DECLARATION AND RESOLUTIONS
ADOPTED BY THE CONFERENCE OF PRESS EXPERTS
Submitted to the Council on September 2nd, 1927

PREAMBLE.

Whereas the Assembly of the League of Nations, on September 16th, 1925, requested the Council of the League to consider the desirability of summoning a Committee of Experts representing the Press in different continents in order (1) to enquire into means of ensuring more rapid and less costly transmission of Press news with a view to reducing the risks of international misunderstanding and (2) to discuss all technical problems the solution of which, in the opinion of experts, would be conducive to the tranquillisation of public opinion in various countries

And Whereas the Council of the League, after careful consultation with interested journalistic circles and on the basis of the preparatory work of three technical Press Committees, convened this General Conference of Press Experts, which met in Geneva from August 24th to August 29th, 1927

Whereas this Conference brought together sixty-three experts, twenty assessors, and thirty-five technical advisers, from thirty-eight countries, Members or non-Members of the League, representing not only the different continents of the world but also the different categories within the Press itself, of newspaper proprietors, news-agency representatives, journalists, and directors of official Press bureaux

This Conference expresses to the Assembly and the Council of the League of Nations its appreciation of the importance attached to the work of the Press, of the opportunity for wide consultation so offered, and especially of the principle laid down by the Council and Assembly of the League that there should be no interference whatsoever with the independence of the Press

Expresses the hope that the Assembly and the Council of the League of Nations will give the necessary instructions to the various technical organisations of the League of Nations whose collaboration may be desirable for the execution of the technical resolutions of the Conference

Trusts that the Assembly and the Council will maintain such contact with the progressive development of these problems that, if the various interests here represented express at a later date the desire of the Press for a further consultation or conference, they may again put the League’s technical facilities at the disposal of the Press

Adopts the following programme in order that journalists may have every facility in residing, travelling, securing news and improving their professional equipment, and that news itself may be free at the source, expedited in every possible way in its transmission, protected before and after publication against unfair appropriation, and given the widest possible dissemination, to the end that the work of the Press may be made more effective in its responsible mission accurately and conscientiously to inform world public opinion and hence to contribute directly to the preservation of peace and the advancement of civilisation

And adopts the following special resolutions, based on technical, professional, and international considerations, as the first steps towards carrying this programme into effect

RESOLUTIONS.
I. PRESS RATES.

The Conference of Press Experts expresses the conviction that it is to the general interest to assure the propagation of Press news as rapidly as possible and at moderate rates.

For this purpose it decides to submit the following recommendations to the Council of the League of Nations and to request it to be good enough to communicate them to the Organisation for Communications and Transit in order to undertake the necessary technical investigations in co-operation with Press experts and communication authorities.

A. Telegraph and Wireless Telegraph.

(a) Priority for Press Telegrams by Wire and Wireless.

The Conference recommends that, for the purpose of international communication, Press telegrams should be given priority over ordinary private telegrams.
(b) "Urgent Press" Telegrams by Wire and Wireless.

The Conference recommends the establishment, for the purpose of international communication, of an "Urgent Press" telegram which should pay double rates compared with ordinary Press telegrams. "Urgent Press" telegrams should have priority over "Urgent Private" telegrams.

(c) Long-Distance Communications.

In view of certain excessively high rates that prevail for long-distance Press communications, the Conference recommends that measures should be adopted by Governments and the commercial enterprises concerned to facilitate the reduction of tariffs for such Press communications by cable, by wire, or by wireless.

The Conference recommends that all fiscal taxes imposed by administrations on Press telegrams in transit and all terminal charges levied by Governments upon incoming messages by telegraph, cable, or wireless that are not handled by such Governments should be eliminated.

The Conference recommends the introduction, where such services do not exist, of a system of deferred Press telegrams and cable letters at a particularly low rate.

(d) Regional Telegraphic Understandings.

The Conference recommends the conclusion, on the example of agreements already concluded between the Scandinavian and Baltic States, of regional understandings between neighbouring countries establishing internal rates for telegraphic communications between the signatory States.

B. Telephone.

The Conference recommends in international conversations

1. For ordinary Press communications, a reduction in rates of 50 per cent, with priority over ordinary private conversations

2. For urgent Press communications, a reduction in rates of 50 per cent, with priority over urgent private conversations

3. The readjustment of rates whenever the rate applied on the basis of an international scale is greater than what would result from adding the national rates of the countries through which the communication passes.

C. Questions exclusively concerning Wireless Telegraphy.

(a) Authorisation to receive Press Messages by Wireless.

The Conference recommends postal administrations to grant to properly accredited newspapers and news agencies licences to receive wireless telegraphic and telephone Press messages at a charge based on the character and extent of the services received.

(b) Rates of Wireless Telegraph Messages.

The Conference recommends that the rates charged for transmitting Press messages by wireless telegraphy should be fixed with regard to the lower cost of transmission by wireless as compared with transmission by cable.

(c) Messages by Wireless Telegraph from Geneva.

In order that journalists whose duty it is to make known the proceedings and affairs of the League of Nations may be enabled to perform their duties in the best possible conditions, the Conference recommends that facilities should be granted them at all times to despatch their messages direct from Geneva by wireless.

II. Coding of Press Messages.

In order to prevent any unauthorised use of Press news sent by wireless, the Conference recommends that the Press should be allowed to use an appropriate code in whole or in part, and at the ordinary Press rates, for the despatch of Press news by wireless.
III. IMPROVEMENT OF COMMUNICATIONS.

(a) Inter-Continental Communications.

The Conference is of opinion that better facilities should be provided for telegraphic and wireless communications between the Oriental countries and those of Europe and North and South America.

(b) European Communications.

The Conference expresses the desire that normal telephone communications should be restored as quickly as possible between countries where these communications are still interrupted or irregular. On the other hand, the Conference expresses its great satisfaction at the efforts made by the administrations to organise a special network of telephone cables for long-distance communications. It expresses the hope that the construction of these lines will be carried out with all speed.

The new channels of international communication afforded by wireless telegraphy and telephony telephotography television and air mails will only attain their maximum efficiency if developed in competition with the other existing services under reasonable control, and it is desired to recommend this principle to the League of Nations for consideration and support.

IV TRANSPORT OF NEWSPAPERS.

The Conference adopted the following resolutions:

1. The Conference of Press Experts — after discussing, in the presence of M. Scheller, representing the Messageries Hachette, Mr. Kimpton, representing Messrs. W.H. Smith and Son, and M. von Herwarth, representing Messrs. Georg Stilke & Co., on the basis of the report presented by the Messageries Hachette, the question of the measures to be taken for developing and accelerating the circulation and interchange of newspapers and periodicals between the various countries in which they are published — decides to request the Council of the League of Nations to transmit the above-mentioned report to the Organisation for Communications and Transit of the League of Nations, in order to examine what effect should be given to its recommendations.

2. Believing that international understanding and the promotion of peace can best be encouraged by the widest possible dissemination of news, the Conference urges the Governments concerned to consider the urgent need for early abolition of any taxes and other restrictions on newspapers which hinder a fuller and more extended circulation of the international Press.

V POSTAL SUBSCRIPTIONS TO NEWSPAPERS.

The Conference expresses the wish (1) that the countries which have not adhered to the Stockholm Convention of 1924 concerning postal subscriptions to newspapers should do so as soon as possible and (2) that the countries which have adhered to this Convention should put it into force without delay.

All these resolutions were adopted unanimously with the exception of those relating to priority for (1) Press telegrams, and (2) urgent Press telegrams, which were adopted by 41 votes to 7, and 44 votes to 6, respectively.

2 Paragraph 2 reads "Reduction of Rates to the Strict Minimum, irrespective of the methods of conveyance used, in order that they may not be inaccessible to newspapers, which it should always be possible to sell at a price within the means of the general public."
VI. PROTECTION OF NEWS.

The Conference adopted the following preamble and resolutions

The Conference of Press Experts lays down as a fundamental principle that the publication of a piece of news is legitimate subject to the condition that the news in question has reached the person who publishes it by regular and unobjectionable means, and not by an act of unfair competition. No one may acquire the right of suppressing news of public interest.

(a) Unpublished News.

The Conference is of opinion that full protection should be granted to unpublished news or news in course of transmission or publication in those countries in which such protection does not already exist.

It shall be illegal for any unauthorised person to receive for publication or to use in any way for the purpose of distribution through the Press, through broadcasting, or in any similar manner information destined for publication by the Press or through broadcasting. There shall be no preferential right in official news issued by a Government or Government Department or by an official representing a Government or Government Department. All such news may be published without restriction in full or in part.

Newspapers, Press agencies, Press bureaux, and newspaper correspondents and representatives shall have free and equal opportunity of access to and transmission of such news.

(b) Published News.

In view of the widely differing conditions obtaining in various countries, the Conference is of opinion that the question of the protection of published news, whether reproduced in the Press or by broadcasting, is one for the decision of the respective Governments concerned, and recommends that any Government to whom application in this respect is made by its country's Press should sympathetically consider the advisability of granting suitable protection.

Such protection should, however, permit the reproduction of news within a specified period, subject to acknowledgment and payment.

The Conference affirms the principle that newspapers, news agencies, and other news organisations are entitled after publication as well as before publication, to the reward of their labour, enterprise and financial expenditure upon the production of news, but holds that this principle shall not be so interpreted as to result in the creation or the encouragement of any monopoly in news.

In order to realise these principles, it is desirable that there should be international agreement and that the Council of the League of Nations, by resolution, should request the various Governments to give immediate consideration to the question involved.

VII. PROFESSIONAL FACILITIES FOR JOURNALISTS.

The Conference adopted the following preamble and resolutions

The Conference does not ask for the granting or extension to journalists of any favour the acceptance of which would entail the risk of infringing the independence of the Press or the unbiased judgment of journalists.

On the other hand, it strongly urges that all possible facilities should in all circumstances be granted to journalists in pursuit of their calling so that they may fulfil their duties more thoroughly and rapidly both in acquiring and transmitting news.

The Conference further desires that similar and appropriate facilities should be granted to the national and international organisations of the Press in the discharge of their professional functions.

A. Travel Tours.

The Conference considers that collective travel tours for journalists in foreign countries can in certain circumstances be most useful and that the custom should not be discontinued.
Nevertheless, the serious disadvantages that the abuse or wrong use of these tours may involve are so evident that the Conference urgently recommends closer supervision of the methods by which such collective tours are organised.

This supervision should not be undertaken solely by Governments but as far as the carrying out of such tours necessitates the co-operation of Governments, the latter should previously ask for the opinion of competent Press organisations as to whether such tours are opportune or desirable.

B. Schools for Journalists.

The Conference, noting the fact that journalism is a profession the exercise of which demands special gifts and practice which can be obtained only by professional experience, considering, nevertheless, that general knowledge and a certain technical training are indispensable for the pursuit of this calling, declares itself in favour of the maintenance or establishment in universities or analogous institutions of such special courses as will enable journalists, during their available time and with due respect to their intellectual freedom, to supplement their knowledge of political, economic, or other subjects.

C. Scholarships for Journalists.

For the purpose of promoting the professional education of journalists, the Conference declares itself favourable to the establishment by Governments or private bodies of study or travel scholarships, which should be granted so far as possible after consultation with professional organisations of journalists.

D. Double Taxation of Journalists Living Abroad.

The Conference expresses the hope that the Committee specially set up by the League of Nations to solve the general problem of double taxation, and particularly to determine what country is to receive the sole tax, will provide a satisfactory solution of this problem as quickly as possible.

It asks that Governments should meanwhile be requested to grant every facility compatible with the existing laws to journalists who are obliged to live outside their country of origin in the exercise of their profession.

E. Reductions of Railway Fares.

The Conference considers it desirable that, in countries where this practice exists, foreign journalists, on giving proof of their professional status, should be entitled to reductions of railway rates equivalent to those granted to nationals.

The same facilities should be granted, under the supervision of national and international organisations, to journalists obliged to travel for the purpose of representing their colleagues at meetings concerned with professional conditions.

F. Passport Visas for Journalists.

The Conference considers that it is essential for a journalist to be able to move rapidly from place to place in order to arrive at his destinations without losing valuable time at frontiers, so as to be able with the least possible delay to follow the progress of any event.

At the present time, although many countries have abolished the formality of passport visas—a frequent source of delay—there are others which still maintain it. The Conference considers that journalists, on giving proof of their professional status, should invariably be exempted from visa formalities.

G. Identity Cards for Journalists.

The Conference declares that it would be of the greatest advantage to institute an international identity card for journalists which should, at the same time, be a means of professional identification, and particularly designed also to facilitate travelling and the general exercise by journalists of their profession abroad.

This card should follow the principles on which the card prepared by the International Association of Journalists accredited to the League of Nations has been framed, and the draft suggestions submitted to the Conference by the International Federation of Journalists and the Preparatory Committee of Journalists.

The Conference expresses the hope that, when the Organisation for Communications and Transit discusses this question, it will consult the representatives of the groups concerned, including directors of newspapers and directors of news agencies.

With the exception of the second paragraph, which was adopted by 45 votes to 1, this resolution was adopted unanimously.
H. Repressive Measures against Foreign Journalists.

The Conference requests the League of Nations to make the most urgent representations to Governments in order that measures of expulsion or withdrawal of a permit to stay in a country on grounds concerned with the exercise by a journalist of his profession should never be taken without asking for the opinion of a committee of journalists, by which the journalist concerned could be heard.

I. Equality of Treatment for Foreign Journalists.

The Conference recommends that all official news should be communicated to all newspapers and news agencies, whether national or foreign, without distinction, and that rates, privileges and facilities for the transmission of news by telegraph, telephone, or wireless should be granted to all in equal measure.

J. Facilities for Enquiry afforded to Foreign Journalists.

The Conference expresses the wish that foreign journalists should be able, on the production of an official document, to obtain from the official Press bureau or from the local authorities concerned the same facilities as those accorded to their national journalists.

VIII. Censorship in Peace-Time.

The Conference adopted the following resolution:

Whereas the principal reason for the convocation of this Conference is that the unfettered and prompt interchange between nations of news of events and conditions promotes mutual understanding and peace,

Whereas it is obvious that news despatches, in order to be effective in the foregoing sense, must be generally accepted as true in the countries in which they are published,

Whereas the Conference declares itself opposed in principle to every restriction of the liberty of the Press, and considers that no form of censorship should be established or maintained except for vital reasons and in exceptional circumstances only,

Whereas, without wishing to interfere in the internal affairs of the various States, it nevertheless expresses a general desire for the re-establishment of normal intellectual communications between peoples by modifying or repealing laws relating to censorship wherever the situation permits,

Whereas, not only as recognised by the Preparatory Committees of News Agencies, and of Journalists, is censorship powerless to prevent the distribution of false and misleading news, but is also in fact injurious to the Governments by which it is maintained,

The Conference is of opinion that censorship in any form should quickly and finally be abolished.

So long, however, as censorship, contrary to the principle of the liberty of the Press, still exists in any country the Conference asks for the following minimum guarantees:

1. That telegrams submitted to censorship should be examined by specialists and despatched with the greatest promptitude possible.

2. That journalists should be informed of the instructions given to these specialists so as to enable them to make their own dispositions.

3. That they should be informed of the passages suppressed in their despatches as well as of exceptional delays in transmission, and that they should be given the option of sending or withholding telegrams which have been either censored or delayed.

4. That the transmission charges paid in advance for telegrams which have been either censored or delayed should be refunded in proportion to the number of words suppressed.

5. That complete equality of treatment should be granted to all journalists without exception.

IX. Miscellaneous Resolutions.

The following resolutions are the outcome of proposals submitted by delegates during the Conference.

1 This recommendation was adopted by 29 votes against 15, with 8 abstentions.
1. **Publication or Distribution of Tendentious News.**

Fully cognisant of the fact that the publication or distribution of obviously inaccurate, highly exaggerated, or deliberately distorted news or articles is calculated to cause undesirable misunderstandings among nations and suspicions detrimental to international peace

And desiring to promote among peoples the growth of mutual understanding, necessary to world peace

This Conference expresses the desire that the newspapers and news agencies of the world should deem it their duty to take stringent measures to avoid the publication or distribution of such news or articles, and should also consider the possibility of active international cooperation for the attainment of this purpose, which is in conformity with the spirit of the League of Nations. 1

2. **Courses for Journalists at Geneva.**

Whereas it is important, from the point of view of consolidating peace and of ensuring reasonable criticism of the activities of the League of Nations, that the greatest possible number of journalists should become familiar with the organisation of the League of Nations;

This Conference recommends that preliminary consideration should be given to the question of organising at Geneva in connection with the League of Nations an international press centre or institute which could be attended by journalists throughout the year in order to obtain such knowledge, and draws the attention of Governments to the advantage of affording every support to such an organisation.

3. **Establishment in Newspapers of a special Heading on the League of Nations.**

This Conference expresses its gratitude to the League of Nations, and especially the Information Section of the Secretariat, for the support and facilities granted to its members and for the organisation of its meeting, and notes that the League has in no way attempted in this connection to make League propaganda in its favour, but simply to assist in the material and spiritual development of the Press

And recognising that the work of the League is worthy of the closest attention, constituting as it does one of the most interesting movements of the century, recommends the establishment in the great newspapers of a permanent section, such as already exists in some papers, devoted to objective information on the work of the League.

4. **Moral Disarmament.**

The Conference makes a warm appeal to the Press of the world to contribute by every means at its disposal to the consolidation of peace, to combat hatred between nationalities and between classes which are the greatest dangers to peace, and to prepare the way for moral disarmament.

5. **Regional Press Understandings.**

This Conference, considering that regional agreements with the object of promoting international harmony concluded by the Press of groups of neighbouring States constitute not only one of the best means of facilitating the decisions of Governments on its improvements suggested by the Conference, but also, and above all, a permanent guarantee of pacification calculated to contribute in large measure to the prevention of misunderstandings between nations

Recommends to the delegates of all countries that might benefit by agreements of this sort — in particular the Balkan countries — to confer immediately with each other in order to reach as soon as possible an amicable understanding which may draw closer the bonds between the Press of their countries and thus favourably influence public opinion.

6. **Periodical Conferences of Press Experts.**

With a view to examining in the near future the extent to which the resolutions and recommendations of this Conference have been acted upon by the Governments and other organisations concerned, and also to considering various new problems arising from changed conditions due to the application of those resolutions and recommendations, the Conference requests the Council of the League of Nations to consider the advisability of calling a subsequent Conference and also of making such Conferences periodical.

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This resolution was adopted by 27 votes to 2.
7 Right of Reply.

The Conference decides to refer the consideration of the right of reply to a subsequent Press Conference and requests that it be studied meanwhile by the League of Nations, with a view to issuing a report.

X. General Resolution.

At the close of its session, the Conference adopted by acclamation the following resolution

The Conference and Public Opinion.

Considering that all the resolutions which have been adopted will require the support and advocacy of the Press, this Conference requests all its delegates to undertake to forward the general interests of the Press in their newspapers in order favourably to influence the public opinion and the Governments of their respective countries.

ANNEX 978 a

CLOSING SPEECH OF THE PRESIDENT, LORD BURNHAM, SUMMARISING THE WORK OF THE CONFERENCE OF PRESS EXPERTS (August 29th, 1927)

Submitted to the Council on September 2nd, 1927

We have now come to the end of our business and I am glad to say that the agenda paper has been completely cleared up. It is possible to use a well-worn tag of Latin and say finis coronat opus. This is the more satisfactory because I have had to rely entirely on the courtesy and goodwill of this assembly and I have had no powers, except such as are inherent in chairmanship by the laws of nature, the author of which, as we all know, was that stormy genius and citizen of Geneva, Jean Jacques Rousseau. I imagine that in a real sense his spirit will haunt the palace of the League of Nations until its ideals are realised in a more sensitive conscience and a more generous spirit for the general inspiration of human conduct.

This has been the first independent conference that the League of Nations has ever held. By that I mean that all the previous conferences have been either composed of officials or appointed by Governments. In English parliamentary language, we are well acquainted with the term 'free conference' and this has, in every respect, been a free conference. I am glad to add that it has also been a friendly and familiar conference. Belonging as we all do to one great interest and industry which consists in the production and publication of news, we have had a bond of union and fellowship which has given us a familiar feeling among ourselves, in spite of all our differences of origin and opinion. We have therefore discussed every subject with which we have dealt with the intention of getting things done by the good offices of the League of Nations.

The origin of the Conference, as you will all recall, lay in a proposal submitted to the Assembly of the League of Nations in 1925 by M. Yanez, delegate of Chile, asking the Council to consider the desirability of summoning a Committee of Experts representing the Press in different continents in order

(1) To enquire into means of ensuring more rapid and less costly transmission of Press news with a view to reducing the risks of international misunderstanding.

(2) To discuss all technical problems, the solution of which in the opinion of experts, would be conducive to the tranquillisation of public opinion in various countries.
The Council, acting upon this resolution, brought together successively three preliminary and advisory committees of news agencies, directors of Press Bureaux, and journalists. In that way the Agenda which has been before this Conference was put together in due form.

I think the Conference would bear me out in saying that this is the largest and most influential Press congress that has ever been brought together. We have here 68 delegates, 20 assessors, and 89 experts from 31 countries, representing not only States which are Members and non-Members of the League, but also all the continents and all the categories of Press interests — newspaper proprietors, news-agencies, Press bureaux and journalists' societies. In addition, we have been fortunate in having in attendance a representative of the International Cables Association, and representatives of the great British, French and German newspaper distributing houses.

I have already said, and I also mentioned in my opening speech, that this Conference is the first independent conference called by the League of Nations. I should like to emphasise that point again here, as I think you will all agree that the Conference has been left absolutely free and unfettered in any way whatsoever. If we read the preliminary discussions in the Assembly and the Council, we can appreciate the great hesitation that these political authorities felt as to any sort of interference with the liberty of the Press, and I may say that, during our discussions, this principle has been scrupulously observed.

I should like to say and I am sure that I shall carry you with me, when I tell you that this Conference has been carried through smoothly and effectively owing, first and foremost, to the good temper and good sense of my colleagues, who have given me throughout the encouragement and support which all our labours would have been in vain. I ask you all to accept my grateful acknowledgments. Then I wish, in your name, to offer our sincere thanks to Sir Eric Drummond and the Secretariat of the League of Nations for the care and thoroughness with which this Conference has been organised. The three preliminary meetings of Press agencies, Press bureaux and journalists have rendered it possible for us to cover so wide a field of interests in so short a session, and I am sure we are greatly obliged to those of our number who devoted so much time and trouble to their transactions. To the officers of this Conference we are very much indebted for their able and courteous arrangement of our business and for the constant assistance and advice which they have given us, both in anticipation and during our sittings. May I add that, in all my experience of international assemblies, I have never known the labourious and exacting duties of translation into the two official languages so well and accurately done, as at this conference?

There have been three main heads for discussion and decision: communications, circulation, and journalistic facilities in other words, the collection of news, the transmission of news, and the circulation of news.

Perhaps we may best see the scope of our efforts if we look at them from the point of view of the successive steps taken by the journalist in his search for news, in its rapid transmission, in its protection before and after publication, and, finally, in its increased circulation.

The first link in this chain consists of the resolve of the Conference to extend the freedom of the journalists for the fulfilment of his essential duties. As regards material facilities, it has sought to safeguard his status by making provisions for the issue of an international identity card, to assure his easier passing of frontiers by special treatment in regard to passports and visas, to expedite his travelling by reduced rates on trains and steamships, and to relieve him of double taxation. As regards his professional equipment, it has sought to give him access to special courses of instruction in universities, to open scholarships, and to enable him to see the world under proper auspices.

The second link is undoubtedly communications. News cannot be despatched if telegraphic rates are unfairly high and telephone charges unreasonably restrictive. Many reductions have already been made, and the competition of wireless with cables is surely, if slowly, lowering the cost of transmission. This competition is bound to have important results in the near future, no less important than those which have already taken place in the Atlantic and Pacific services. I understand, moreover, that a general reduction of telephone charges for newspaper purposes is likely to take place in the near future.

The resolutions point to many possible means of improving the methods of sending news; for instance, by regional agreements, by special consideration of the difficulties prevailing in the Far East, and in the European telephone system. It can also be done by permission to use codes under proper regulation. Suggestions have also been made for cheaper correspondence by general rates without rates and dues, by new kinds of deferred messages, and in the remission of transit and terminal charges. Similarly, resolutions have been adopted for increasing the speed of communication by establishing new categories of "priority" and "urgent Press" messages.

The third link in the chain is the means of protecting news before and after publication against unfair appropriation. This question was more warmly debated than any before the
Conference, and I think it represents a real triumph for journalistic statesmanship that a unanimous agreement was reached on a subject of such vital importance. The Conference does not wish to establish any monopoly in news or prejudicial control of the sources of public information, but it does wish to protect against unfair competition those great journalistic enterprises which, by their initiative and their organisation, bring the world’s news at great cost of time and skilled labour to the use of the reading public.

The fourth link is the distribution of the finished product. The Conference approved of a clear and connected report with recommendations which will widen the existing system of postal subscriptions to newspapers and ensure their quicker despatch and more extensive distribution across international frontiers.

Lastly, as the undercurrent of the discussion on all these points, there has been the manifest desire to recognise the mutual responsibility of the Press to the public and of the public to the Press. This applies not only in the matters mentioned above in connection with the desirability of rapid distribution, of the protection against unfair competition, and of adequate facilities for journalists, but also to a number of other more general resolutions as to the part and functions of the Press in world affairs. In a real though may be still in an intangible way, I think the conscience of the Press has been quickened and stimulated by this great meeting.

And now as to the future. All our resolutions will be passed to the Council of the League for examination and report, with a view to immediate action for the purpose of obtaining the sanction and support of all States. These are practical matters of immediate interest to newspapers in all countries and to the countless numbers of their readers who depend upon them for their information and instruction in the history of the present and the preparation for the future. On the continent of Europe, all the means of communication are either in Government hands or under Government control. Similarly it is only through the agency of the League through Governments that such reforms can be obtained in the system of transportation as will enable the distribution of newspapers to be accelerated and increased for the common advantage.

I should judge, however, not only from several resolutions presented, but from what I understand to be the spirit of the Conference, that you would have me go further. Let me, then, note with cordial concurrence a remark made at the banquet at which we were so hospitably entertained by the Secretary-General, to the effect that the League neither expected nor desired that this would be the last Press Conference to be summoned at Geneva. Personally, I am strongly of opinion that, with an interval of three or, at most, four years, it will be a wise and helpful course to follow for the Council to bring the representatives of all the Press interests here present again to Geneva in order to take counsel together on these and other issues of real pitch and moment in the affairs of the world’s Press. Meanwhile, I hope that the Secretariat of the League will keep itself in sympathetic touch with the associations of the newspaper Press in all countries which have attended this Conference. There are no steps backward in such an organic part of the world’s economy and, as a writer once said, “consequences are unpitying” and they are likewise compelling. This is the first international conference of the newspaper Press that has been held, and it will assuredly not be the last.

Public opinion is, in the long run, the sovereign power in the government of men. As the trustees of public opinion, we Pressmen have a heavy and constant responsibility to our fellows. All I can hope and pray is that this Conference has deepened and enlarged our consciousness — not a class consciousness, but a general consciousness — of what we owe to mankind, still in the making and re-making, in giving such light and leading as we can to concord and collaboration for the common good.