clearing the political atmosphere for further agreements. Such action will greatly

enhance the prospects of substantial success for the second session of the Disarmament Conference, which, if wisely conducted, will not only benefit the economic situation by reducing the cost of armaments, but will insure world peace by removing fear of aggressive action on the part of nations which now are maintaining excessive armaments.