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ANNEX.

VERBATIM RECORD OF THE EXTRAORDINARY PLENARY MEETING

Saturday, February 6th, 1932, at 10 a.m.

For the purpose of receiving Petitions and Hearing the Representatives of National and International Organisations.

President: The Right Honourable A. HENDERSON.

The President. — In my opening speech, I alluded to the many manifestations of the interest of public opinion in the problem of disarmament which I had received in the form of petitions, requests for interviews, etc., before the opening of the Conference.

The Secretariat and myself have also received a very considerable number of telegrams, letters, resolutions, etc., of support and goodwill from many countries, and emanating from conferences, organisations — religious, political, social — and individual men and women.

It is obviously impossible for me to read all these communications to the Conference, or even to give a summary, however brief, of the messages which they contain.

But it is right for me, by calling attention to some of these communications, to inform the Conference of the very striking evidence which they give of the universal desire of the peoples of the world that our work shall succeed:

Telegram from the Secretary-General of the International Co-operative Alliance: “At its meeting at Strasbourg during the present week, the Alliance decided to send its strong resolution, in the name of seventy million co-operative families in forty-four countries, in favour of universal peace and the complete success of the Disarmament Conference.”

Resolution adopted by the Eastern Council of the Ecumenical Methodist Conference, representing a world-wide community of about fifty millions, which urges upon the Disarmament Conference the overwhelming importance of a successful issue and which calls upon it to “resolve upon a thoroughgoing policy of disarmament alike in respect of land, sea and air forces.”

Telegram from the Secretary-General of the Extraordinary Congress of the Trade Union Commission of Belgium representing the wishes of five hundred and fifty thousand organised workers in that country.

Petition from the Church of Scotland, supported by more than two hundred thousand signatures.

Telegram from the Confederation of Intellectual Workers in France numbering one hundred and ninety thousand.

Telegram communicating to me a petition in favour of a decided reduction in armaments on land, on sea and in the air, signed by one hundred and seventy-three thousand men and women of Japan.

Resolution passed at the Ninth Annual Congress of the Confederation of Authors (known as the “P.E.N. Club”), which includes distinguished writers of forty-five centres in thirty-four countries, among them being nearly all the leading poets and authors in the world.

At a conference attended by many men whose names are known throughout the world, they urged upon us that, by reducing armaments, we should take the first step towards abolishing war, which, in their view, destroys the supreme moral and spiritual welfare of mankind.

Telegrams from the students of Upsala University and from many other schools and universities throughout the world.

A considerable number of letters and telegrams from churches in France, in my own country and elsewhere.

Telegram from the Archbishop of Melbourne, in Australia, informing me that a great inter-church gathering in Melbourne Town Hall expressed its strongest sympathy with the aims of the Conference.

Similar messages from the Young Liberals of Amsterdam; from branches of the Women’s Co-operative Guild in many places in France, Great Britain and other countries; from Rotary Clubs in the United States and throughout Latin America; from branches of the Organised Workers throughout the world; from a joint religious meeting in New York; and also from a variety of sources in Holland, Italy, Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria, and other countries.
In view of the great importance which the Conference attaches to the support of public opinion in the difficult task which is before it, it decided, as an exceptional measure, to give representatives of various international organisations the possibility of appearing before the Conference at an extraordinary meeting, in order to lay before it the text of the petitions adopted by their organisations and to indicate the points to which they attach particular importance.

It is quite clear that, owing to the very limited time at our disposal in which to prepare this meeting to-day, it would have been impossible to notify all the organisations which might otherwise have wished to be represented.

Thanks to the Rules of Procedure adopted by the Conference a few days ago, their petitions will, however, not be forgotten, but will be brought to the attention of the delegates through the Journal of the Conference.

I think the Conference should express its great satisfaction at the fact that we have here to-day the representatives of the principal groups which, for a year or more, have been working to make known the various problems involved in Disarmament.

In accordance with the recommendations of its Petitions Committee, the Conference has laid down certain rules as to the procedure to be followed at the present meeting. I have since then considered, with the President of the Petitions Committee and with the Secretariat, the best means of carrying out the wishes of the Conference and of facilitating the proceedings of to-day.

In this connection, I am very glad to acknowledge here the help which the representatives of the various organisations have given us in this task.

According to the recommendations of the Petitions Committee, each speaker is to be allowed a limited time, and I shall ask them strictly to observe that limitation and to confine their observations to giving support to the text of the petitions they are presenting.

M. Titulesco, in his capacity as President of the last Assembly, has asked to make a short statement.

M. Titulesco (Roumania):

Translation: When acting as President of the twelfth Assembly of the League, I received on its behalf, in the presence of Mr. Beelaerts van Blokland, Netherlands Ministers for Foreign Affairs, a petition to which nearly two and a-half million citizens had spontaneously affixed their signatures, and which is a magnificent testimony to the strength of Netherlands public opinion in favour of disarmament. That petition I was asked to lay before the present Conference.

To hear such opinions, such convictions, proclaimed by a people great in its history, great in its victorious campaign, which it still wages day by day, of wresting new territories, not from hostile neighbours, but from the relentless hand of Nature; by a people worthy of emulation in the development of its democratic institutions, the splendid upgrowth of its system of popular instruction and popular education, its vast and well-directed work of colonisation, and its unceasing efforts for the organisation of peace; by a people it is impossible not to admire for its industry, for the care and probity with which it conducts public and private business — to hear such a proclamation by such a people, I repeat, will hearten all the members of this Conference throughout the arduous task that awaits them.

The fact that this demonstration by the Netherlands, culminating today in a presentation to the President of the Disarmament Conference of the impressive document which I have the honour to submit to you, was launched on the initiative of the Netherlands Press, is, to my mind, a most striking proof of the beneficent influence the Press can exert and of its power to help forward the work of the League.

The task devolving upon the Disarmament Conference is one of infinite complexity and difficulty. To reach the goal they have set themselves the men now assembled at Geneva must indeed be surrounded by an atmosphere of cordiality and confidence of hope, and, above all, of understanding sufficient to dispel all possible elements of divisions while retaining those of lasting unity.

As temporary guardian of this declaration of faith and determination by the Netherlands people, I feel, Mr. President, that the task to which you have pledged your efforts has already been upheld by a plea in the name of one of the noblest peoples of Europe.

The League of Nations will always remain profoundly grateful to the Netherlands people for this proof of its loyalty, for the League, however much it may be criticised, will always be entitled to credit for having been the first institution to put into the history of the human race to instil into the minds of men this message: "Lay down your arms; the battlefield is not the only outlet for your heroism, nor the only means of affording your devotion to the great causes of mankind."

The President. — The representatives of the Women's Organisations will now present their petitions.

I call upon Miss Mary A. Dingman, President of the Disarmament Committee of the Women's International Organisations, to speak.

Miss Dingman (President of the Disarmament Committee of the Women's International Organisations). — It is with a profound sense of responsibility that we come before you to-day as the representatives of fifteen international women's
organisations having branches in fifty-six countries and with a combined membership of some forty-five millions.

We have formed ourselves into a committee, in order to assist by every means in our power in organising a vast and growing public opinion in favour of the Conference and of the realisation of the world-wide cry for disarmament and security.

In the name of our member-organisations throughout the world, we bring you these petitions. We cannot regard them as a mere bundle of papers, nor indeed can we contemplate them without emotion, for they are the expressions of an ardent desire, the appeal of a crying need—the desire and the need for peace. The collection of these millions of signatures has been a task calling for much willing and devoted labour, yet they represent no more than a fraction of the volume of conviction of the urgent necessity for disarmament which is growing on all sides in ever greater proportions.

No pains have been spared to make the signing of these petitions an act of deep meaning and sincerity. Behind each of these eight million names stands a living personality, a human being oppressed by a great fear, the fear of the destruction of our civilisation, but also moved by a great will for peace that cannot be ignored and must not be denied.

It has sometimes been urged by politicians that the world is not ready for disarmament. Here, at least, is the reply of a multitude of men and women from all parts of the world who are determined that nothing shall further delay the fulfilment of the repeated pledges of Governments to carry out a real, general and substantial reduction and limitation of armaments.

But that pledge to disarm does not stand alone. It cannot too often be repeated that we have given our solemn word to renounce war as an instrument of national policy. If that solemn promise of our Governments is not to remain a dead letter, if we are to be true to our best selves and to each other, we are bound in honour to seek immediately another and a better way of settling our differences. It would seem almost an insult to question the sincerity of those pledges but for the tragic evidence we have had within the last few days of the distance that has still to be travelled before we can confidently trust that they will be fulfilled.

We are all living under the shadow of a heavy cloud of depression and anxiety.

The only way out is upwards. We call upon you, our leaders, to rise into a higher atmosphere—above the mists of suspicion and dread—to make the bold experiment of reducing the means and equipment of war as an essential step towards the abolition of war itself.

As the messengers of vast numbers of people who would be here to speak for themselves if they could, we declare that the will of the people is for peace. We assure you that we stand behind you in every effort you are making to achieve a successful issue to this momentous Conference, that we are ready to share in the sacrifices and risks that may be necessary.

That in spite of all this there are sinister influences working against us is not to be denied. If one of the two great causes of war is fear, the other is greed; and, while fear can go far to paralyse the efforts of the friends of peace, greed impels many to be its invertebrate though secret foes. The only way to resist these forces of selfishness is to expose them. We look to you to bring all such oppennents into the open, for we cannot combat shadows and whispers.

While the piling of armaments is a constant menace to the future, it is also a crushing burden which cripples every effort to escape from the economic depression of the present and to build up again the shattered fabric of our civilisation. Even at this moment of acute crisis in every country, more than sixty-five millions of gold francs are being spent every twenty-four hours on preparations for war. We are weary of the unending sacrifices expected of us for purposes of destruction; but the leader who has the courage to demand sacrifices for constructive ends will be enthusiastically supported. Only the peace of the future can redeem the past and do justice to those who gave their lives in the hope of putting an end to war.

A great vision has become clear to the eyes of this generation—the vision of the forces of humanity working together towards one single aim, towards a new world order based on mutual understanding and international goodwill, instead of destroying one another in an endless struggle for conflicting rights. We look to you to bring us one step nearer to the realisation of that vision of peace in our time. It is not for ourselves alone that we plead, but for the generation to come. To us women, as mothers, the thought of what another great war would mean for our children is the strongest incentive impelling us to spend ourselves in the endeavour to make their lives secure from such a disastrous fate.
You have been chosen as delegates to this great Assembly by your respective Governments; but it is not in the name of Governments alone that you speak and act. You are responsible to the peoples of the world. During these anxious weeks, while you are bringing all the power of your intellect and judgment to bear upon the intricate problems that are before you, the people are waiting; they are determined that a way of solution must somehow be found; they are knocking at the doors and their call must be answered. They call upon you to let nothing turn you aside from the unwavering purpose of freeing mankind from the intolerable burden of preparations for war and from the atmosphere of hatred and insecurity which those preparations engender.

We do not shut our eyes to the grave difficulties that you will have to meet, to the tremendous demands that will be made upon your patience, your courage and your goodwill. But technical obstacles, however formidable, are not insurmountable if there is a strong enough will to overcome them, and we believe with all our hearts that there is so mighty a force of public opinion behind you that your efforts must not and will not be in vain.

I will now present the texts of the petitions which were finally adopted by our Disarmament Committee of these fifteen organisations, together with the signatures country by country, which amount to the great total of eight millions.

Besides the eight million individual signatures affixed to these four texts, we have also received declarations, resolutions, and petitions, signed by organisations on behalf of the thousands of members represented by them, from the Argentine, Bulgaria, Uruguay, Lithuania and the Netherlands. Many more petitions have been in since this list was completed, and these petitions will be on view in the delegates' corridor to the left of the building.

The President. — The next speaker is Madame Steenbergh-Engerlingh, President of the International Union of Catholic Women's Leagues.

Madame Steenbergh-Engerlingh (President of the International Union of Catholic Women's Leagues):

Translation: It is in the twofold capacity of members of the great human family and of Catholics that the twenty-five million Catholic women, represented by fifty-four women's leagues belonging to the International Union of Catholic Women's Leagues, together with the Catholic men and women from various countries who have asked the League to represent them here, are resolved to collaborate actively in the cause of peace.

The various resolutions signed by the organisations in various countries which we have the honour to lay before this august assembly are evidence of the determination of the women and other Catholics whom we represent here to pursue the mission of peace in a spirit of charity, the only basis on which peace can be firmly founded, to bring about the substitution of the spiritual force of right and justice for the physical force of arms, in obedience to the injunctions to be found in the Pontifical documents dealing with this subject.

That is why, believing that the simultaneous and general reduction of armaments is indispensable if peace is to be achieved, we adjure the delegates to the present Conference to realise their responsibilities and not to separate without having agreed to an appreciable reduction of armaments. And as, except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it, it is our earnest hope that ladies and gentlemen, that the Lord may be with you.

The Catholic men and women on whose behalf we are also presenting petitions are those of Czechoslovakia and the Netherlands Catholic Peace League.

The President. — The next speaker is M. Müller, Secretary of the Disarmament Committee of the Christian International Organisations.

M. Müller (Secretary of the Disarmament Committee of the Christian International Organisations):

Translation: The Disarmament Committee of the Christian International Organisations is glad to have this opportunity of formally presenting to the Conference for the Reduction and Limitation of Armaments a number of petitions and resolutions which it believes represent the moral and religious convictions of its constituent bodies.

This group numbers in its membership the Universal Christian Council for Life and Work, the World Alliance for International Friendship through the Churches, the World's Alliance of Young Men's Christian Associations, the World's Young Women's Christian Associations, the World Student Christian Federation, the Friends' International Service, and the International Fellowship of Reconciliation.

We do not fail to take into account the vast currents of religious thought and activity that do not come within the realm of our Committee, nor do we presume to speak in the name of all the churches and local religious groups that are affiliated to our international organisations. We do, however, in a broad way, claim to represent the ideals, sentiments, and common programme on behalf of international peace and fellowship of most of the Churches of the Protestant world, a large proportion of the Eastern Orthodox Church, the Old Catholic Church, and hundreds of organisations
connected with the life of these Churches in every continent.

The disastrous effects of the war and of the continued and, indeed, increased menace of armed conflict between nations upon the very structure of our civilisation have compelled these bodies to address themselves directly to those tremendous problems which have brought you here. This has been done in three ways. In the first place, deeply convinced that, even when men and women have done their utmost, they must ultimately depend upon divine guidance, our organisations have considered it their first duty to prepare for this Conference by prayer and to surround its deliberations with this same spirit.

In the second place, they have sought, in all continents and in almost every country, to stimulate those educational processes which will, on the one hand, build up an effective public opinion in the various nations in support of the just peace ideal to which you are committed, and, on the other hand, will produce in the rising generations those qualities of courage, cooperation, and understanding which alone can finally banish the spectre of war. Of these activities, however, it is impossible to give any detailed account here.

In the third place, our organisations have endeavoured to confront the peoples and Governments of the world with clear and unequivocal statements of Christian principle in relation to the basic issues underlying the heavy responsibility resting upon this Conference. I will now take the liberty of recalling certain salient passages of these declarations, selected, on account, not so much of their matter, as of the wide measure of endorsement and support which they have received throughout the world.

First, we have expressions of opinion from innumerable individual congregations; secondly, from great international Church bodies such as the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America, the French Protestant Church Federation, the German Church Federation, the Lambeth Conference, the National Free Church Council of England, the Swiss Evangelical Church Council, the Dutch Branch of the World Alliance, and the Churches of Wales and Monmouthshire. All of these have expressed, in varying terms, the same confident hope that it may be possible to bring about immediately speedy and effective reduction in world armaments, such as is embodied in the following resolution adopted by the Universal Christian Council for Life and Work, which is included in the petition we have the honour to lay before you:

"The Christian Council, addressing itself to the Disarmament Conference, desires to convey to it a message of confidence; it knows that it will not confine itself to a negative prescription of war, but will proceed to a positive organisation of peace.

"It therefore begs the Conference to bring about an effective reduction of armaments on land, on sea and in the air, in accordance with the letter and spirit of the Covenant of the League of Nations."

As recently as September 1931, the International Council of the World Alliance for International Friendship through the Churches, assembled at Cambridge, England, asserted that:

"War, considered as an institution for the settlement of international disputes, is incompatible with the mind and method of Christ and therefore is incompatible with the mind and method of His Church.

"The International Council therefore welcomes the fact that the League of Nations has summoned a World Disarmament Conference and declares that it is the duty of all Churches to bring their utmost influence to bear upon that Conference, so that the representatives of the nations there assembled may know that the religious and moral forces of the world demand such an international agreement as will bring about (1) a substantial reduction of armaments in every form, (2) the fixing of a scale for the armed forces of the nations which shall be equitable for all and consistent with the fact that they have renounced war and have undertaken that any disputes which may arise among them shall never be settled except by pacific means, and (3) security for all nations against aggression.

"The International Council holds that, in the world of to-day, the Churches can countenance no other methods of settling international disputes than conciliation, arbitration or judicial decision, and that the true way to the abandonment of all instruments of war lies in the development of a system of international justice, the growth of mutual respect and confidence, and willingness to make national sacrifices for the common good."

Similarly, at its recent Twentieth World's Conference held at Cleveland, Ohio, the World's Alliance of Young Men's Christian Associations, representing a membership of more than one and a-half million men and boys, unanimously expressed itself in the following terms:

"Conscious of its deep responsibility in regard to the present campaign for effective disarmament, the Conference calls upon the National Alliances to bring the full weight of their influence to bear upon their respective peoples and Governments, with a view to securing that the forerunners of Disarmament Conference shall result in an actual and considerable reduction and limitation of
armaments in accordance with Article 8 of the Covenant of the League of Nations, the Preamble to Part V of the Treaty of Versailles and the official correspondence relating thereto, and the terms of the Briand-Kellogg Pact.

"At the same time, the Conference is deeply concerned about the causes of fear and friction in the international situation of the present day, and, as armaments necessarily imply a state of fear and disharmony between peoples, affirms that it is a Christian duty to strive with hope towards the goal of total disarmament and the elimination of the causes of fear and friction."

Finally, the International Conference of the Society of Friends, held in Paris last November, affirmed that:

"In considering the world situation, we are brought with special urgency at this moment to the problem of disarmament. Recognising that armaments are in part both evidence and cause of that sense of fear and insecurity which is the basis of the present crisis, we share the conviction that their drastic reduction would go far to secure the economic recovery of the world. For the ultimate solution of this problem, we look to the growth of the spirit and practice of cooperation and the development of international institutions, believing that, in this process, armaments will become obsolete and complete disarmament an inevitable reality."

"Yet we would lay emphasis on the significance of the World Conference of 1932, when the first direct assault on the armaments of all nations will be made in Geneva. Without immediate respite from the menace of future war which unrestricted armaments involve, without relief from the spiritual and economic burdens which they impose, the healing forces of reconciliation and the unifying processes of international co-operation will not be given a chance to lead us into that condition from which all occasion for war or armaments will be removed."

"We therefore look to the forthcoming Conference to disregard the pressure of armament interests and to secure drastic entailment of armed preparation."

It is, of course, this group which has most conspicuously and consistently expressed the conviction of no small body of Christian opinion that "all war, and all the symbols and instruments of war, are incompatible with our religious faith and with the essential standards of a sensible civilisation."

The foregoing summary of public pronouncements of Christian bodies, representing various denominations, confessions, nations, and races, indicates clearly that Christians all over the world are keenly aware of the momentous significance of this Conference. There is hardly a nation represented here which has not contributed to the chorus of Christian voices which urge and demand an equitable and universally acceptable solution of the problems of armaments. The clergy and laity of the Christian Churches, as well as leaders of international Christian movements, have expressed themselves in unmistakable language as advocates of a truly peaceful world based on justice and law rather than on power and violence. It is natural that the different conceptions as to the best way of working towards the goal of disarmament, which it will be your duty to harmonise, are also reflected in our midst. You do not know the well the share of Christians in the sins of war and violence to take up an attitude of pacifism. We realise the almost superhuman difficulty and complexity of your task. But while there is diversity in our ranks about the best methods to adopt, there is unity among us as to the immediate aim of our endeavour. We are all working for a world order in which the use of armaments will be both unnecessary and unjustifiable. And we all believe that this Conference can and must make an important advance towards that goal.

As we try to see the present situation realistically, we find that the Conference meets in an atmosphere of widespread uncertainty and pessimism. This pessimism is unfortunately easily to be explained as a result of the tension between nations and classes and now more especially of that breach of the peace which weighs so heavily upon all our hearts. We would, however, urge that Christianity brings a message of hope. It challenges us all, not only to face facts, but also to discharge our responsibilities as those upon whose efforts the future world order must so largely depend. Our faith is in a God Who leads the destinies of the nations and to Whom nations, as well as individuals, are responsible. Is not the great opportunity of which the President spoke in his opening speech an opportunity given by God Himself? If so, His message to us to-day is: "If ye will hear His voice, harden not your heart".

As Christians we recognise that the possibility and success of all efforts for disarmament depend upon the attitude of the nations towards each other. More important even than a new convention on disarmament is that inner disarmament of the spirit which excludes fear and hatred from international life. It is to this task..."
that we are specially called as messengers of the Prince of Peace. It is to this task that we would solemnly pledge ourselves before this historic gathering.

The President. — We are now to have the representatives of the students' organisations. The first speaker is M. Jean Dupuis, representative of the Disarmament Committee of International Students' Organisations.

M. Jean Dupuis (Representative of the Disarmament Committee of International Students' Organisations):

Translation: We learned with pleasure of your decision to hear this morning the voice of public opinion direct. As for my friend, the representative of the American universities, and myself, representing the great international university associations, we are extremely grateful to you for allowing us to occupy this platform for a few moments, a privilege which we owe to your confidence and your gracious appreciation of the action taken by our associations in favour of the organisation of peace.

Students, who are frequently thought of as light-hearted and careless, have in recent years been brought into contact with stern realities and have understood the necessity of working for peace and the still more vital necessity of combined effort in this work. On July 12th last, on the initiative of the International University Association for Mutual Assistance and of its representative, M. Poberezhskii, our delegates decided to engage in joint action in favour of the present conference. These delegates represented more than two million students. They represented the International Conference of Students, the International Student Service, the International University Federation of League of Nations Unions, the Universal Federation of Christian Students' Organisations, the International Federation of University Women, Pax Romana, and the Union of Jewish Students.

The resolution which they adopted was followed by immediate results — amongst others, the organisation in several countries, under the auspices of the International University Federation of League of Nations Unions, of university meetings on a large scale in favour of disarmament. A Permanent Committee was also set up to act as a liaison Committee, and has its headquarters at Geneva.

In November last, in Paris, when a great demonstration of disarmament was held, the delegates agreed upon a text which was to be the universal charter of the university associations in the cause of disarmament. I would remind you of the principles of this charter. They are as follows:

"The international students' organisations, representing the young people of the universities of the world, of every race, creed and shade of political opinion, and comprising upwards of two million students, devoted to the ideal of peace, for which their fathers laid down their lives;

"Whereas the success of the forthcoming Disarmament Conference is absolutely essential if the world economic crisis is to be overcome and the dangerous race for armaments is to be stopped;

"Are convinced that the fate of their generation and the future of civilisation depend to a large extent on the results achieved by the Disarmament Conference; and earnestly hope that the members of this Conference, met at Geneva in February 1932, will not separate until they have rendered possible a substantial limitation and reduction of armaments by means of an international pact."

As you see, we are convinced that it is our duty to work for a reduction of armaments, because we are convinced that that means working for organised peace and defending an ideal, an ideal sanctified by the death of numberless men on numberless battlefields, who were all convinced, no matter from what country they came, that they were dying to end war.

We are persuaded, too, that, thanks to the economies resulting from a general reduction in armaments, we shall to some extent succeed in mitigating the economic crisis, which condemns us of the present generation to unemployment before we have begun to work. Aware as you are of the plight of students who are faced with the problem of earning their living, you will not be surprised that they also should be thinking of remedies capable of preventing a return of the scourges which threaten us.

Primarily interested as we are in the intellectual relations between our respective countries, we have realised the fundamental importance of moral disarmament, which is the first necessary condition of material disarmament and, like material disarmament, depends upon the results of this Conference. "To disarm men's minds is to disarm their arms" is a common saying, and that is why we are convinced that the peace of the world depends to a large extent on the outcome of the Conference.

It is not for us to study the technicalities of disarmament, but what we venture to say, and what we feel, is that there is a need for this machinery and that, after what has been reached in the battle of conflicting views, you should agree upon a basis for disarmament. We know that the organisation of peace in general depends upon the goodwill of all, no matter whose he best they obey, no matter in what capacity they are working or what sacrifices they have
to make. We are placing all our strength at the disposal of pacific forces. In some countries, for example, we shall find ourselves working with teachers’ associations, in others with women’s organisations, while everywhere we desire to work with servicemen’s associations—with those who, better than anyone, know the true value of the word “peace.” We, of the present generation, desire to work with them—the generation of the trenches—so that we may realise to the fullest possible extent what M. Henry de Jouverneul has so truly described as the “holy alliance of past ills and future hopes”.

Thus, shall we—mainly thanks to you—succeed in giving to the nations which have been fighting since time immemorial, the living, comforting realisation of what is to-day only a hope, though a hope which we shall defend all the more resolutely because we realise our own weakness.

Mr. James Green (Representative of the Intercollegiate Disarmament Council of the United States of America).—This morning you are receiving petitions from many of those who may most justifiably beseech you to secure a substantial reduction of armaments. I wish to petition you on behalf of several groups which have a particular right to demand the assurance of a permanent peace, based upon the principles that security is a collective interest of the several States, that the building of peace must be founded on equality of status, and that those instruments of war which allow rapid mobilisation for purposes of aggression should be abolished.

As representative of the Intercollegiate Disarmament Council, the Student Christian Movement and the Peace Patriots in the United States, as well as the Student Movement of Great Britain, may I endorse the remarks of the previous speaker by endeavouring to express the views of the young men and women of these two countries.

American college students organised this fall an Intercollegiate Disarmament Council to crystallise our sentiment through a disarmament poll, which was taken in over seventy colleges, including almost 25,000 undergraduates. Sixty-two per cent of the voters desired the United States to begin disarming independently, while thirty per cent favoured total disarmament on agreement with other States. Seventy-four per cent of the students voting favoured American participation in the World Court; sixty-three per cent recommended adherence to the League of Nations. Eighty-one per cent were opposed to compulsory military training, although only thirty-eight per cent suggested dropping voluntary training from the curriculum.

When presented with these results by a deputation of thirty-nine undergraduates from thirty-two colleges, President Hoover was asked to appoint an official student member on the American delegation. As this was deemed impractical by the Government, the Council has sent me to Geneva as a special representative to express its views before the Conference. We deeply appreciate your willingness to receive this report of our work.

The Council of Christian Associations formulated a comprehensive programme to the same end, co-operating with the World’s Student Christian Federation, which has directed the student peace work of many countries. Small study groups, public forums, and regional conferences were formed throughout the United States under these and similar auspices.

I am deeply gratified that I may add to the petitions from America a special message received yesterday from representatives of all types of undergraduate opinion in Great Britain. These students, who include the presidents and officers of the unions, athletic clubs and other societies from twenty-nine universities and university colleges of England, Scotland and Wales, united in petitioning their Government to stand for drastic all-round reduction of armaments, saying that no reduction of less than one-quarter will meet the immediate need.

In transmitting these petitions, I should hardly be speaking with the candour of the new world if I did not discuss some of the questions which are constantly being debated in every dormitory, club and fraternity house in America and England. We never cease to ask: Were those ten million young men, who loved life as wholeheartedly as ourselves, the victims of an illusion when they fell to earth only a few years ago? Must the insanity known as war be repeated within our generation at the cost of our lives? Most important, what is to be our answer to the Government in case of mobilisation for war? No doubt, it may be considered unwise, even impertinent, to raise these issues; yet I would be playing traitor to my constituency were I to remain silent. Perhaps students may rush in where diplomats fear to tread.

After contemplating the events preceding the catastrophe of 1914, we remain unconvincing as to the wisdom of our predecessors. Fourteen years after the
armistice, the glamour and heroism of that period fail to impress us, even when inscribed in gilt on stone memorials. The swords have lost their brilliance; the helmets and shiny buttons are tarnished. In fact, the whole glorious temple of Mars has crumbled into ashes. We respect the noble war dead; but we question the judgment of those responsible for their death.

Organised slaughter, we realise, does not settle a dispute; it merely silences an argument. We insist that for violence be substituted juridical control through the World Court and executive action through the League of Nations. If we are to evolve an international order out of anarchy, we must renounce nationalism and drastically curtail the absolute sovereignty of States.

The other speakers have much at stake; we have even more, for we are literally fighting for our lives. I stand before you as attorney for the defence, pleading for a reprieve. It is my generation which will be called upon to surrender all we consider worth while in life in order to become targets for machine-gun bullets and victims of the latest poisonous gas. It is the young men and women of my age who will be commanded to commit suicide. It is my generation which will be requested to destroy the best of human culture, perhaps civilisation itself, for causes which future historians will discover to be erroneous, if not utterly stupid or actually vicious. We have thus lost interest in being prepared for cannon fodder.

In a sense, I am presenting an ultimatum, rather than a petition. The students whom I represent are watching critically every action of this Conference. For behind your deliberations stands staring down at us the spectre of Death. We desire to live and to live at peace. We desire to construct a world society providing freedom, equal opportunity and a sense of security. We desire to make possible for every human being full development of personality in terms of the highest human and spiritual values we know. Those of us who have retained a conception of a loving and purposeful God desire to live in peace lives which will reflect that concept. We are therefore petitioning you for a substantial reduction of armaments, in order that we may have a civilisation in which to forward this creative purpose.

The President. — The next speaker is M. Paul Dupuy, representative of the International League for the Rights of Man and Citizenship.

M. Paul Dupuy (Representative of the International League for the Rights of Man and Citizenship):

Translation: The International League for the Rights of Man and Citizenship, being the outcome of a revolt on behalf of individual freedom against the abuse of force, could not but associate itself wholeheartedly with all the efforts that have been made to prevent that abuse in international relations.

Hence the 200,000 signatures collected in France for the petition which was sent in September 1931 to the responsible League of Nations authorities, to press forward the meeting of this Conference. The signatures are firmly convinced that all peoples hate war, that all are chafing at the burden of taxation imposed upon them for the preparation of war, and that when they are seized with war psychosis the fault lies with those who govern them.

We have proof of this in the present moral state of the world; the idea of a fresh war is spreading, and acute anxiety is undoubtedly one of the principal factors in the worldwide economic crisis. It is your task to dispel that anxiety, and to restore confidence to the world by a frank fulfillment of the undertaking inscribed in the Covenant of the League.

The Covenant, by recognising that the maintenance of peace requires a reduction of national armaments, not only promises this reduction, but solemnly proclaims at the same time that failure to reduce armaments would mean a threat of war. You are meeting at the very moment when the threat of a new world war has been expressly formulated before the Council of the League.

If ever a common effort was necessary to fulfil that promise and remove that threat it is necessary to-day.

It is no longer a case of awakening hope, as at the time of Locarno or the Paris Pact; it is a case of dispelling anxiety by removing the suspicions which is felt throughout the world that Locarno and the Paris Pact were mere shams, and the still more demoralising suspicion that your work is a sham as well.

There is a pledge to be honoured. To honour that pledge by a mere semblance of armament reduction would be to recognise, on the one hand, that the peoples of the world expect the pledge to be honoured and, on the other, that the Governments cannot or will not do so. In a word, it would be a most dangerous subterfuge. Moreover, the pledge was given even more to the dead than to the living — to all the dead, among whom there were undoubtedly some who to-day would be of the greatest value to our civilisation in helping to prevent its ruin.

Auguste Comte once said that humanity is composed more of the dead than of the living. In the rooms in which you confer, you must be conscious of the presence of ten
I am not here to state the case for disarmament. It would be superfluous for me to do that, since the actual meeting of this Conference shows that a general agreement exists throughout the world as to its necessity. My object is rather to lay before the Conference certain proposals agreed to by my Federation on which, in their view, disarmament can be secured. I wish to emphasise that what I have to put before you is a concrete plan, not worked out of course, in all its details, but as precise as we can make it in its general lines. That plan is set forth in the resolution that accompanies the written version of my observations which is now in the hands of all members of the Conference.

The resolution was passed last year at Budapest at the annual meeting of the Federation. It had been drawn up by an international committee which met at Paris in the previous spring, on which eleven nations were represented, including, besides my own country, Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, and so on. I am not going to read that resolution, but I will state as shortly as I can its general purpose.

In the first place, it states the general case for disarmament so far as it depends on treaties, and it emphasises the danger which will unconditionally be caused to peace by a failure to discharge those obligations. There might, of course, have been added many reasons, as the Conference knows, including those of an economic nature.

Secondly, it asserts that security and disarmament must go hand in hand, and it points out that since 1919 there has been, as far as treaty obligations are concerned, a great increase in international security. In this connection, it mentions the growth in authority and prominence of the League of Nations, the increase of agreements to refer international disputes to arbitration, the Locarno Treaties, the Pact of Paris, and the Treaty of Financial Assistance. In return for these obligations, it urges that the time has come for a serious reduction of armaments which might result in a reduction of world armament expenses by some twenty-five per cent.

Thirdly, it declares that, with a further increase of security, further disarmament might take place, and it urges a variety of measures by which the increase of that security might be obtained. Amongst these measures is included the extension of the League and of arbitration treaties, the internationalisation of aviation, further prohibition of chemical and bacteriological warfare, and other measures. It also recommends proposals by which the security
of any nation the victim of aggression shall be augmented by further provisions aimed at joint action in its defence by all other Powers. If I had time, I should like to go further into those questions.

Fourthly — and in some ways this is the most important part of the resolution — it lays down that equality in disarmament between the victors and the vanquished in the world war should be in principle recognised, and that steps in that direction should be taken by the present Conference. With this object it makes three definite recommendations: first, the acceptance by all signatories of the Disarmament Treaty of the principle of budgetary limitation — that is, the limitation of the amount spent every year on armaments by each nation; secondly, it proposes the prohibition for all nations of those kinds of armaments which are now forbidden to the vanquished Powers; and thirdly, it recommends the establishment of the same system for the international supervision of the armaments of all countries.

It will be observed that these proposals rest on three main principles. In the first place, the sanctity of treaties. The Federation holds that the obligation to disarm is just as much a treaty obligation as any of the others contained in the peace treaties; and if the obligation is not honoured — in other words, if this Conference does not succeed in bringing about some real measure of disarmament — the whole basis on which those treaties — and indeed all treaties — will be undermined. The two other principles are those of security and international equality. They may perhaps be considered as different aspects of the same proposition; since security in the last analysis must depend upon treaties, the binding force of treaties must depend upon the real and genuine assent of the parties to them, and it is doubtful if real and genuine assent can ever be obtained without equality of status. In the same order of ideas, it will be found that the actual proposals tend to decrease the offensive power of armaments which leave the defensive power untouched.

That eventually must be the chief object of any disarmament proposals. If I am right in this representation of our proposals, it is evident that they will produce a very important increase of security. Carried to its logical conclusion, the removal of the power of aggression would eventually bring about a complete security, and anything which diminishes the power of aggression proportionately to the power of defence necessarily increases the safety of the world.

What then are the specific reductions which we propose? We urge on the naval side that there shall be built no more ships over ten thousand tons in size. We hold that naval monsters larger than that have no real reason for their existence, except to fight one another. They are not the vessels most suitable for the protection of commerce, or indeed for any other defensive operation; if there were none of them on the sea, no one, as far as we can see, would be in any degree injured. Next we desire the abolition of submarines. It is sometimes said that submarines are really defensive and that they are a great source of security to small Powers which cannot afford the larger warships. That argument would be to a great extent destroyed if the big battleships came to an end. Moreover, I do not think that the records of the late war really afford any justification for this dogma. I doubt whether the submarines in the late war ever succeeded in hindering any naval operation. Certainly, vast numbers of men and munitions were transported from England and America to the theatre of war without one single ship by which they were carried ever being injured by a submarine. It is true that a certain number of war vessels were sunk by submarine attack but they were not many, and it is understood that the recent developments of marine architecture make future successes of this kind still less likely. The real strength of the submarine was in the destruction of merchant ships, which is a purely offensive operation and one which has already received condemnation by most, if not all, of the great naval Powers.

Next as to the land. We wish for the abolition of tanks and large land guns. The great purpose of both these weapons is the destruction or penetration of defensive entrenchments. In the late war, it was found that, with modern rifles and machine-guns, the power to hold an entrenchment was very great, especially with the aid of wire entanglements. I believe that it will be generally admitted that without tanks and land guns and one other weapon which I will come to in a minute, it would have been impossible to capture a properly entrenched position. In other words, these weapons — tanks and big land guns — are essential to attack and, without saying that they are not sometimes of use for defensive purposes, it is true to assert that without them no offensive against properly organised defences is practicable.

Finally, there is the question of military aircraft which are also of use in attacking entrenched positions. But their use went far beyond that. Their main offensive purpose was to bomb buildings and other objects of military importance, or it might be even bodies of troops. But even those objects of military importance gradually came to include anything which would weaken or
destroy the morale of the enemy country. Accordingly, great cities were bombed, on both sides, and though, under the then conditions, not very much material damage was done, there was no doubt a considerable amount of fear and anxiety caused amongst the civil population. In any future war, all that would be enormously increased; the powers of aerial bombing have been multiplied in recent years ten or twenty times at least, involving an appalling slaughter of non-combatant men, women and children. Nor need anyone think that there is any prospect that these powers will not be utilised to the full. We have seen in recent events in the Far East to what extent the military authorities have thought it right to employ bombing under very remarkable conditions, nor have we any reason to suppose that the Japanese military authorities are unique in that respect. On the contrary, in all the air manoeuvres that have taken place in the last few years, practice in bombing cities has been a common occurrence. If, therefore, the Conference would agree to the abolition of military aircraft, it would not only render offensive military operations more difficult; it would abolish what is surely a most barbarous form of warfare and would, in one important respect, equalise the armament conditions of the vanquished and victorious Powers in the late war. The only objection that I have seen to this proposal is that it is said that, if military aircraft are abolished, there would be no defence against civil aircraft used for military purposes. I am personally inclined to think that the danger thus indicated is exaggerated in argument, but, in any case, it ought to be met, and I believe that it could be met either by the internationalisation of civil aircraft, or it may be—and this is a matter for careful examination—by the creation of an international air force. I am sorry that I cannot go into these subjects further on the present occasion.

Such is the scheme that I am authorised to lay before the Conference, and, if I may say so, I would not only lay it before the Conference but, through the Conference, before the peoples of the world. If it were adopted, you would make a genuine first step towards disarmament; by lessening the offensive power of armaments, you would automatically increase general security; you would afford substantial satisfaction to the demand for international equality and you would save fully the twenty-five per cent on world expenditure for which the overtaxed peoples of all nations are looking.

The President. — I now take the Workers' Organisations, (a) Labour and Socialist Organisations (the speaker will be M. Vandervelde), (b) the International Federation of Trade Unions (the speaker will be M. Joniaux).

M. Vandervelde (representative of Labour and Socialist Organisations): Translation: I rise to speak in this assembly in the name of the Labour and Socialist International, acting in conjunction with the International Federation of Trade Unions.

The Socialist International numbers more than six million organised workers. It groups, in countries constituted on a democratic basis, more than twenty-five million votes. The membership of the International Federation of Trade Unions amounts at present to over fourteen millions, and when, together with ourselves, it calls for total disarmament, it is conscious that it is speaking also in the name of millions of workers all over the United States of America, India and the Far East, who, in this particular sphere, are in full agreement with us.

This is the text of our joint petition:

"We must disarm to ensure peace. The treaties have imposed disarmament on certain nations. They have promised it for the others. But the lengthy negotiations carried on at Geneva have not as yet been productive of positive results. Military burdens are continually increasing. The nations' patience is strained to its limits. We demand that the Government represented at the Conference should now take action and conclude a convention which shall at once ensure a mass reduction of effective and material and military expenditure, thus bringing about without delay world disarmament, total disarmament, subject to control."

There may perhaps be some among you who will be amazed, who may even be offended at the imperative character of this text. But unless we spoke in this tone we should be betraying the purpose of the millions of men who have appointed us to represent them here. This I declare to be full consent, no less, of what I am saying: we come here not in a mood of supplication, to voice the hopes of others; we come to state our claims. Calling upon the higher powers, we speak on behalf of the lower powers. Not, I need hardly say, that we are under any illusion, or expect immediate and full effect can be given to our claims. But it means something, it means a great deal, that this Conference should have met at last. It is a wonderful thing to see assembled here all the nations which not so long ago in Paris placed a ban upon war; it is a wonderful thing to see them taking counsel together, discussing the means whereby they may do away with national armaments, which weigh so heavily upon the peoples, and deliberating under circumstances such that our President — forgive me, your President, for I was thinking myself back in the days when Henderson was my predecessor in office, that your President, I say, was right a hundred times over to declare in his opening speech that he refused to contemplate even the possibility of failure for this
Conference, for no one could foretell the evil consequences that might ensue.

It is a wonderful thing also to see at the head of this assembly, as it were, the living symbol of the growing power of the working classes, a man who once worked iron with his hands, who was for years the President of our International, who still enjoys the full and complete confidence of his former comrades, and who, only the other day, declared it to be his conviction—which is ours also—that the world wants disarmament.

In spite of this, we cannot, if I may say so, expect exaggerated results from this Conference. And why? I have stated why in writing. We were requested to submit texts to the Petitions Committee, and although our text has already been communicated to the Press, there are certain objections on grounds of procedure to my reading it now. We expressed our doubts as to the possibility of obtaining decisive results from this Conference.

There are very few here who represent directly, in the present Governments, the hopes of the vast masses of the working classes. Not all of the Governments represented at the Conference are Governments constituted on a democratic basis.

Lastly—and here we touch on the delicate point which our President does not wish us to bring up—things are happening at this moment on the other side of the world which would spell war if the Paris Pact did not prohibit war, things wherein I have expressed in my text an opinion which I hold more strongly than ever, and which I will simply summarise now: it would be highly regrettable if, either now or in the future, treaties were to lose all their moral force by reason of an assertion by fire and sword, that might is right.

Having said so much, I would remind you of the circumstances in which we have come here (and we are grateful to you for having given us this opportunity). We have come to remind you of undertakings and promises which have been made and to place before you the circumstances in which a joint resolution came to be agreed upon between the representatives of the Workers’ Union.

When, at the Conference of Versailles, in May 1919, the German Government agreed to the abolition of compulsory military service on condition that this should be the beginning of a general reduction of the armaments of all countries, the President of the Conference replied: “The Allied and Associated Powers wish to make it clear that their requirements in regard to German armaments were not made solely with the object of rendering it impossible for Germany to resume her policy of military aggression.

They are also the first steps towards that general reduction and limitation of armaments which they seek to bring about as one of the most fruitful preventives of war.”

I do not propose for one moment to discuss whether, and if so, how far, those promises have been kept. The fact remains, however, that there is at present an enormous disproportion, a flagrant disproportion, between the armaments allowed to the vanquished and those which the victors claim the right to maintain.

That disproportion explains in the main the claims set forth in the joint resolution of the International Federation of Trade Unions and the Socialist Workers’ International. I am not going to read you the resolution now; I simply wish to place the essential clauses of it before you.

1. Disarmament can be stable and permanent only if based on equality of rights and duties. Nothing could be more fatal to peace than to claim that the victorious and vanquished nations should be made subject indefinitely to different regimes.

2. There can be no question of achieving equality by the re-arming of the countries which were disarmed under the terms of the Peace Treaties. This Disarmament Convention must not be used as an instrument for increasing armaments. We are faced with this dilemma: either disarmament for all or freedom to arm for all. Armaments must not be levelled up but levelled down. General disarmament must tend towards a lower level of armaments.

Finally (and this, I may inform you, is essential in our view), in order to guarantee the observance of the general Convention which is to be concluded, it is imperative to organise, independently of the national control in the different countries which only democracy makes possible, strict international control over expenditure, armaments, public and private manufacture of war material and international traffic in arms.

Thus we have: the abolition of the distinction between victors and vanquished; the maintenance, but also the generalisation, of the disarmament already imposed by the treaties and, lastly, international control, without which, I need hardly say, the most pacific Conventions would remain ineffective and might even perhaps constitute a danger, unless accompanied by stringent multilateral control. Such are our claims.

That is what we ask; or rather—to revert to your President’s speech at the first meeting—that it what we demand. We demand it on behalf of the peoples who are tired of paying each year over one hundred billions of francs for the international war budget, on behalf of the socialist workers of every country who refuse to march forward again—the blind led by the blind—towards the abyss of war. After the terrible sufferings they have experienced, they see things clearly to-day, and the masses are beginning to see clearly too.
Your President, with all the authority which international confidence has conferred upon him, addressed a stern warning the other day to those who refuse to see, who refuse to realise that in every country the working masses are firmly opposed to war and to anything that may seem to be a preparation for war.

This is the moment at which fates are decided. From your deliberations may issue peace or — who knows how soon? — war. Experience has shown us that competition in armaments produces its inevitable consequences. We know too — and that is perhaps a pledge of your ultimate success — how wars between peoples end. That you might learn, if it were necessary, from one delegation here which could speak if it would.

That is why, after the terrible sufferings which have brought common misery upon them all, the socialist workers of all countries of Belgium and of France, of Germany and of Britain, of all the sections of the International, are calling for disarmament and in urging that, should a fresh catastrophe befall the world, the inevitable result would be what happened in half of Europe as the aftermath of 1917.

The socialist workers of all countries are agreed to spare no effort to prevent the repetition of such a state of affairs; and if there were a repetition they are firmly determined, if not to throw away their arms, at all events to refuse to turn them against one another.

Such is the message entrusted to us. We have it to your far-sightedness and wisdom — perhaps, I might add, to your statesmanlike sagacity — to draw the conclusions.

M. Jouhaux (Representative of the International Federation of Trade Unions):

Translation: After my friend Vandervelde, I too wish to say, before you briefly the reasons why we have come here.

Our purpose in bringing to the Conference the fourteen million petitions from trade unions, federations, national trade union organisations affiliated to the International Federation of Trade Unions, was to bring home to you the determination of millions of men and women that effect should at last be given to the solemn promises made to the peoples, promises inscribed in the treaties. The moment has come when the reduction of armaments — a preface to complete general disarmament — appears as an essential, an indispensable, undertaking, the performance of which can no longer brook delay.

We know that this reduction is possible. Factors of security exist already and demand a reduction of armaments, that they may become permanent and be further extended. We know it is possible, because the International Federation of Trade Unions, through its delegates, collaborated in the work of the

Disarmament Commissions of the League and the work accomplished has enabled a certain number of rules to be defined, rules whereby armaments can be reduced to the minimum compatible with national security. We call for this reduction in arms, because the unparalleled world-wide unemployment can be relieved only by a reduction of the stupendous military burdens which cripple the economic progress of the peoples. We call for those measures on behalf of the twenty millions of unemployed, on behalf of the sixty millions of human beings who are suffering actual physical deprivations.

It is idle, it is mere mockery, to talk of international co-operation if the peoples continue to arm against one another; it is idle to speak of economic co-operation, if rival aims and competitions in armaments still tend to banish mutual confidence. Armaments do not mean security; security is a function of mutual confidence between peoples, of their common determination to settle their disputes by peaceful means, on a basis of equal rights and equal duties. Security determines disarmament. If this were not so, if the Conference were to fail, the righteous wrath of the peoples would blaze up — righteous because kindled in the cause of peace. The weary hours fraught with danger through which we are passing make our duty clear, and that duty is to enter on the path of disarmament.

The conscience of the world proletariat will be with you in the accomplishment of this great work of pacification. The assistance of its organisations is yours to help you to make effective and sincere that mechanism of national and international control without which the reduction of armaments might remain inoperative, without which the private manufacture of arms and implements of war, that shameful ranker of modern society, would continue to corrupt the virtue of mankind. Supported by the will of the peoples through your readiness to assist you, the Conference must achieve its mission; it must dispel the nightmare of war that still haunts us with such ghastly menace; it must establish peace upon earth, peace the outcome of security, disarmament and compulsory arbitration.

The President.—In the name of the Conference, I desire to thank all those who have addressed us this morning; also to thank the deputations who have accompanied their spokesmen, and to thank the organisations whom they represent. Not only do I thank them in your name for their universal expression of goodwill and support, but for the many practical suggestions which are contained in several of the speeches.

I would like specially to say a word of thanks to the Women's Organisations. They have brought us really a remarkable
manifestation of public interest in this Conference, and the amount of labour which must have been necessary to obtain all those millions of signatures is truly astonishing, and it is difficult to realise how they have been able to devote the necessary time and effort to the accomplishment of this work. I venture to hope that, as this Conference proceeds, they will feel that they have a deepened interest in watching its progress, and that their efforts have not been in vain. Not only will the speeches and petitions be noted, but I venture to think that their important demands will receive the serious consideration of all the delegations represented at this Conference.