

League of Nations. The British Empire, again, is not only one of the strongest influences behind the League, but she is honestly and sincerely feeling her way to a better ordering of international relations. China is not only a member of the League, but has been elected a member of the Council at the last meeting of the Assembly at Geneva. All the great parties concerned in the Pacific and in Pacific policy are therefore pledged to friendly conference and consultation in regard to what is the most important, possibly the most dangerous, next phase of world politics. They are all pledged to the new system of conference and consultation, either by membership of the League and its Council, or, in the case of America, by the resolution which the Senate has just passed. It is now for this Conference of ours to give the lead and guide the Powers concerned into a friendly conference, or system of conferences, in regard to this great issue. This, I submit, is the great opportunity presented to this Conference, and I trust that our deliberations will be exploited to the full for the good and future peace of the world. As you said yesterday, Mr. Prime Minister, the British Empire involves the great question of East and West, the relations of East and West. That great question is now coming to a head. There is no doubt that the British Empire is more vitally interested than any other country in this, for she has her feet planted on all the continents. By her great position she is called upon to act as the peacemaker, the mediator, between East and West, and nowhere else has she such scope, such opportunity, for great world service as just here. Great rival civilizations are meeting, and great questions have to be decided for the future. I most heartily applaud what you said yesterday on this point, and I trust that difficulties on this most thorny path will not prove insuperable to us. You spoke yesterday most eloquently on the Peace Treaty, the sacredness of the Peace Treaty, and the obligation to carry out the Peace Treaty.

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There is one chapter in that Treaty which, to my mind, should be specially sacred to the British Empire: that is the first chapter on the League of Nations. The Covenant may be faulty, it may need amendment in order to make it more workable and more generally acceptable, but let us never forget that the Covenant embodies the most deeply-felt longings of the human race for a better life. There, more than anywhere else, do we find a serious effort made to translate into practical reality the great ideals that actuated us during the war, the ideals for which millions of our best gave their lives. The method of understanding instead of violence, of free co-operation, of consultation and conference in all great difficulties which we have found so fruitful in our Empire system, is the method which the League attempts to apply to the affairs of the world. Let us, in the British Empire, back it for all it is worth. It may well prove, for international relations, the way out of the present morass. It may become the foundation of a new international system which will render armaments unnecessary, and give the world at large the blessings which we enjoy in our lesser League of Nations in the Empire.

I have spoken at length already, Prime Minister, and therefore I do not wish to refer to the other great matter which we are met here to consider, and which Mr. Hughes touched upon—namely, constitutional relations. We shall come to a very full discussion of that subject, and therefore I do not wish to say any more at this stage.

OPENING SPEECH BY MR. MASSEY.

MR. MASSEY: In the first place, Prime Minister, I want briefly to take advantage of what you referred to as our “unenviable privilege.” Speaking for myself, the privilege of having the longest record as Prime Minister of any of those who sit around the Council Board to-day, and on that account I want to add a few words to what you have said with regard to an old friend, General Botha. During the very few months that I was acquainted with General Botha I came to regard him as one of the best men I ever met—a great man undoubtedly, and in addition a great British statesman. If he had been with us to-day it goes without saying he would have been invaluable in assisting to solve some of the difficult