

MEMORANDUM TO THE SECRETARY-GENERAL OF THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS, GENEVA, FROM THE
PRIME MINISTER OF NEW ZEALAND, DATED 16TH JULY, 1936.

“ Prime Minister’s Office, Wellington, N.Z., 16th July, 1936.

“ SIR,—

“ In accordance with the resolution of the Assembly of the League on the 4th July, 1936, and anticipating the formal request from the Council (as is necessary in the circumstances of New Zealand if the proposals of the New Zealand Government are to be received by the Secretary-General before the 1st September next), I have the honour to forward herewith an expression of the views of the New Zealand Government on the Covenant of the League of Nations:—

“(1) We believe in the first place that there is no material fault in the existing provisions of the Covenant and that the difficulties that have arisen, and that may arise in the future, are due to the method and the extent of its operation.

“(2) We believe that the Covenant has never yet been fully applied and that it cannot be characterized as an ineffective instrument until it has been so applied.

“(3) We are prepared to reaffirm with the utmost solemnity our continued acceptance of the Covenant as it stands.

“(4) We believe, nevertheless, that the Covenant is capable of amendment, which should take the form of strengthening rather than weakening its provisions.

“(5) We are prepared to accept, in principle, the provisions proposed for the Geneva Protocol of 1924 as one method of strengthening the Covenant as it exists.

“(6) We are prepared to take our collective share in the application, against any future aggressor, of the full economic sanctions contemplated by Article 16, and we are prepared, to the extent of our power, to join in the collective application of force against any future aggressor.

“(7) We believe that the sanctions contemplated by the present Covenant will be ineffective in the future as they have been in the past—

“(1) Unless they are made immediate and automatic:

“(2) Unless economic sanctions take the form of the complete boycott contemplated by Article 16:

“(3) Unless any sanctions that may be applied are supported by the certainty that the Members of the League applying the sanctions are able and, if necessary, prepared to use force against force.

“(8) It is our belief that the Covenant as it is, or in a strengthened form, would in itself be sufficient to prevent war if the world realized that the nations undertaking to apply the Covenant actually would do so in fact.

“(9) We are prepared to agree to the institution of an international force under the control of the League or to the allocation to the League of a definite proportion of the armed forces of its Members to the extent, if desired, of the whole of those forces—land, sea, and air.

“(10) We consider that there can be no certainty of the complete and automatic operation of the Covenant unless the Governments of all Members of the League are supported, in their determination to apply it, by the declared approval of their peoples.

“(11) We propose, therefore, that all the Members of the League, and as many non-Members as may be persuaded to adopt this course, should hold immediately a national plebiscite with the object of taking the opinion of their peoples on the following points—

“(1) Whether they are prepared to join automatically and immediately in the sanctions contemplated by Article 16 of the Covenant against any aggressor nation nominated as such by the Council or the Assembly:

“(2) Whether in such case the armed forces of their country (or such proportion as may previously have been fixed by the League) should be immediately and automatically placed at the complete disposal of the League for that purpose.

“(12) We do not accept the desirability of regional pacts, but, if Members of the League generally approve of such pacts, we should be prepared to support a collective system in which all Members of the League, while accepting the immediate and universal application of the economic sanctions contemplated by Article 16, nevertheless, if they desired to do so, restricted to defined areas their undertaking to use force.

“(13) In such a case we consider that the question of the use of force in defined areas should also be made the subject of national plebiscites.

“(14) We believe it improper to enforce a system of preventing war without at the same time setting up adequate machinery for the ventilation and, if possible, rectification of international grievances, and we would support the establishment of an acceptable tribunal for that purpose.