

DISARMAMENT

THE AMERICAN FEDERATION OF LABOR

Its Declarations and Actions in Support of Disarmament and International Peace

FROM THE OFFICIAL RECORDS



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INTRODUCTION.

The June, 1921, convention of the American Federation of Labor urged the Government of the United States to assume the leadership in a world movement for general disarmament as an essential means in promoting international peace. The convention's unanimous declaration reads:

The labor movement recognizes the value of freedom and it knows that freedom and rights can be maintained only by those willing to assert their claims and to defend their rights.

The cause of disarmament and international peace can be promoted by creating and stimulating a public sentiment that will not tolerate waste of life and by establishing international relations, understanding, and agencies that will constitute insuperable barrier to policies of force and destruction.

With humanization, education, cultivation, the establishment of the rule of reason, occasions for wars and wars themselves will cease.

The working people, the masses of the world population, can end wars if they but have the independence to think and to give their convictions reality by daring to do.

For this and many other obvious reasons this convention calls upon the Government of the United States to take the initiative or to cooperate with any other nation or nations for the purpose of a general agreement for disarmament both of the army and naval affairs of the world, and that it shall be the duty of the Executive Council to call upon the workers and the people to aid in every way within their power and to have translated into action the sentiments recommended.

The Government of the United States has convened an International Conference on Limitation of Armament to meet in Washington on November 11, 1921.

The International Conference on Limitation of Armament is a source of profound gratification to the American Federation of Labor. In it may be seen the beginning of the realization of the object sought by the Federation's activities for disarmament extending over more than a third of a century.

The American Federation of Labor is the pioneer organization in America to favor, advocate, and work for substantial restriction of armament and ultimate disarmament.

From its origin it has persistently demanded the establishment of international arbitration as a substitute for war, and war's armies and navies, in the settlement of international disputes.

In 1887 the convention of the Federation by a unanimous vote declared that it would support every movement that tended toward the elimination of war in the organization of international affairs.

From that day to the present the Fédération has never faltered in nor receded from its opposition to large navies, large standing armies, and militarism in all its aspects. It has persistently voiced the demand of the American workers for disarmament through the establishment of international institutions for the peaceable settlement of international differences and has largely contributed to the development of a nationwide and worldwide conscience against war and in favor of disarmament.

But in Labor's long effort for the peaceful organization of international relations it early appeared that the specter of governments stalking up and down the earth armed to the teeth was a result rather than a cause.

Disputes between nations existed. To settle those disputes, war and its armies and navies had been developed into an institution and was firmly rooted.

Labor realized that fundamental institutions are not destroyed over night and immediately supplanted by new ones. Old institutions rarely give way until new ones are developed to do the work of the old.

Therefore it was Labor's view that naval and military armaments, which are the machinery for making effective the institution of war, would automatically be limited, reduced, and finally dismantled when the peoples of the nations of the earth developed international institutions of a peaceful character to settle on the basis of justice international differences for whose arbitrament the brutality of war, based on the superior killing and destroying ability of competing armies and navies, is the classic agency.

Labor clearly saw that war for the adjudication of disputes between nations is the result of two primary forces. There are no permanent international institutions for the settlement of those disputes on the basis of peace. There is lacking that international conscience which regards human life as sacred above all else.

Labor saw a society subjected to the military way of thinking. To the military mind the main object is to defeat the enemy and then humiliate the defeated nation with the most onerous terms of peace. To the military mind the thing to do is to win the war regardless of the slaughter of human lives entailed. To the military mind the thing to do after the war is to imbue the mind of the people with the idea that war and its brutality and disregard for human life is the only feasible way to adjust disputes between nations.

Into this jungle of international anarchy and blood lust, the
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American Federation of Labor hewed its path toward the goal of disarmament.

In carrying out its policy the Federation saw that it must work mainly along two lines.

It must destroy the sway of the military mind. It must humanize humanity. It must develop an international conscience which would look with unutterable horror upon the death and destruction caused by war. It must create the international conviction that human life is sacred.

Firm in its conviction that war would continue until other agencies adequate for the adjustment of international disputes appeared, the Federation saw that it also must mobilize humanity for the development of the institution of international arbitration as a substitute for the institution of war.

In this two fold policy the American Federation of Labor from the outset placed its main reliance upon the influence of the working people of the nations of the world to realize disarmament. And for good reasons.

From time immemorial the workers have shared with others the spirit which has led humanitarians everywhere to seek to abolish war. But there is a deeper reason for Labor's persistent endeavors to establish peaceful institutions to adjudicate the disputes traditionally determined upon the field of battle.

The workers everywhere have always borne the brunt of war. It is largely the workers whose bodies are mown down by the shot and shell and poison gas of battles on land and sea. Later the workers for generations bear the major portion of the burdens which war passes on. It is therefore not difficult to discern why the workers have ever committed themselves unalterably and forcefully to the abolition of war. Nor is it difficult to understand why the workers in their national and international congresses have always declared for international peace and disarmament.

It was therefore logical and inevitable that the American Federation of Labor, as the representative of the working people, organized and unorganized, of the United States, should commit itself from its foundation to the dethronement of war and its armament of death. It was equally logical that the Federation should undertake to mobilize the humanizing sentiments of the working people in the stupendous task of arousing an international public opinion for the civilized organization of international relations and the destruction of the savagery called war. And an important part of the Federation's work has consisted in establishing fraternal relations with the

organized workers of other countries to develop the international solidarity of labor for ending war and enforcing disarmament.

From the beginning the American Federation of Labor envisioned international arbitration as the driving force that would bring about disarmament. Out of its own experience Labor knew that disputes between employes and employers might be settled either peacefully or by industrial war. Labor found that industrial war would be resorted to until peaceful agencies were established. Labor chose the peaceful method, and undertook to develop the institution of voluntary industrial arbitration in disputes between labor and capital and to organize the field of industrial relations upon this basis. Labor's collective bargains or trade agreements secured through voluntary industrial arbitration are industrial treaties of peace obtained by peaceful methods rather than by industrial war.

In the field of international relations, Labor reasoned, a similar policy may be pursued with equally happy results. The institution of war exists as a fact for the settlement of disputes between nations. It will exist as a fact until there are developed agencies based upon justice adequate to settle these disputes. Then will come disarmament.

The work of the American Federation of Labor for disarmament has radiated along these lines: creating an international conscience to mobilize public opinion in opposition to the use of the institution of war in international relations and developing the institution of international arbitration to settle the differences for which war has so long been regarded as necessary.

During its entire life every measure or movement looking toward disarmament and the abolition of war has received the hearty support of the American Federation of Labor.

The First and Second Peace Conferences at The Hague, the Permanent International High Court of Arbitration at The Hague, the Czar's disarmament conference, arbitration treaties between individual nations, general arbitration treaties, limitation of naval and military budgets for definite periods, the "naval holiday" proposed by the British Government, citizen soldiery in place of large standing armies, national and international peace conferences, labor representation in government peace conferences at the end of wars, abolition of secret diplomacy, abolition of compulsory military training and service, democratization of government, democratization of international relations, the League of Nations with its armament limitation provision and its international court of justice, and finally the International Conference on Limitation of Armament—all these various efforts and movements to bring the dictatorship of

war and its armament to an end have found their energetic and enthusiastic sponsor and supporter in the American Federation of Labor.

The American Federation of Labor is proud of the fact that it now sees the day when its demand for international arbitration and international disarmament is accepted by the world.

The Council and Assembly of the League of Nations, representing forty-nine governments, have elected the bench of the International High Court of Justice provided for by the Covenant of the League for the adjustment of disputes between the signatory nations, and have chosen as one of the bench that distinguished citizen of the United States and recognized authority on international law, John Bassett Moore.

The Temporary Disarmament Commission of the League of Nations has recommended that the League convene an international conference to consider the suppression or control of private manufacture of munitions of war and war material.

And the Government of the United States has convened an international conference on limitation of armament.

These movements on the part of the governments of the civilized world are the official acceptance of principles and institutions for the realization of which the American Federation of Labor, since its foundation, has consecrated its members, its strength, and its enthusiasm.

It is therefore deemed appropriate and in the general interest to present a summarized history of the work of the American Federation of Labor and its officials in the movement for disarmament which must be given additional impetus by the International Conference on Limitation of Armament convened by the Government of the United States.

The Federation's consideration of disarmament is so closely linked with its consideration of international arbitration as the method for reaching disarmament that no attempt is made to separate the two closely related subjects.

LABOR'S FIRST DECLARATION FOR INTERNATIONAL PEACE

Thirty-four years ago, in 1887, W. R. Cremer and Sir Lionel Playfair came to the United States as the representatives of the arbitration group of the British House of Commons in the interest of arbitration between nations in general and with an arbitration treaty between the United States and Great Britain as their special mission.

Mr. Cremer, who was a labor member of Parliament, was given an enthusiastic reception by the annual convention of the American Federation of Labor, then in session at Baltimore.

At the conclusion of Mr. Cremer's statement in favor of "arbitration between nations," President Gompers said:

I think I reflect the sentiments of the delegates when I say we are in sympathy with the arbitration movement. I think it is not from want of patriotism that we say we are opposed to destroying so many of the world's producers in war. I have no doubt that this Federation will take some measure to aid you, Mr. Cremer, and we trust the day will not be far distant when, in truth and fact, we shall have a federation of the world and the brotherhood of man.

By a unanimous vote the convention declared for international arbitration as a substitute for war and its armaments in the settlement of international disputes.

The resolution adopted by the 1887 convention reads:

WHEREAS, The American Federation of Labor has been entrusted with the solemn duty of defending the best interests of the working people of America; and

WHEREAS, The demands of the working people will never be fully heard in all their strength and nobility of aspiration until the nations of the world mutually agree to refrain from the fratricidal strife that has so often brought misery and desolation into many millions of happy homes; and

WHEREAS, The working class, the class that always has to bear the brunt of war, has the most profound interest in the establishment and maintenance of peace, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the American Federation of Labor convention in the city of Baltimore assembled hails with deep satisfaction the arrival of a delegation from Great Britain and Ireland charged with the task of proposing a treaty by which all questions which can not be settled by ordinary diplomatic agency may be referred to arbitration.

1897.

In 1897 the five-year arbitration treaty between the United States and Great Britain was before the United States Senate.

The president of the American Federation of Labor in an emphatic demand for its ratification said:

. . . The organized workers of both countries have unequivocally placed themselves on record, possessing all the best traits of humanity of our time, that nothing can nor will arise which can not and should not be decided by a fair tribunal of international arbitration.

1898.

In 1898 the Czar startled the world by issuing a call for a disarmament conference. Although the call came from an unexpected source, the proposal was endorsed in the president's annual report to the convention of the American Federation of Labor. Under the caption "Disarmament," he said:

From a strange source came a still stranger message of peace to the world. The Czar of Russia invited the governments of the world to send representatives to a conference to discuss and devise ways and means with a view to the disarmament of nations. A militancy is inimical to liberty, and as peace is essential to successful industry, progress and civilization, we should express our warm approval of any movement likely to contribute to the accomplishment of these desired ends.

But while endorsing the Czar's conference, the president of the Federation sounded the keynote of Labor's conviction that labor itself must first organize international labor relations and use the labor movement to influence governments to abolish war and the machinery of war when he directed the attention of the convention to the significance of the growth of internationality among the working people:

With each step in the direction to cement the bond of fraternity and the recognition of the principle of solidarity in the international labor movement, we shall not only help to bear each other's burdens, but continually make those burdens lighter, and be the lever for the international brotherhood of man when the wars of the nations shall be a thing of the past, and the song of the poet, the dream of the philosopher, and the hope of the philanthropist and humanitarian may be achieved.

This declaration was endorsed by the convention.

1899.

In 1899, when there were numerous rumors relative to alliances for the maintenance of international peace, President Gompers paid a fitting tribute to the American Federation of Labor for its educational work in the peace movement. In his report to the annual convention he said:

Scarcely a session has passed in the history of the American Federation of Labor but that the yearning of the toiling masses has been voiced for the estab-

lishment of universal peace. We realize that peace is essential to successful industry, commerce, and civilized life. Our trade unions have recognized the identity of the workers of the world. We have constantly cultivated the spirit and bond of fraternity among them. . . . The constant and persistent effort to impress upon the minds of all our people the absolute necessity for relations of amity is bearing fruit, and should cause no one astonishment at the results now achieved.

The convention approved the declaration.

1900.

Viewing with apprehension the tendency to resort to war as a method of settling disputes arising out of the struggle for foreign markets the president of the American Federation of Labor in his report to the 1900 convention again reverted to the growing power of organized labor to maintain peace between nations and to educate the people in the direction of substituting peace methods of international adjustment for the violence of war:

As year by year commercial competition becomes keener, and the standing armies of the powers are more and more used in aggressive wars undertaken with a view to opening new markets for our surplus machine-made products, the danger of fratricidal war between the competitors becomes greater and greater. Thus the preservation of the peace of the world devolves more and more upon organized labor, whose voice is becoming more and more potent in the formation of public opinion, that supreme tribunal before which both monarch and merchant must inevitably bow. . . .

The 1900 convention endorsed these sentiments and adopted the following report:

We are much gratified to see so many evidences of the growth of international solidarity and oneness of purpose of the labor movement of the world, and feel assured that, with the growth of trade unionism in all countries and among all races, the workers will be less and less inclined to kill each other in the interests of their masters.

1901.

The annual report to the 1901 convention of the American Federation of Labor, again envisioned the time when organization of international relations on the basis of peace would permit the nations of the earth to reduce their navies and their standing armies to the limits required for the maintenance of interior order, and stressed the importance of the trade unions in the formation of a public opinion strong enough to enforce this principle:

Of all the forces at work for the establishment of rightful relations among the peoples of the civilized world, none is so potent as trade unions.

The movement of labor makes for the fraternity of man and the peace of

the peoples of the earth. The organizations of the toiling masses in the several countries tends to the recognition of the fact that our interests are identical, not inimical; that we have the same, or very nearly the same, contest for the establishment of a higher conception of human rights; and that in the same proportion as our fellow workers organize, unite, and federate, shall we not only hope to further public opinion, but largely constitute that public opinion by our very unity and the common polity which guides us.

The convention endorsed the report.

1904.

During 1904 the American Federation of Labor did effective work in furthering the cause of international arbitration as the necessary forerunner to reduction in both naval and military armament.

In January, President Gompers participated in the International Arbitration Conference held at Washington in the interest of the arbitration treaty between the United States and Great Britain. He stated the position of the labor movement in the following trenchant declaration:

I wish to say that both as an individual and as a representative of the interests of the organized wage earners of the country I and those whom I represent are in full accord and in sympathy with the movement for the establishment of international arbitration between our Government and that of Great Britain.

Nor did the president of the American Federation of Labor limit Labor's support of arbitration to the United States and Great Britain. It should be substituted for war in all international disputes, thus rendering large navies and large armies unnecessary. Moreover, the abolition of war was essentially a labor movement, and for good reasons:

In all the great battles that are fought, while there are men in other walks of life who lose their lives and property, the great majority of those who give up their lives and lose their limbs come from the wage earners of our country. For that reason, as well as for the larger reason that we are all men, and that no man's life ought to be given in a fray which it is possible to avoid within reason, justice, and morality, Labor ought to be and is in favor of a treaty or any other method that will settle international disputes by peaceful, reasonable, humane methods, rather than by force of arms.

Organized labor's unwavering support to The Hague Tribunal, the extension of arbitration treaties, and the demand for the limitation of both land and naval forces as an immediate step toward

disarmament, were voiced in the president's comprehensive report to the 1904 convention of the American Federation of Labor:

International Court of Arbitration at The Hague.

We welcomed the establishment of the International Court of Arbitration at The Hague. May we not hope that its benign influence may be extended and make for universal peace?

We recognize that in the last analysis, and in order to prevent any reaction that may lead to greater and more repeated wars and bloodshed, the success for international peace must come from a higher intelligence and a better conception of the sacredness of human life. Out of these wellsprings will flow that kindred and humane spirit that will recognize the best maintenance of our rights by conserving the rights of others. In the broad domain of human activity there is no force so potent and which will be so powerful to establish and maintain universal peace and human brotherhood as the international labor movement. . . .

Arbitration Treaties.

It is a pleasure to report that the representatives of our government have negotiated treaties with the representatives of several European governments by the terms of which disputes which can not be settled by diplomacy may be determined by arbitration rather than by the arbitrament of the sword.

We hail with keen gratification this forward step of humanity, and we shall give to the movement every aid which the American Federation of Labor can exert and every influence it can wield.

Disarmament.

True to the highest and best conception of human life, the trade union movement, from its first inception, has been opposed to war. It recognizes that although others may fall the brunt of the war is borne by the working people; not only upon the battlefield itself, but the burdens thereafter which war entails.

We can not be indifferent to, restrain our feelings of horror at, nor withhold our sympathies from, the slaughtered thousands of human beings, even in the Far East, regardless of the country toward which our predilections lie.

The convention approved the report and reindorsed the principle of arbitration between nations.

1905.

The war between Russia and Japan and its final settlement, brought about by the kindly intervention of President Roosevelt, was cited in the report to the 1905 convention of the American Federation of Labor as proof of the righteousness of Labor's indictment of war in the adjustment of international differences and the correctness of Labor's demand for the establishment of international courts of arbitration as a substitute for the violence of navies and armies:

True to our traditions as well as to our feelings for humanity, we all deplored the terrible war in the Far East, and expressed our earnest hope that peace might come between the contending nations.

Our sense of right and justice, our feeling of humanity, are outraged at the

awful consequences of modern warfare, whereby hundreds of thousands of men are maimed for life or slaughtered. Our feelings are not lessened by the knowledge that the great sum total of men so destroyed or made useless come from the ranks of the masses, the workers, and that thereafter the burdens and consequences of debts, and taxes to pay them, are drawn from the wealth produced by the toilers.

As we were not loth to place the blame of responsibility upon those who are indifferent or antagonistic to the cause of Labor, to the cause of humanity, so, I am sure, we are in hearty accord with the act of the President of the United States, who found the heart of the world akin to him in bringing to an end the frightful carnage between Russia and Japan.

Organized labor stands for peace, industrial as well as international. . . . We want international peace. All mankind yearns for it; humanity demands it.

In our day there is no reason why international disputes should not be adjusted by a policy of conciliation and arbitration. We should and shall throw the weight of our influence in the effort to establish these means to avoid armed conflict. . . .

In approving these sentiments the convention declared:

While the armies and navies of the world yet clash in the shock of battle, while our own Christian nation increases its annual expenditure for death-dealing armament, we proclaim and seek to establish the creed of human brotherhood.

1906.

The growing influence for peace of the international relations of the national labor movements was especially stressed in the president's report to the 1906 convention of the American Federation of Labor. Discussing "trade unions and international peace," that report said:

The interchange of fraternal delegates between the organized labor movement of various countries, representing as they do the ambassadors from and to the parliaments of labor, the many other means employed to aid and encourage the wage earners of the world, all are tending toward the better understanding so essential to international peace and human progress.

In approving the report, the convention declared:

We reaffirm the doctrine of international brotherhood and urge the trade unions of America to join in promoting all movements having for their purpose the elimination of the cruel barbarism of war.

In 1906 the Second International Peace Conference was called to meet at The Hague in 1907. Throughout the civilized world it was the unanimous opinion of those who believed in effecting gradual disarmament by the establishment of international arbitration that The Hague conference should provide, among other things, for a general arbitration treaty and a periodic world assembly to consider further ways and means for the abolition of war.

The 1906 convention of the American Federation of Labor took

decisive action relative to the forthcoming Hague conference and adopted the following resolution as its method for mobilizing the forces of the American labor movement in the interest of the peaceful settlement of international disputes:

Convention Resolution on Second International Peace Conference.

WHEREAS, The delegates to the Minneapolis, Minn., convention of the American Federation of Labor, November, 1906, in convention assembled, believe that action which makes for the peace of nations is intimately bound up with the welfare of the workers of all nations and that labor should make an organized effort to aid the movement for arbitration of international disputes; therefore, be it

Resolved, That the president of the American Federation of Labor is hereby instructed to send a copy of this resolution to each local union affiliated thereto and to each local union of affiliated national and international bodies; also to every affiliated central body and state branch, and notify them that it is the sense of this convention that each local union, central and state body should communicate with their representatives in Congress asking whether they belong to or are in sympathy with the arbitration group and requesting them and the president of the United States to give the support of our Government to the resolutions of the Inter-Parliamentary Union regarding the subjects to be discussed at the Second Hague Conference, to the end that there shall be established:

1. A general arbitration treaty.
2. A periodic world assembly.
3. Impartial investigation of all difficulties before hostilities are engaged in between nations.
4. Immunity of private property at sea in time of war.

In the letter submitting this resolution to the organizations affiliated with the American Federation of Labor, President Gompers expressed the belief that the time had come when a beginning should be made in disarmament by halting increases in military and naval forces:

The trade union movement, from its inception, has been opposed to war. It recognizes that though others may fall the brunt of war is borne by the working people; not only upon the battlefield itself, but the burdens which war entails.

International wars have been so destructive of human life and property that the world is shocked from center to circumference at the holocausts witnessed in battle. While it may not be a practical proposition to ask for immediate disarmament of all countries, the time and the intelligence of our people demand that the extraordinary increase in the armed naval and military forces shall be limited and restricted rather than expanded and extended.

1907.

What will the Second Hague Conference do for peace and disarmament? This was the question which believers in international arbitration were asking in 1907.

At the Peace Congress held at Cooper Union, New York City,

April 16, 1907, President Gompers definitely declared for a limitation of armaments:

You can not hope to secure international peace by the disarmament of any one of the peoples of the world. . . . We hope by the great pressure of the public conscience of the American people to so impress the Government of the United States that in turn it will give most explicit instructions to the representatives of the next Hague Conference that, if they can not agree upon general disarmament, at least this constant burden of expansion and growth of armaments shall be arrested for all time to come. . . .

Reporting to the 1907 convention of the American Federation of Labor, the president expressed organized labor's deep regret that the Hague Peace Conference had not accomplished as much in the interest of disarmament and peace as had been expected of it, and reiterated his former declarations that the organized labor movement must be relied upon as the agency reorganizing international relations between nations on the basis of the abolition of war. On the subject of "International Good Will and Peace," he said:

Thinking and liberty-loving and peace-loving men the world over have been keenly and painfully disappointed at the meager results of the conference at The Hague in the interests of international peace. Mankind had a right to expect something of a more tangible character tending toward the abolition of international slaughter. The toilers the world over are primarily interested in averting international conflict, for they form the mass of men who fall in battle or who bear the burdens which war entails.

Despite the failure of the congress to fulfill the expectations of the peace and liberty loving men of the world, the duty devolves upon the organized labor movement of all civilized countries to carry on educational propaganda that shall reach the consciences and the hearts of mankind.

I am firmly convinced that if a growing tendency toward international fraternity among the workers of all countries is manifested; the more general recognition of the identity of interests of the toilers is established the world over; the more general acceptance of each other's union traveling cards as a passport in the international trade unions of all countries is extended; the interchange of fraternal delegates, the ambassadors of good will at the conventions and congresses of organized labor is continued—that these practical methods will contribute more than all else to the enthronement of universal peace among the peoples of the nations of the earth.

Likewise expressing its regret at the failure of the Second Hague Conference, the 1907 convention of the American Federation of Labor also asserted its faith in the superiority of the trade union movement as the ultimate power to abolish war and develop civilized institutions to adjust disputes between nations:

We regret that the recent peace conference at The Hague did not accomplish

as much in the interests of international peace as its friends had anticipated and hoped for.

We hope to see a continuance of these efforts toward international amity and good will. Nevertheless, we are strongly imbued with the idea that international peace will come sooner and be more permanent as a result of the growth of the international trade union movement than would possibly be the case by the establishment of an international court with no power to enforce its decisions.

1908.

Intelligent international effort of the organized workers to avert war was the keynote of the report to the 1908 convention of the American Federation of Labor:

The spirit of international amity and universal peace is an accomplishment toward which the hearts of humanitarians yearn. There are none who have so potent an interest and who are more assiduously devoting their efforts toward its achievement than are the men of labor of all countries. The constant exercise of our influence to avoid wars will avert them if the intelligent, earnest efforts of the toilers are concentrated the civilized world over.

We are not less patriotic, nor do we lose one jot of our love of country, by our intense desire for the universal fraternization of man.

Approved.

1909.

At the Second National Peace Congress, held at Chicago in May, 1909, organized labor's support of international peace was presented by President Gompers:

We want peace and we want it very much, but we must get it by universal agreement or by the agreement of the powerful nations of the earth, by the keen conscience of the peoples of the civilized nations that shall compel the powerful nations of the world themselves to restrain themselves first, to prevent extension and expansion of their armies and navies, and then exert their influence upon the other nations of the world.

We want peace as a substitute for war, and arbitration to determine justice and right between nations; for we realize that apart from the immediate results of war, the wholesale killing, the production simply for destruction, there is one element to which seldom any attention is given. It is this: Every war is an interruption of the natural progress of the people and the attention to their own welfare; it is an interruption of the orderly development of the spirit of unselfish service to our fellows; it is an interruption of the best concepts of altruism and good fellowship and good will. Every war that has come upon the people of the nations has retarded the spirit of progress and universal kindness.

Our batteries, arsenals, armories, and navy yards should be converted into school rooms, into colleges, into universities, into university extensions, into manual training and technology, to make parks for playgrounds and airspaces, breathing places, aids to the effort to weed out this great white plague that is ravaging the masses of the people. . . .

In 1909, during his trip to Europe, President Gompers found the European labor movement consecrated to the abolition of war

and navies and armies. He sums up the anti-war spirit of the continental workers in the following report to the 1909 American Federation of Labor convention:

While our trade union movement and Federation are purely American, the spirit and purpose of international amity and universal peace is an accomplishment we strive to attain.

During my stay in Paris, and in connection with the international labor conference there, no incident occurred which afforded me greater satisfaction than participation in and delivering an address to a great mass meeting of Parisian workmen in which the representatives of labor of many countries delivered addresses for the abolition of war and the attainment of universal peace.

It was my pleasure to voice the sentiments of America's workers for Labor's solidarity and for the fraternity of man.

Impressed with the necessity of restricting the constantly increasing armaments, both naval and military, of the great nations, the 1909 convention of the American Federation of Labor urged the Executive Council to renewed efforts for international arbitration and its logical reduction in armaments. The resolution reads:

Resolved, That we urge the Executive Council of the American Federation of Labor to use its best efforts to promote the use of arbitration by the nations of the earth for the adjustment of all international questions which arise and fail of adjustment through diplomatic channels.

War which forces man to kill his fellow man, war by which the many are forced to sacrifice their lives to gratify the passions of a few, is repugnant to the concepts of our civilization.

We view with sincere gratification the growth of an international sentiment opposed to this barbarous method of the past, and we urge our Executive Council to use their best efforts in assisting in the development of those principles founded upon man's duty to his fellow-man, which must eventually make wars impossible through the application of the spirit and methods of arbitration and conciliation.

1912.

The 1912 convention of the American Federation of Labor again indicted armaments and war as absolutely unnecessary in the settlement of international disputes and reaffirmed its previous declarations for the adjustment of "all international differences through arbitration."

The resolution adopted by the convention reads:

International Arbitration.

WHEREAS, Progress and civilization are interrupted and retarded when international peace is disturbed; and

WHEREAS, With a better conception of justice, life, and human rights, thinking, peace-loving men the world over deplore the barbarism, the waste, and the cruelty of war; and

WHEREAS, Means and instrumentalities are in existence whereby inter-

national disputes may be decided without recourse to crude, brutal, and uncivilized methods; and

WHEREAS, Questions of honor and justice should be determined in some rational manner, not by conflicts which decide only relative physical endurance and power, or the comparative military progress of contestants and in no way decide the merits of the issues; and

WHEREAS, The leveling forces of industry, commerce, travel and communication have swept aside artificial prejudices and barriers, and have stimulated and fostered the bond of unity and universal brotherhood so that the taking of life in war becomes clearly an act involving moral issues and standards; and

WHEREAS, True to the highest and best conception of human life the trade union movement from its first inception has been opposed to war; and

WHEREAS, The trade union movement, knowing that though others may fall, yet the brunt of war, not only upon the battlefield itself, but the burdens thereafter entailed, is borne in the main by the working people; and

WHEREAS, Organized labor recognizes the identity of interests of the wage workers and the brotherhood of man of all the world, realizes the duty which devolves upon the organized labor movement of all civilized countries to carry on an educational propaganda having for its purpose the awakening of the hearts and consciences of all mankind to the enormous waste and cruelty of war; therefore, be it

Resolved, That the American Federation of Labor emphatically reaffirms its previous declarations for the settlement of *all* international differences through arbitration, looking toward the final establishment of universal international peace among the peoples of the civilized world.

1913.

In its report on "International Peace" to the 1913 convention of the American Federation of Labor, the Executive Council gave a profound analysis of the supreme interest which the working people of all countries have in the maintenance of peace among the nations, summarized the achievements of organized labor in the development of the international good will fundamentally necessary for the organization of international relations upon the basis of the orderly adjustment of international differences rather than their settlement by war, and predicted the establishment of a "world federation" which would relegate navies and armies to the museums of history.

The following excerpts from the Council's report are significant of Labor's convictions, methods, and aspirations toward peace on earth and good will toward man:

International Peace.

The workmen of all countries . . . know that the deadweight of the world's burdens, both in industry and upon the battlefields, have ever fallen upon the toilers, the burden-bearers of the world. They know that too often wars have been entered upon too lightly for the aggrandizement of special interests rather than for justice and humanity. It is not lack of love of country which

prompts the toilers to protest against international fratricide. They love their fatherland, home and justice, but they are unwilling to be exploited or killed for the promotion of private or selfish ends.

Organized Labor's Peace Efforts.

Labor organizations have fostered the spirit of cooperation for mutual helpfulness by international gatherings and by sending fraternal delegates to national gatherings in foreign countries. This practice has been the means of establishing good will and harmony; it has taught the workers that they are everywhere confronted by similar problems and facilitated the execution of common purposes.

In accord with this conviction, labor organizations the world over have committed themselves to the policy of international peace—peace with honor and justice in international politics as well as in industry. . . .

Organized Labor Supports World Peace Movements.

It is especially fitting, then, that organized labor heartily endorse the efforts of the representatives of our country in endeavoring to secure world-wide cooperation in a movement for international peace. Such a movement marks an epochal development in the world's culture, a widening of men's thoughts and a quickening of their consciences and humanitarian instincts, with which the American Federation of Labor has ever been in most hearty accord and has done much to promote.

Organized Labor Creates International Good Will.

The organized labor movement has been a mighty factor in creating and stimulating the spirit of human sympathy and understanding between nations, which is the basis for mutual good will, and is now ready to endorse and aid in every movement for international justice and orderly adjustment of problems and difficulties. The future seems to assure some world federation that shall realize our ideals and protect all humanity.

The 1913 convention of the American Federation of Labor unanimously adopted the following resolution on the Executive Council's report:

International Peace.

The convention endorses every thought and sentiment expressed in the report of the Executive Council on "International Peace." The American Federation of Labor reiterates and emphasizes its determination to do all in its power to prevent the interruption of international fraternity and good will by the avertance of international conflict. /

The 1913 convention of the American Federation of Labor did more than issue a declaration in favor of international peace in the abstract. Consecrated from its earliest days to the policy of limitation of military and naval armament, the Federation received with enthusiasm the proposition emanating from Sir Winston Spencer Churchill, First Lord of the British Admiralty, that the governments of Great Britain, Germany and the United States should refrain from the manufacture of naval armament for one year.

In this proposal the Federation saw at least a step toward the

realization of its disarmament demands, and the convention adopted a resolution which not only pledged the support of the American Federation of Labor to the "naval holiday," but in addition instructed the executive officials of the Federation to undertake to mobilize the organized labor movement of the entire world for its realization.

The resolution is such a thorough statement of the American Federation of Labor's peace and disarmament policy that it is given textually:

Naval Holiday.

WHEREAS, The progress of the world's development has been a series of attempts to establish some better forms of justice, and the changes that have taken place in political institutions have been for the purpose of securing better and easier ways of securing justice to a constantly increasing portion of the people; and

WHEREAS, Justice prevails more surely and more freely where men are engaged in the customary occupations of life, with minds and energies intent upon those things which promote the social, economic, and moral welfare, undisturbed by the passions, the turmoil, and the destruction accompanying all wars, and there is free scope for the institutions administering justice, which, though not perfect, are the best means as yet attainable for securing the rights to the people; and

WHEREAS, The methods, the effects, the influences of war are destructive, destroying property, wealth, human life and happiness, and national power; and

WHEREAS, The influence of war upon minds and hearts is brutalizing, numbing human sympathies through familiarity with suffering and bloodshed and through regarding the taking of human life as essential to attaining desired ends; and

WHEREAS, The existence and preparedness of *large navies and large standing armies* tend to precipitate international conflicts rather than to exert an influence that makes for peace and the settlement of misunderstandings upon an equitable basis; and

WHEREAS, The practice of militarism is not only wastful in expending funds that should be used for other purposes that would make the lives of the people better and happier, but also in expending human ability and energy upon things of no constructive value and of no paramount interest or advantage; and

WHEREAS, The government of Great Britain has offered the suggestion that all powers cease naval construction for a specific period, thereby putting a check upon mad rivalry in increasing national armament; and

WHEREAS, Such a "naval holiday" from battleship construction would establish a precedent and a tendency that could be made a *beginning of gradual disarmament*; and

WHEREAS, The American labor movement has repeatedly and emphatically declared for *international peace and for policies and institutions to promote international justice*, which is the only foundation for all peace, and has ever encouraged mutual good will and exchange of fraternal courtesies between the labor movements of the different nations in order to further international peace; therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Seattle convention of the American Federation of Labor express its appreciation of the proposal of the British Government, respectfully

urge it upon the labor movement of Germany and the German Government and upon the labor movements and the governments of the civilized countries of the globe for favorable consideration and action, and use every honorable means to prevail upon the present administration of the United States to use its best offices to encourage this *movement for international peace and disarmament.*

1914.

When the 1914 convention of the American Federation of Labor met, the cataclysm of the European war had stricken the world with its devastation.

The horrors of the war impressed the Federation's Executive Council more than ever with the absolute lack of international agencies to adjust disputes between nations and the inevitable result that war and its navies and armies would be used to settle those disputes according to the principle of brute force rather than the principle of justice.

In its report on "International War and Peace" to the 1914 convention, the Executive Council emphasized not only the necessity of the development of institutions for the peaceful settlement of disputes between nations, but also stressed the educational work necessary to make human life more sacred, and reiterated Labor's demand for the abolition of competitive armament.

The following excerpts from the Council's report strikingly illustrate Labor's views on war and the maintenance of peace:

Lack of Agencies to Maintain International Peace.

. . . This war with its terrific toll of human lives is the product of artificial conditions and policies and repugnant to the thought and political progress of the age. The big things of life and civilization are international. But so far we have made little effort or progress in providing agencies for organizing international relations to maintain peace and justice. We realize intellectually that peace and justice should obtain among nations, but we have not yet instituted permanent means adequate to make that conviction a reality.

A time when we are confronted by the effects and the appalling realities of a most terrible war is a peculiarly appropriate opportunity for the people to think out methods and agencies for the maintenance of peace. . . . Wars will cease only when society is convinced that human life is really sacred and when society establishes agencies, international as well as national, for protecting lives. . . . Those who wish to abolish war must lose no opportunity to implant the ethics of humanity, to make the sacredness of human life a part of the thought and action of nations. The power to declare war must be put in the hands of the people or their chosen representatives.

Militarism, Competitive Armament, Arbitration.

In addition to establishing a sentiment and a conviction for peace there must be agencies established for the maintenance of peaceful relations among nations

and for dealing with international issues. Militarism and competitive armament must be abolished and tribunals for awarding justice and agencies for enforcing determinations must be instituted. International interests and issues exist. Political institutions should be established corresponding to political developments.

World Federation—Workers Should Lead.

Those most interested should lead in the demands for world federation and the rule of reason between nations. The working people of all lands bear the brunt of war. They do the fighting, pay the war taxes, suffer most from the disorganization of industry and commerce which results from war.

Organized Labor and International Peace.

The national labor movements can promote the cause of international peace by two complementary lines of action: by creating and stimulating within their own nations a public sentiment that will not tolerate waste of human life, and by establishing international relations, understanding and agencies that will constitute an impassable barrier to policies of force and destruction.

The convention unanimously adopted the Executive Council's report.

In its report to the 1914 convention of the American Federation of Labor, the Executive Council gave an account of their attempt to mobilize the organized workers of the world in support of the "Naval Holiday," which was endorsed by the 1913 convention. The account is significant in its illustration of the restrictions which the autocratic government of Germany placed upon the activities of trade unions:

In accord with the action of the Seattle (1913) convention upon the resolution endorsing the Naval Holiday plan proposed by the First Lord of the Admiralty of Great Britain, that nations cease from making additions to their navies for the period of one year and that the plan be urged upon all labor movements and governments of the civilized world, the president of the American Federation of Labor wrote to President Legien of the International Federation of Trade Unions advising him of this action and requesting that the plan be conveyed to the various affiliated national centers, for presentation to their respective governments.

President Legien replied that under the laws of Germany as a representative of a trade union he would not be allowed to forward such a document to the officers of the national trade union centers of the various countries. He stated that in Germany the difference between political and economic organizations was carefully distinguished, and that discussion of the American Federation of Labor resolution would entail consequences limiting their activities.

President Legien also stated that it would be inexpedient to circulate the manifesto through the medium of the International Federation. However, the International Office was helpful in having the manifesto translated into several different languages and forwarded to American Federation of Labor headquarters. The translations were sent out from the American Federation of Labor head-

quarters with the exhortation that the national centers take action similar to the declaration of the Seattle convention.

Replies to the communications were received from France, Denmark, Great Britain, Austria, Sweden, Holland, South Africa, and Switzerland.

In addition to endorsing the Executive Council's broad survey of the international peace situation and Labor's relation thereto, the convention adopted two resolutions stating the conviction of the American Federation of Labor on specific peace questions arising from the war. One resolution dealt with armaments and disarmament. It attributed the European war largely to the existence of modern armaments which afford a "perpetual temptation to the rulers to put these weapons into use against mankind" and concluded with this clear declaration:

WHEREAS, This most impressive example must teach us but one lesson, the beauty and desirability of a peace that preserves order with honor, that conserves life and property and insures the pursuit of happiness, and that it is the noblest of man's endeavors; therefore, be it

Resolved, That we pledge our support to any plan which has for its purpose the bringing about of the disarmament of all nations to the furthest extent consistent with the preservation of order throughout the world.

The other resolution expressed the belief of the convention that an international conference of the representatives of organized labor should be held coincidentally with the general peace conference in order that the government delegates to the latter might be officially informed of Labor's demands for the abolition of war and armaments through the establishment of international institutions adequate to justly settle by arbitration the differences which result in war.

The convention's statement accompanying the resolution so thoroughly covers Labor's position on war, international arbitration, disarmament, and the necessity of Labor's voice being heard wherever and whenever these questions are under consideration, that it is here given from the text of the resolution:

The whole civilized world is torn by the awful titanic struggle which is now devastating continental Europe, disturbing the industrial and commercial conditions of the whole world, submerging the nations of Europe in the shadows and horrors of war, touching our sympathy and stirring the depths of our emotion.

All history has proved that trial by conflict does not result in permanent peace when it does not establish justice as its foundation, while peace promotes the establishment of those agencies which seek to regulate the relations between men that justice may prevail.

Political experience shows that the welfare and the interests of all the people are promoted in proportion as they are represented in the government, and the government is responsible to them. It is therefore necessary that the workers have a will and an effective voice in determining international relations.

The workers of every age have had special and imperative reasons for ad-

vocating and endeavoring to secure provisions insuring the maintenance of peace with justice, since upon them fall the burdens of actual warfare and the real fighting in the ranks, while the hardships and the suffering accompanying war and following it are felt most keenly and most palpably by them and those dependent upon them, and the costs of war ever fall disproportionately upon their already inadequate resources.

The workers of all countries have been leaders in protesting against injury and violence to human life in peace as well as in war, and against the cruelty and waste of needless war. They have steadfastly endeavored to rouse the general public to realize the enormity of war, thereby rendering public opinion alert and sensitive to the responsibility of all men for the existence of war. Moreover, the workers have been inspired to assist in constructive movements for the prevention of wars whereby peace may be maintained with justice.

The organized wage workers of the civilized nations have established fraternal relations for the purpose of binding together the trade unions of all countries for the promotion of common interests and ideals, and by frequent and regular communication, cooperation, and exchange of representatives have brought about an understanding and sympathy between the organizations and their members in the various countries, relations which are necessary for the inception and continuance of peace.

Out of the experience of these workers, out of their burden-bearing and their wrongs, out of their hopes and their victories, have developed principles of justice and the conviction that the establishment of these principles as practical forces in the lives of the workers is conditioned upon establishing representative agencies for the realization of purposes and agreements determined upon.

Because of these convictions and aspirations, the 1914 convention authorized the Executive Council to convene an international conference of the representatives of organized labor coincidentally with the official peace conference composed of representatives of the governments concerned.

1915.

The absence of other than military and naval institutions for adjustment of international differences was again a theme of the Executive Council's report to the 1915 convention of the American Federation of Labor:

International Relations.

During the previous history of the world, international relations have been left as the field for the professional diplomats and politicians. As a result this field has not been organized and there are few permanent agencies for dealing justly, comprehensively, and humanely with international questions and rights. There exists, however, what may constitute a nucleus for developing permanent institutions. The nucleus consists of The Hague Tribunal and that indefinite mass of international customs known as international law. Suggestions have been made to these embryonic institutions to further develop into a more comprehensive provision for influencing international relations.

The Council deplored the lack of democracy in the existing international agencies and international methods for adjusting

international differences, and insisted that the workers should bend every effort to democratize international relations, and declared that their interests should be given primary consideration in the Official Peace Conference at the close of the war.

The 1915 convention, without a dissenting voice, approved the report of the Executive Council and emphasized the sentiments of that report by this resolution relative to the characteristics which should signalize international relations:

This convention urged that everything possible be done to make a permanent part of international relations the spirit and the purpose that shall be mindful of the supreme importance of human welfare and protection, and shall make provisions for institutions and agencies that shall make their ideals effective factors in the determining of world policies and the relations between nations as well as within nations.

1916.

Constructive measures to prevent the recurrence of such a horror as the European war were considered in the Executive Council's report to the 1916 convention of the American Federation of Labor. "The way to prevent war is to organize for peace." With the failure of "secret diplomacy" apparent, what new agencies should be considered to make war less probable and armament of every sort less necessary. Conferences of nations, international arbitration, international economic conferences, and a league of nations are suggested in the report to the convention as institutions tending toward the peaceful settlement of questions arising between nations.

The following excerpts from the report indicate the breadth of the viewpoint of the American Federation of Labor:

We submit that there ought to be a voluntary union of nations, a league for peace, to adjust disputes and difficulties and to take the initiative in constructive efforts to direct and facilitate world progress in accord with highest concepts.

Among the suggestions usually made for maintaining peace is arbitration. Arbitration has been so generally discussed that it is not necessary at this time for us to consider its purposes and function. However, it has been generally conceded that arbitration has an exceedingly important field of service within definite limitations.

Arbitration can be effective only in the adjustment of differences, and thus is limited to justiciable matters. We suggest, therefore, that it is not suited to adjust difficulties that are most likely to threaten peace between countries and it can not deal constructively with elements and conditions in their making, which when further developed would inevitably result in friction, misunderstanding, or the use of force.

Would not a permanent world judicial tribunal composed of jurists and those familiar with international law with jurisdiction over judicial questions concerning members of the league be a fitting agency to perform this work?

In international judicial and justiciable matters there are a large number of

problems susceptible to mediation and administrative action. For these we recommend a second agency adapted to deal with matters of an entirely different nature, such as economic issues and affairs concerned in the daily life and work of the citizens of the nations.

Such a commission should be composed of men in close touch with industrial and commercial forces in action, not those who from a viewpoint remote from the political and industrial struggle look down upon the activity of the people and the creative forces hewing out the destiny of nations.

The real interests, needs and ideals of the people would be best represented by selecting for this commission journalists, publicists, scientists, professional men, men of affairs, wage earners—those in close touch with the heart of the nations through their work, whether as organizers of the processes of production and commerce or as the human agents necessary for the utilization of material resources.

In order to render international law more tangible and better adapted to the problems with which it must deal would it not be well to provide for conferences of nations to meet at definite time to formulate and codify international law?

. . . Establishing methods and agencies which render display of military and naval power no longer effective is the practical and direct way to abolish rivalry between nations in standing armies and naval equipment.

The 1916 convention approved unreservedly the constructive proposals of the Executive Council for the organization of peace to prevent wars. It did more. It answered the objection that war is necessary to oppose infringement of rights and protect freedom:

We hold that these can best be safeguarded by establishing institutions for dealing with relations between nations and thereby organizing the field for peace. We believe that through permanent institutions, mediation, conciliation, and by directing forces and conditions as they develop, the causes of wars and wars themselves may be prevented.

The convention, moreover, expressed the workers' conviction that permanent peace and the public opinion to demand and enforce it must largely come from the radiating influence of organized labor itself:

We appreciate the fact that peace is essential to the highest development of civilization, and that it is earnestly desired by all right-thinking people. But desire for peace is in itself insufficient. There must be will for peace, together with the agencies for making that will effective in the affairs of nations. There must be voluntary associated effort to establish justice so that there may be an honorable basis for permanent peace.

It is a purpose so valuable that it is worthy of our best thought and most intelligent efforts. The organized labor movement must present constructive suggestions if their concepts are to be considered while international institutions are in the making.

The attempt of the Secretary of War to introduce military training into the public schools and the endeavor of certain groups in the

Congress of the United States to enact compulsory military training legislation brought forth a stinging indictment of these and all other aspects of militarism from the 1916 American Federation of Labor convention. The convention appointed a special committee to consider the question. The committee reported a statement voicing organized labor's antagonism to compulsory military institutions and presenting labor's program of a citizen soldiery instead of a large standing army.

The declaration of the special committee on militarism was adopted unanimously as the declaration of the convention. The declaration reads:

We are unalterably and emphatically opposed to "militarism," that system fostered and developed by tyrants with the object of supporting their arbitrary authority and utilized by those whose predatory designs or ambitious for power and worldly glory lead them to invade and subdue other nations, destroying their liberties, acquiring their wealth, and fastening the yoke of bondage upon them.

The American trade union movement is convinced by the experience of mankind that "militarism," even in its less horrid manifestations, brutalizes those influenced by the spirit of the institution. Under the baleful thrall of the savage instincts which it arouses, the finer sentiments of humanity are strangled. Under "militarism" a pseudo-patriotism is established in the minds of the people wherein men believe that there is nobility and heroism in dying for the glory of a dynasty, or the maintenance of institutions which are inimical to human progress and democratic institutions. "Militarism" is the appeal of arbitrary and irresponsible force as opposed to reason and justice.

Resistance to injustice and tyranny is that virile quality which has given purpose and effect to ennobling causes in all countries and at all times. The institutions of our country and the freedom won by its founders would have been impossible had they been unwilling to die in defense of their liberties. Only a people willing to maintain their rights and defend their liberties are guaranteed free institutions.

Conditions foreign to the institutions of our country have prevented the entire abolition of organized bodies of men trained to carry arms. A citizen soldiery supplies what would otherwise take its place—a large standing army—to which we are unalterably opposed as tending to establish "militarism" in all its phases. Large standing armies threaten the existence of civil liberty. The history of every nation demonstrates that as standing armies are enlarged the rule of democracy is lessened or extinguished.

Our experience has been that even this citizen soldiery, the militia of our several states, has given cause for gravest apprehension. At times their ranks have been recruited from professional thugs, criminals and employes of corporations involved in conflict with workmen who are endeavoring to protect their rights and interests and elevate their standard of living.

During industrial disputes the militia has been called upon to support the authority of those who have desired to enforce martial law, while the courts were open and civil authorities competent to maintain the supremacy of civil law.

We declare that the militia of our several states should be organized and controlled by the democratic institutions of our country, so that this voluntary force

of citizen soldiery may never be diverted from its true purpose to be used to jeopardize or infringe upon the liberties of our people.

The right to bear arms is a fundamental principle of our government, a principle regarded at all times by free people as essential to the maintenance of their liberties and institutions. We demand that this right shall remain inviolate.

Unquestionably the perpetuity of our ideals of government and the maintenance of our free institutions depend largely upon the character of training received by the youth of today—the citizens of tomorrow. While demanding that our public schools shall so teach our children as to develop keen, ready minds, and inspire them with high and lofty ideals fully prepared to intelligently exercise the duties and responsibility of a free people, we also demand that the body of every child be so trained in our schools as to develop it into full manhood or womanhood. We likewise insist that the youth of today—the worker of tomorrow—be so trained as to take his place in our industries fully equipped to protect his rights as a worker and to properly exercise his influence in our economic and industrial life.

We are, however, unalterably opposed to any form of physical training or any quality of mental education which would tend to inculcate the spirit of "militarism." The child's immature and impressionable mind must not be taught to think, except with horror, upon the killing of human beings. To arouse the thought that any of their school hours are devoted to preparation for the possible use of arms against their fellow men is to brutalize their instincts and subvert the influence of the necessary lessons of humanity, peace and good will which it is the duty of our public schools to impress upon them.

These are the principles upon which the American Federation of Labor declares its position.

The convention also recommended that the president of the American Federation of Labor appoint a committee to make a thorough investigation of militarism.

1917.

When the 1917 convention of the American Federation of Labor convened the United States had been drawn into the world war against the Central Powers. Consistent with the former expressed conviction of the Federation, the Executive Council reiterated its position that the primary cause of the war was the absence of any adequate tribunal for the peaceful determination of international questions. If wars were to be prevented in the future, such a tribunal must be provided. The Council therefore placed the following demand at the head of its list of "Peace Terms" with the Central Powers:

The combination of the free peoples of the world in a common covenant for genuine and practical cooperation to secure justice and therefore peace in relations between nations.

In justification of this demand the Executive Council said:

Existing international anarchy has invited imperialism on the part of strong governments and furnished opportunity and occasion for war. Militarism

finds its justification in international anarchy and can be abolished only when international relations are organized.

The convention unanimously adopted the recommendations of the Executive Council.

1918.

More than ever impressed with the imperative necessity of definite constructive work for permanent international peace after the world war, the Executive Council in its report to the 1918 convention of the American Federation declared for a league of nations as the most propitious institution for effecting this purpose and leading to gradual disarmament. Repeating its former declaration that the primary cause of the European war was the "inadequacy of the then existing international agencies for dealing with international affairs," the Council said:

International anarchy creates the opportunity for aggression on the part of strong, resourceful nations seeking outlet for employed energy and excess production. Where there are no established agencies or methods for dealing with such aggressors, militarism manifests itself and can be eliminated only when the field of international relations is justly organized.

This work of organization will clearly devolve upon a league of nations. Although its work will be fraught with far-reaching consequences, such a league can be trusted to institute necessary agencies and methods if it is democratic and humane in character and method. . . . Under the opportunities created by a league of nations adequate agencies could be established for dealing with all justiciable questions. An administrative body composed of representatives of the principal groups constituting national interests should be established to deal with practical problems in a constructive way and thus avert situations that might otherwise result in injustice and war. . . .

The 1918 convention endorsed the report of the Executive Council and added this definite declaration in favor of a League of Nations to adjudicate international disputes rather than rely upon the violence of armies and navies for their arbitrament:

League of Nations.

We are of the opinion that no permanent peace can be made nor should be made until democracy supplants autocracy and until a league of nations is established for the purpose of maintaining a just peace and for the protection of small nations.

1919.

In its report to the 1919 convention of the American Federation of Labor, the Executive Council condemned the propaganda of the militarists to fasten a large standing army upon the people of the United States. In the proposed military regime the Council saw civil liberty threatened, and reiterated the traditional demand of

organized labor for a voluntary citizen soldiery as the only form of military organization compatible with a democracy.

In its indictment of militarism, the Executive Council said:

The trade union movement is unalterably and emphatically opposed to militarism or a large standing army.

Militarism is a system fostered and developed by tyrants in the hope of supporting their arbitrary authority. It is utilized by those whose selfish ambitions for power and worldly glory lead them to invade and subdue other peoples and nations, to destroy their liberties, to acquire their wealth and fasten the yoke of bondage upon them.

The trade union movement is convinced by the experience of mankind that militarism brutalizes those influenced by the spirit of the institution. The finer elements are strangled. Under militarism a deceptive patriotism is established in the people's minds, where men believe that there is nobility of spirit and heroism in dying for the glory of a dynasty or the maintenance of institutions which are inimical to human progress and democracy.

Militarism is the application of arbitrary and irresponsible forces as opposed to reason and justice. Resistance to injustice and tyranny is that virile quality which has given purpose and effect to ennobling causes in all countries and at all times. The free institutions of our country and the liberties won by its founders would have been impossible had they been unwilling to take arms and if necessary die in defense of their liberties. Only as a people are willing to maintain their rights and defend their liberties are they guaranteed free institutions.

Conditions foreign to the institutions of our country have prevented the entire abolition of organized bodies of men trained to carry arms. A voluntary citizen soldiery supplies what would otherwise take its place, a large standing army. To the latter we are unalterably opposed as tending to establish the evils of militarism. Large standing armies threaten the existence of civil liberty. The history of every nation demonstrates that as standing armies are enlarged the rule of democracy is lessened or extinguished.

The convention adopted this declaration upon militarism as the complete expression of its own convictions.

By the time the 1919 convention of the American Federation of Labor met the Versailles Conference had completed the draft of the Treaty of Peace, including the Covenant of the League of Nations, with its labor charter, and submitted it to the governments of the various nations for ratification.

In its report to the convention the Executive Council of the Federation gave its unqualified endorsement to the League of Nations, not with the idea that it made war impossible, but because it "provides the best machinery yet devised to prevent war." The Council said:

The Covenant of the League of Nations . . . must meet with the unqualified approval and support of the American working people. It is not a perfect document and perfection is not claimed for it. It does, however, mark the nearest approach to perfection that has ever been reached in the international affairs of

mankind. It provides the best machinery yet devised for the prevention of war. It places human relations upon a new basis and endeavors to enthrone right and justice instead of a strength and might as the arbiter of international destinies.

Opportunity is afforded for amendments to the Covenant of the League of Nations in order that the human family may from time to time make such improvements as may be needed and may so readjust its guiding rules of conduct as to make for the highest good of all the world.

We declare our endorsement of the triumph of freedom and justice and democracy as exemplified in the Covenant of the League of Nations.

The 1919 convention of the American Federation of Labor, by the emphatic vote of 29,909 to 1,830 endorsed the League of Nations as the "best procedure yet devised for the prevention of war," and consequently as a measure well adapted to insuring gradual disarmament, both naval and military. The resolution of adoption, which came before the convention in the form of a report from the Committee on the Executive Council's Report, declares:

League of Nations.

We agree with the Executive Council that the treaty embodying the Covenant of the League of Nations is not a perfect document and that perfection is not claimed for it. Your committee agrees "that it marks the nearest approach to perfection that has ever been reached in the international affairs of mankind." It is calculated to and does "provide the best machinery of procedure yet devised for the prevention of war." It provides that international disputes between nations shall be settled in the calm light of reason and justice, rather than by the arbitrament of war, with its consequent slaughter of priceless human lives and the destruction of untold wealth.

No human being in possession of his moral senses can deny the adoption of a measure that will tend to prevent the indescribable horrors of another world war. Civilization must turn to a point where international disputes will be settled in the calm light of reason rather than by the repetition of the horrors we have just witnessed. While the Covenant of the League of Nations, with its labor provisions, is not perfect, is not all that we desire, it is in the right direction for the reasons stated and a multiplicity of others and should be adopted in principle.

The organization of international relations for the orderly and civilized adjustment of disputes between nations has been the demand of the American Federation of Labor, as the spokesman of the workers of America, from its earliest years. In the organization of international relations the American Federation of Labor saw the beginning of the end of war, the beginning of the end of large navies and large standing armies—the institutions relied upon from time immemorial to settle international disputes.

1920.

In its report to the 1920 convention of the American Federation of Labor, the Executive Council reaffirmed its former endorsement

of the Covenant of the League of Nations with its labor charter, as an instrument for the organization of international relations on the basis of the peaceful settlement of international disputes.

The convention itself reiterated its support of the League by adopting this terse declaration:

We, speaking in the name of labor, the toiling masses, hold that we can not recede from the position taken at the Atlantic City convention in 1918, without endorsing the policy of greed, hatred, and brutal war as the rule that guides in the settlement of relations between nations.

1921.

In its report to the 1921 convention of the American Federation of Labor, the Executive Council gave a resume of the Federation's previous demands for international disarmament and recommended that the convention urge the Government of the United States to take the leadership in convening a disarmament conference.

The convention unanimously endorsed the Council's recommendation by the adoption of the following report:

The labor movement recognizes the value of freedom and it knows that freedom and rights can be maintained only by those willing to assert their claims and defend their rights.

The cause of disarmament and international peace can be promoted by creating and stimulating a public sentiment that will not tolerate waste of life and by establishing international relations, understandings, and agencies that will constitute insuperable barrier to policies of force and destruction. With humanization, education, cultivation, and the establishment of the rule of reason, occasions for wars and wars themselves will cease.

The working people, the masses of the world population, can end wars if they but have the independence to think and to give their convictions reality by daring to do.

For this and many other obvious reasons this convention calls upon the Government of the United States to take the initiative or to cooperate with any other nation or nations for the purpose of a general agreement for disarmament both of the army and the naval affairs of the world and that it shall be the duty of the Executive Council to call upon the workers and the people to aid in every way within their power and to translate into action the sentiments recommended.

CONCLUSION.

The record of the declarations and activities of the American Federation of Labor as here compiled is set forth not alone for its historic value, great as that may be, but also for the inspiration and information of the International Conference on Limitation of Armament and those who may be associated with that conference in the furtherance of the effort to bring about international peace, good will and justice and the release by agreement of all nations from

the tremendous burden of armament. The record of Labor is consistent and inspiring. It demonstrates clearly that Labor's understanding and Labor's contention is based upon a thorough knowledge of fundamentals and an unalterable determination that human life shall be sanctified above all other things in the affairs of the world.

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