THE PROPOSAL FOR A LEAGUE TO
ENFORCE PEACE—NEGATIVE

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Before taking up the subject which I desire to dis-
cuss, I am sure that my distinguished friend [Mr. Taft] will
pardon me if I dwell for a moment upon the plans of the
League to Enforce Peace, and I will say to you that, in
dissenting from those who support those plans, I give
myself more embarrassment than I give those who rep-
resent the views from which I dissent. I know the dis-
tinguished gentleman who is at the head of this League too
well to doubt for a moment that he desires to have every
possible criticism candidly stated, for I know him well
even to know that he desires the triumph of that which is
right much more earnestly than he desires the triumph of
any particular thing in which he may believe. [Applause.] And
I think that that can be said in general of those who
assemble here, for this is rather a unique organization;
it is composed of those who have no pecuniary interest in
the subjects which they discuss, and therefore each one
speaks in a disinterested way. While he proclaims what
he believes, he is at the same time a seeker after truth.
The names of those who stand sponsor for this League to
Enforce Peace create a very strong presumption in its favor,
but it seems to me, as I view it, that there are four ob-
jections to the plan and that these objections are of such
great weight and
importance that they deserve to be considered by those who have this plan in contemplation or who are inclined to support it.

The first is that it involves us in entangling alliances with Europe, and that we, therefore, cannot adopt it without abandoning the advice of Washington which has been followed thus far and I believe will continue to be followed by the American people. I have not the slightest thought that any argument that can be presented in behalf of any plan that connects us with the quarrels of Europe will ever bring to the support of that plan anything like a majority of the American people.

Now, as I understand this plan, we are to agree with other nations of the world to enforce peace and to enforce it by compelling all of the contracting parties to submit all of their controversies for investigation before going to war. I need not tell you that the plan of investigating all questions is one that I heartily approve. It is now more than ten years since I began to urge in this country and in other countries a plan which has finally been embodied in thirty treaties, which submits every question of dispute of every kind and character to investigation and gives a period of a year for that investigation, during which time the contracting parties agree that there shall be no resort to force. I am committed to the plan of investigation. The point I make is this, that, when we join with other nations to enforce that plan, we join with them in attempting to settle by force the disputes of the old world. While the chances of a resort to force may be very remote, I am not willing to speculate on a proposition about which we can know absolutely nothing; I am not willing that this nation shall put its
army and navy at the command of a council which we cannot control and thus agree to let foreign nations decide when we shall go to war. Now, if I understand this plan, you cannot agree with other nations to enforce peace by compelling the submission of all questions to investigation before war, without lodging with some power somewhere the right to decide when that force shall be employed. We cannot hope to have a controlling influence in that body; I assume that it would be impossible to secure any kind of an agreement which would leave us to decide when these nations would enforce a proposition. My first objection, therefore, is that it necessarily entangles us in the quarrels of Europe and that we would go, blindfolded, into an agreement, the extent and effect of which no human mind can know.

The second is that if we join with Europe in the enforcement of peace over there, we can hardly refuse to allow Europe to join in the enforcing of peace in the Western hemisphere. If I understand the sentiment of the American people, there is not the slightest thought in the American mind of surrendering the Monroe Doctrine, or of inviting any foreign nation to assist us in maintaining peace in the Western hemisphere. [Applause.] This is the second objection.

The third is that our Constitution vests in Congress the right to declare war and that we cannot vest the power to declare war in a council controlled by European nations without changing our Constitution. The suggestion that we so amend our Constitution as to vest in a body, whose control is across the sea, the right to declare war would not be popular in the United States. If we are to change the Constitution from what it is now,
I am in favor of putting the declaring of war in the hands of the people, to be decided by a referendum vote of the American people. This is quite different from surrendering, into the hands of a foreign body, the right to determine when this nation shall take up arms.

The fourth objection that I see to this plan is fundamental and cannot be changed by a suggestion that I shall make in a moment. The fourth objection is that when we turn from moral suasion to force, we step down and not up. I prefer to have this nation a moral power in the world rather than a policeman. Therefore, while I have no doubt whatever of the high motives and of the laudable purpose of those who stand for the doctrines of the League, I cannot bring myself to believe that it is a step in advance.

Now, three of the objections mentioned might be obviated if we divided the world into groups, the American group being entrusted with the maintenance of peace in the Western hemisphere. I would be much more willing to join with the Republics of Central and South America in any plan that would compel the submission of all disputes in this hemisphere to investigation before war; I would be much more willing to do that than to favor a plan that would bind us to enforce decisions made by nations across the ocean, or even obligate us to join European nations in *compelling* investigation before war.

And in addition to all the other objections, and there are so many that I shall not take time to give them all—in addition to all other objections that may be made to this League, when it embraces European nations and puts them in a position where they can decide questions of
war for us, there is this consideration that I think will not be treated lightly by the American people. If we are in a group of American Republics, we are associated with people having our form of government, but the moment we cross the ocean, we tie ourselves to a theory of government from which our people dissented a century and a third ago. If I understand the heart of the American people, they still believe that there is an essential difference between a monarchy and a republic. So long as the European monarchies vest in their executives the right to declare war, it seems to me that the American people can well refuse to tie themselves to these countries and become thus "unciously yoked together."

As I said, if we are going to have any change in our Constitution, I want it to be a change in the direction of democracy and not a change in the direction of monarchy. If I understand the spirit of our nation and the sentiment of our people, you will find that when this becomes a practical question and comes before them for adoption or rejection, they will consider very seriously before they will join this country to the countries with hereditary rulers and thus give to these rulers an influence over us which we refuse to give to our own executives.

Now I have presented, as briefly as I could, the objections that I see to this plan to enforce peace, and I shall be very glad if it can be so modified as to make it consistent and harmonious with the ideas of the American people and the institutions of the United States, for these gentlemen do not surpass me in the desire to do whatever can be done to make war impossible. And now let me give the remainder of my time to two or three phases of
the subject under consideration. I say the subject under consideration, for I suppose that the subject is as broad as the subject is when it is described as "the state of the Union."

We are here to consider the attitude of this nation and I ask you to bear with me for a moment while I speak of the nation's attitude on two or three phases of the subject now under consideration. First, as to whether we shall go into this war; there are very few people who say that we should. I believe they had a meeting in New York not long ago, and one in Boston, at which speakers said that it was our duty to go into this war. The virus has not yet been carried across the Allegheny Mountains; we have had no meetings in the west where anybody has suggested that we go into this war. My fear is that, following the diplomacy of the old world, we may do the things that will bring us into this war, even though we do not desire to enter it. You well remember that all the rulers who entered this war entered it *protesting that they wanted peace*, but they followed the precedents that lead to war.

My contention is that the precedents of the past have broken down, that they have involved the world in a war without a parallel; that they have made a slaughterhouse out of Europe, and that these precedents ought not to be followed in this country if they will tend to bring us into this war. And so, where I have had a chance to speak to the people—and I have been improving every opportunity for now some ten months—wherever I have had a chance to speak to the people, I have presented the alternatives which I think we can choose instead of going to war.
In the first place, if diplomacy fails, we have a peace plan. It was offered to all the world. It has been embodied in thirty treaties with one billion three hundred million of the human race. We now have three-quarters of the globe connected with us by these treaties, and three nations, exercising authority over one hundred millions of people, that have not signed the treaties have formally endorsed the principle, although they have not yet joined in treaties with us. We have almost the entire civilized world bound to us either by treaties actually made or by agreement upon the principle which the treaty embodies, providing that every dispute of every kind shall, before hostilities begin, be submitted to an international tribunal for investigation and report. Four of the belligerent nations have signed these treaties with us, Great Britain, France, Italy and Russia. Great Britain and France signed on the 15th of September, 1914, a month and a half after the war began, and Russia signed on the 1st of October, two months after the war began. Italy signed before the war commenced. Three belligerent nations, Germany, Austria and Belgium, have endorsed the principle but have not yet signed treaties. Germany was the sixteenth nation to formally endorse the principle embodied in these treaties. My contention is this, that if this plan was good enough to offer to all the world—and we have never withdrawn the offer—if it was good enough to be embodied in the treaties we have made, and good enough to be endorsed in principle by the other nations that have not yet signed treaties, it is good enough to use with any nation before we go to war with that nation.

But, my friends, in an argument it is well to cover
every possible contingency, and this is so important a question that I desire to leave no point uncovered, and so I go a step further and say that if we use the treaty plan and it fails to bring a peaceful settlement, or if we fail to use the treaty plan and reach a time when we must decide either to go into this war or to postpone final settlement of the dispute until the war is over, if we are compelled to choose between these two alternatives, I believe it will be the part of wisdom to postpone final settlement of the dispute until after this war is over. In suggesting this, I am simply applying to international affairs a principle that is applied in our courts every day. Our courts postpone hearings in the interest of justice, and if, by postponing the final settlement of a dispute until this war is over, we can secure a settlement without war, I think it is worth postponing. The only difficulty we have had in regard to any dispute with either side has been the fear of the effect of the settlement on this war; when this war is over, that difficulty will be removed and I think the chances are many to one that we can reach a settlement without a resort to arms.

But there is another contingency which should be considered. Suppose it were impossible or were believed to be impossible to secure a settlement after the war without a war; suppose the question were simply this, that we must have a war to settle the dispute and that the only thing we had to decide was whether we would have it now, while this war is on, or after this war is over. If we were compelled to choose between those two alternatives, I believe it would be the part of wisdom to have our war after this war is over. Why? In the first place,
we would still have on our side the possibility of a peaceful settlement after the war was over. Second, we would be free to act as mediator and help to bring this war to a close before we entered our war; and, third, if we have to have a war, it will be our war with the single nation with which we have the dispute, and we can have something to say about when to go into it and when to come out and the terms of the settlement; but if we go into this war, it is not our war, it is everybody's war; if we go into it, we cannot come out till the others do, and while there we must fight for the things they fight for, and God forbid that this nation shall ever entangle itself in the quarrels of the Old World or put an American army and an American navy at the command of a European monarch to be used in settling his quarrels with other European monarchs. The first point, therefore, that I ask you to consider is this, that we shall not go into this war. I shall not attempt to present all the reasons, I shall simply present three and those very briefly.

The first is that we cannot go into this war without imposing a very heavy burden upon a generation yet unborn, aye, upon many generations. If we go into this war, we cannot go in in a stingy way or as a miserly nation. If it is manly to go in, it will be manly to play a man's part and be prodigal with men and with money. If we judge the possibilities in regard to our expenses by what has already occurred in Europe, we must know that we cannot possibly take part in this war without contracting an enormous war debt. In less than two years the countries now at war have added to the war debts of the world a sum about equal to all the war debts that have come down from all the wars of history
until this time. It is no slight matter to fasten upon the
generations that are to follow us the burden of such a
debt. Five hundred years from now children will be
born into Europe with their necks under the yoke that
this generation has placed upon them. Let us not imi-
tate their folly.

In the second place, no man can tell how many men
it would cost us; it has already cost them 3,000,000 in
killed and nearly ten million in wounded. If we go
into it, what will be our quota? One hundred thousand
men? It would be more likely to be half a million or
a million. If I know the sentiment of the American
people, they are not willing to make this sacrifice in
either blood or money for any cause that has arisen in
our disputes with either side thus far.

The third objection is, that we would forfeit an op-
portunity that never came to any other nation before,
since time began. We are the greatest of the neutral
nations; we are the one to which the world is looking to
act as mediator when the time for mediation comes. If
we go into this war, no matter what the cause, no matter
what the excuse, no matter what the pretext, we step
down from that high position and turn over to some
other nation this unprecedented opportunity.

And more than that, we are next-of-kin to all the
nations that are at war. They are blood of our blood,
they are bone of our bone; not a soldier boy falls on any
battlefield over yonder but what the wail of sorrow in
his home finds an echo at some American fireside, and
these people have a right to expect that we will remain
the friend of all, and in God's good time play the part
of friend.
Some nation must lift the world out of the black night of war into the light of that day when peace can be made enduring by being built on love and brotherhood, and I crave that honor for our nation; more glorious than any page of history that has yet been written will be that page that will record our claim to the promise made to the peace-makers.

This is the day for which the ages have been waiting. For 1900 years the gospel of the Prince of Peace has been making its majestic march around the world and the philosophy of the Sermon on the Mount has become more and more the rule of daily life. All that remains is that this moral code shall be lifted from the level of the individual and made real in the law of nations; and this, I believe, is the task that God in His providence has reserved for the American people.

And now may I devote the remainder of my time to just one more thought? It is a thought upon which I would be glad to expand, but it would not be fair to those who are to follow me to trespass upon their time. My friends, this is a place where, if anywhere, we can and ought to speak heart to heart. Let me say just a word about the false philosophy, as I regard it, that some ask this country to adopt. We have in this country a propaganda for what they call preparedness. It ought not to be called preparedness; it is unfortunate that a word with such a distinguished lineage and such high character should be dragged down to so base a use as this word is. It does not accurately describe it, because there are two kinds of preparedness, and those who ask you to adopt one kind have no right to insist upon monopolizing the meaning of that word.
The question is how best to prepare against war. My objection to the plan which is suggested and described by that word preparedness, as it is used by the friends of large appropriations, is that it will not prevent war but will provoke war, and in proof of this I point to the fact that the war in Europe was preceded by a period of preparation such as the world never knew before. If preparedness would prevent war, there would be no war in Europe, for they had spent money lavishly preparing. One side prepared on land and the other side on sea. Why did the side that prepared on land not prepare on sea? Because it thought preparation on land more effective. And why did the side that prepared on sea not prepare on land? It had as much money to use for one as the other. Why did it not use it preparing on land? Because it thought preparation on sea was more effective. Each thought it was prepared, and when the war began those best prepared went in first, after them others followed as they could prepare, and if we had been as well prepared as some now ask us to be, we would, I believe, be in the war to-day, shouting for blood as lustily as any of them. Now that is my view of it, and I understand that we are here to give expression to our own views, and not to other people's views. I know of no way of comparing views except for each one to give his own. If I tried to give yours, none of you might try to give mine, and then my view would not be presented at all. But if you present your view and I present mine, we have a chance to compare them.

This false philosophy that has brought Europe into this war will, in my judgment, bring into war any nation that adopts it. Europe has built its hope of peace upon
a false foundation, upon the foundation of force and fear and terrorism; the only hope of peace that these European nations have had rested in the belief that each could terrorize the other into peace.

It is a false philosophy; if you want to see how false it is try it on a neighborhood. The big questions between nations are settled by the very same rules that we apply to neighborhoods. I will show you what this philosophy is, and then you can judge whether it can be expected to bring anything else except war.

Suppose nearby you have two farmers living side by side, good farmers, well-meaning farmers who wanted to be friends, and suppose they tried to maintain peace on the European plan, how would they go at it? One would go to the nearest town and buy the best gun he could find, and then he would put a notice in the paper saying that he loved his neighbor and that he had no thought of trespassing upon his neighbor's rights; but that he was determined to defend his own rights and protect his honor at any cost, that he had secured the best gun in the market and that if his neighbor interfered with him, he would shoot him. Then suppose the neighbor went to town the next day and got him a better gun and, with the same frankness, consulted the newspaper and put in a similar notice explaining that he loved peace as well as his neighbor did but that he was just as determined to defend his own rights and protect his honor and that he had a better gun than his neighbor and that, if his neighbor crossed his line, he would kill him. And suppose then the first man, when he read that notice, went to town and got two guns and advertised that fact in the paper, and the second man, when he read it, went to town and got three guns, and so on, each alter-
nately buying guns. What would be the result? Every undertaker in that vicinity would go out and become personally acquainted with the two men, because he would know there would be at least one funeral in that neighborhood. That is the European plan. One country gets a battleship and announces that it can blow any other battleship out of the water; then a rival nation gets a dreadnaught that can sink the battleship; then the first nation gets a super-dreadnaught; then they go to the dictionary and look for prefixes for the names of their battleships as they build them larger and larger; and they make guns larger and larger and they equip armies larger and larger, all the time talking about how much they love peace and all the while boasting that they are ready for a fight.

Go back to the time when they commenced to pass laws against the carrying of concealed weapons and you can get all the material you want for a speech on preparedness, because the arguments made in favor of carrying revolvers can be put into the speeches made today in favor of preparedness, without changing a word. Did you ever hear of a man who wanted to carry a revolver to be aggressive? No, it was just to protect his rights and defend his honor, especially his honor, but they found by experience that the man who carried a revolver generally carried with it a disposition to use it on slight provocation and a disposition to provoke its use by others. For the promotion of peace, every state in this union has abolished preparedness on the part of individuals because it did not preserve peace. It provoked trouble, and unless we can convince ourselves there is a moral philosophy applicable to nations that is just the opposite of the moral philosophy applied to
individuals, we must conclude that, as the pistol-toting man is a menace to the peace of a community, so the pistol-toting nation is a menace to the peace of the world.
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