

Concurrently with the transaction of formal proceedings to which I have already referred, and in the interval of the work of the various committees, the delegates delivered orally to the Assembly the views which their respective Governments had empowered them to express. Brief allusion has already been made to the opinions and proposals of France, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, and a number of other Member States, all of which were subsequently supported and amplified by their representatives in speeches before the Assembly. Without embarking upon a *résumé* of all the speeches, it may suffice to remark that in general they revealed, on the one hand, undiminished attachment to the ideals of the Covenant, and, on the other, varying opinions as to the methods by which the League could discharge either in full or in a modified form the functions which had been assigned to it by its creators.

As regards the attitude of the British Commonwealth of Nations, speaking to the Assembly on the 25th September the representative of the United Kingdom (Mr. Anthony Eden, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs), painted in his opening remarks a word picture of the present state of the world and the seriousness of the times. Nationalism was strong, its antagonisms vibrant, challenging enthusiasms for rival forms of government were hurled in defiance at one another. Even the most peace-loving nations were expending an ever-increasing proportion of their national wealth upon armaments to the ultimate detriment of their economy. It was a British tradition to distrust extremes, but respect for our own forms of government could not be increased by pouring scorn on those of other nations. After centuries of experience democracy still appeared to Great Britain not effete, but enduring; the epitome of man's endeavour to create a civilization wherein he could find freedom, individuality, and peace. Other nations felt just as strongly about their own systems of government and Great Britain had no quarrel with them on that account. The first rule of ordered life between nations was faith in one's own national tenets, toleration for those of others.

The policy of His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom would continue, Mr. Eden said, to be based on the League of Nations, and her whole-hearted co-operation could be counted upon. Lack of universality in the League had been a great drawback, and so also had been its failure to play a more effective part in the earlier stages of a crisis, a defect which it seemed highly desirable to remove. Great Britain attached importance to the question of eliminating the unanimity rule as affecting the first paragraph of Article XI of the Covenant, so far as that rule required the consent of the States in controversy. The United Kingdom, he went on to say, was in favour of regional pacts devised to strengthen general security, provided they were consistent with the Covenant.

After paying a tribute to the importance of the work of the Economic Committee, to which Great Britain attached the greatest value, Mr. Eden turned to the subject of armaments. Great Britain, he said, was engaged in the re-equipment of its three services—navy, army, and air—and was making good progress with its programme. While he believed that the people of the United Kingdom would much prefer to spend their wealth in other ways, His Majesty's Government had no option but to persist in their present course unless and until the nations of the world reached an international agreement for the limitation and reduction of armaments.

Mr. S. M. Bruce, on behalf of Australia, declared that his Government was in favour of the separation of the Covenant from the Peace Treaties. He supported generally the views expressed by the representative of Great Britain, and so did the Aga Khan speaking on behalf of India. The delegates of South Africa and the Irish Free State did not address the Assembly. Mr. Mackenzie King, Prime Minister of Canada, after referring to the contrast between the conditions existing on the American Continent and those in Europe and the consequent divergence of outlook and conception of interest and duty as between the nations of the two continents, went on to say that Canada reaffirmed her adherence to the principles of the Covenant, that the preservation of peace by the progressive organization of international co-operation within a collective system had been championed in equal measure by all political parties in Canada, and that its attachment to this ideal was as strong to-day as it was at the inception of the League. At the same time, he added, Canada believed that automatic commitment to the application of force was not a practical policy. He pointed to the danger that regional agreements might develop in practice into old-fashioned military alliances and to the fact that under present circumstances they could only be worked out in Europe. The Canadian House of Commons, by unanimous resolution, had made the adoption of undertakings to apply either military or economic sanctions subject to the approval of Parliament. What he had said did not mean that in no circumstances would the Canadian people be prepared to share in action against an aggressor—there had been no absolute commitments either for or against participation in war or other forms of force; but it did mean that any decision on the part of Canada to participate in war would have to be taken by the Parliament or people of Canada in the light of all existing circumstances, "circumstances of the day as they exist in Canada, as well as in the areas involved." He welcomed the proposal that the Covenant should be detached from the Versailles Treaty. Canada believed that the only way to strengthen the League's shaken authority was to take heed of previous experience, to make the policies of the League conform to realities, to the conditions and attitudes of mind that existed in fact in the world of to-day, without losing sight of the possibility of modifying those policies as facts and national attitudes changed in the future. Universal acceptance of the principles of the Covenant must be the constant aim of those who hope for the renunciation of war as an instrument of national policy. Universality, however, was not to be attained in a single stride, and in the opinion of Canada its achievement would only be possible as the utility of the preventive functions of the League was confirmed by experience and supported by the quickened conscience of humanity. The coercive and primitive provisions of the Covenant had operated in the past as a deterrent to the kind of collaboration which must serve as an intermediate stage to a League of Nations which would be universal. By emphasizing the mediation and conciliation aspects of the Covenant, we could help to transform the collective system from a hope to a reality. Every vacant seat in the Assembly was a broken link in the chain of collective security. Canada did not believe that formal amendment of the Covenant now was either possible or necessary.