BAKER

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Address Delivered at the Annual Meeting
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League for Permanent Peace
Twentieth Century Club, Boston
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I think you will agree with me that events of the past year in America have been of a kind to try the faith and test the courage of every sincere advocate of an immediate organization of the forces of the world that are striving for permanent peace.

There can be little doubt upon the part of anyone who is at all conversant with the tides of world opinion that our reputation upon this planet, which two years ago stood at an unparalleled height, has now dwindled into cynical dislike and distrust. We are indeed still envied for our wealth, still feared for our power, and we are courted because of our food, our raw materials, our machinery, which all the world now requires; but the fine edge of respect, of confidence, of hopeful faith in our leadership and in our ideals, with which the world then regarded us, has quite evaporated.

It may be that the position we now occupy, of being envied, feared and courted, rather than respected and trusted, satisfies a majority of Americans, as it apparently satisfies certain of our leaders; but I, for one, do not believe it. It does not satisfy me. For it is just this attitude of fear, envy and need which is provocative of war, once the nations cherishing those feelings consider themselves strong enough to wage a war. And we dwell in a fool's paradise when we imagine we shall somehow escape the consequences of allowing such passions to develop in the world.

The true history of American intervention in the world war has not yet been written. It will take some time, some distance, some greater calmness of view, to weigh properly the exact service rendered by America in bringing the war to a successful termination. It will ultimately be realized, I believe, that this service, in large part, was quite distinct from either military or naval aid: quite apart from the money, the food, the munitions, we supplied, important as all of this material aid really was.

I was in Europe during nearly all the crucial year of 1918—in England chiefly, but also in France, and in Italy. It was my specific duty to study the forces of unrest and discontent in the various nations and report upon them to our government. I was there because, in the nature of things, the exact extent and influence of these forces could not be known outside of their respective countries,—and it was needful for those in authority in America, in shaping their policies, that these facts **should** be accurately known. On the one hand, a strict censorship not only of the news but of private correspondence, either suppressed entirely or else shrewdly minimized the news of these movements of unrest: and on the other hand an all-seeing government machinery of propaganda was striving to produce, for its effect both abroad and at home, an impression of unity and harmony that did not exist.

We never knew in America—that is, the public never knew—and does not know yet, the extent of the discouragement, doubt, and even organized opposition, which existed among the allies during that hard spring of 1918 when they were awaiting, anxiously and fearfully, the last great onset of the German military machine.

Here in America we were absorbed and emotionally elated with the breathless process of organization. We could not easily get the point of view of nations entering upon the terrible fourth year of their struggle: or know how weary they were: how sore with their losses: how fearful of the future: how doubtful of any real succor from America. Few of our troops were then available: many European leaders, though they expressed their confidence in public, never believed that we could place our armies in the battle-line in time to be of any substantial service in turning the tide of the war. A wave of doubt, discontent and opposition developed among all the allies, but especially in England and in Italy. So-called "peace by negotiation" movements grew in strength, headed in England by men like Lord Lansdowne and supported by considerable groups of organized labor. Labor in general was discontented. There were great strikes, especially in Italy—semi-revolutionary strikes—I was present during one of them at Milan—of which not one word of news was published in any foreign newspaper. Whether right or wrong, labor would not or did not see that military victory promised anything positive for its cause: offered any new hope to the masses of the world who were shedding their blood upon the fields of France. It was clear enough to

labor what they were fighting against—they were opposing German aggression, they were defending their homes—but they were never clear, until America spoke out, what they were fighting for.

No one who was there can ever forget the magic effect of Mr. Wilson's words—his various speeches, the enunciation of the Fourteen Points, and the Four Points, in which he set forth the objectives of the war as America regarded it. He made the whole world feel that this was a war for democracy, for the rights of man, as opposed to autocracy and the tyranny of force. In a real sense the entrance of America changed the attitude of the allies—I mean the essential spirit of that attitude—from the defensive to the offensive.

It was Mr. Wilson's great service in those dark days of 1917 and 1918 that he powerfully re-moralized a world rapidly becoming demoralized. His words blew across the western nations like a wind of new faith, hope, courage. They helped bring together the idealistic and liberal groups in all the nations: they set up an ideal worthy to be fought for and to die for. And the same influence that strengthened the morale of the allies tended to weaken the morale of the Central Powers: for there were many men in central Europe who at heart also responded to the same high appeal.

In that hard moment, the whole struggle was thus lifted to a higher plane: we felt that we were really fighting for a new world, a new birth of democracy, a new era of justice and peace. In our pride in our material achievements in raising a vast army in an incredibly brief time: in building great ships and railroads and flying-machines: we underestimate the greater spiritual service we performed. Every nation raised great armies, built railroads, and tanks, and flying-machines. Ship for ship, man for man, gun for gun, our allies overmatched us: but no other nation held the place of moral leadership during those great brief months that we did. It is this misconception, perhaps, of our true function—our unique service—then and now—that plagues us: is, indeed, one of the chief causes of our present vacillation, uselessness, hopelessness, in a torn world. What we cannot see is that while the world is indeed starving for food, clothing, credit, it is still hungrier for strong, sure, steady leadership—moral leadership: a spiritual purpose—and for that which we for a time gave it, it now looks to us in vain. We have failed: failed utterly in the crucial test.

Now, I do not believe in giving Mr. Wilson the sole credit for this

great service in the hard days of 1917 and 1918 any more than I believe in heaping upon him, as it seems now the fashion to do, all the blame for the failure in the complicated realization of those high purposes either at Paris or since. It was his great glory—and glory enough for any one life—that he was able to look into the soul of America and to express all that was noblest and best in it and to express it in such a way as to affect the destinies of the world. It was our glory that we felt it and that we supported Mr. Wilson wholeheartedly—at that critical time—both in his words and in the actions with which he proved them.

Well, it was a painful—in many respects, a tragic—experience to everyone who went to Paris after the war closed, to see the peace made, or to help in making it—especially to everyone who had seen the world afire with enthusiasm for the purposes set forth by Mr. Wilson, and had expected to see the nations step forward to a new plane of international life. We Americans especially, having an ardent sense of our own power, and a youthful confidence in our own essential disinterestedness of purpose—and knowing far too little of the depth of the bitter old problems that confronted the world—expected too much. I think that every idealist has to learn and relearn the truth of the maxim that "sudden transformations can never be profound, profound transformations never sudden."

No sooner had the war ended, indeed, than the high emotional and moral enthusiasm which marked its concluding year began to fade away. The spirit of unity, forced by a common danger, began to disintegrate. The allies had not, after all, common purposes. Each had its ancient loyalties, necessities, jealousies, ambitions, and these immediately began to reassert themselves. No miracles had really occurred: men found themselves back in the old familiar world —and more than that, in a state of exhaustion and demoralization which tended to irritate rather than calm the natural differences of opinion. It must never be forgotten that it was in a time of national shell-shock, exaggerated appearances, exaggerated fears, that the treaty was made.

Even before the Peace Conference met, certain ominous things had happened. At the same time that Wilson was making sanguine speeches in England regarding the League of Nations, Clemenceau was telling the Chamber of Deputies in Paris that he still believed in the old-fashioned system of alliances as the only way of safety in the

world, and notable French leaders were advancing claims which would, if granted, defeat the very principles to which the allies had agreed at the armistice. A little later the British elections returned a heavily Conservative parliament endorsing a hard peace with Germany, and defeating some of Mr. Wilson's strongest supporters in the House of Commons. In Italy there began to be talk of the wide expansion of Italy in the Adriatic and elsewhere. And finally, the November elections in America, which returned a Congress in opposition to the President, and the attacks made upon him by various Republican leaders in the Senate, tended to weaken his influence at Paris.

In its essence the problem of the Peace Conference was the effort, as ancient as human progress, to apply clear-cut moral principles—which had been accepted at a moment of spiritual insight and emotional elevation—to the turgid and intractable realities of life. We had all given our assent to the Fourteen Points—as we give it easily to the Ten Commandments and the Golden Rule—but the difficulty came in applying them to obstinate historical realities, national realities, human realities.

These difficulties—these stubborn facts—came upon the Peace Conference wave after wave until there seemed no guidance anywhere left. All the clear objectives were clouded, the initial purposes confused. Whatever was proposed seemed, if not wholly wrong, at least, by comparison with our desires, tragically insufficient.

Here again, a decision as ancient and fundamental as human aspiration, was required of every forward-looking and liberal man. At what point should he throw over the whole sordid business in disgust, and retire from the field, hugging his bruised ideals? How far should he go forward patiently, facing realities honestly, working with the world as it is, and people as they are, and getting the best results he could?

Mr. Wilson himself, beyond any other man at the Conference, had this problem to face squarely. It was, indeed, always before him. There were times when he considered the withdrawal of American representation in Paris: once he actually ordered the "George Washington" to sail from New York. It would have been easy and simple to withdraw: to solve the problem by not solving it: to retire into the stronghold of offended virtue—and he would have had the temporary acclaim of many people if he had done it.

But in the long run I believe it will be the decision of history

that he faced the problems in the spirit of the highest and wisest statesmanship. He kept his attention fixed unwaveringly upon what he considered the vital and essential purpose of America at the Conference. What America was really in Paris to do was not to correct all the ancient grievances of history, or to appease all the international grudges, or satisfy or modify all the national ambitions—not even a man gifted with omnipotence could have done that—but the great central purpose of America at the Conference was to bring into being some method of settling future problems. The great basic thing—as Mr. Wilson plainly saw it—was to supply a means of getting and keeping the nations together; a means of securing constant international co-operation for the prevention of war.

The League of Nations was therefore the inexorable minimum of his demand. It was his breaking point. For if he could get that, he was confident that as men cooled down, and saner moods prevailed, changes and corrections could be made in the various international settlements: while if he did not get it, there was little use in prolonging the discussions at Paris—and little hope of preventing a further appeal to the arbitrament of war.

The Treaty as we now have it, a great bulky volume of 214 pages in two languages, is a tremendously human document. It has in it all the unimaginative greeds, the fears, the vanities, the petty interests of the nations; and yet it also has in it the finest aspirations and hopes of the world: the beginnings of a world league, the principles of a new colonial policy, the halting initiation of a new plan of adjustment between Labor and Capital. It is all there—just like life—for the new world to use as it will. And the aspirations, the hopes, the forward-looking, the moral aspects, would not have been there if it had not been for America and American influence.

I have not time here: and it may not yet be opportune to do it: to try to explain the confused situation—the worse than confused, the tragic situation—which has existed in America since the treaty was signed. It is so easy, so comforting to our consciences,—and so fallacious—to put all the blame on a scape-goat and consign him to some accommodating wilderness. I should myself like to confer that doubtful honor upon Mr. Lodge. Others, I know of, make a rather positive choice of Mr. Wilson. Others say "the Westerners."

No doubt temperament and personal accident—like the illness of Mr. Wilson—and personal animosity, have had a part to play in

the general confusion: so has partisan feeling, and the fact that we were confronted with the problem of the treaty, in which is really involved the reconsideration of the basic attitude of America toward international affairs, at the moment when we were entering upon a presidential campaign. We also find grave defects in our constitutional machinery when submitted to these new tests—such, for example, as the divided responsibility for our foreign policies as between the President and the Senate. It is certain that in the years to come, if we are to go forward in the new paths, we must devise some method of speaking to the world with an undivided voice. The present deadlock between two branches of our government is intolerable. It disgraces us before the nations.

It is also significant to note that opposition to the League comes from both extremes of opinion: extreme conservatives like Mr. Lodge, Mr. Knox, Mr. Reed, as well as from extreme radicals—but curiously for wholly different reasons. When the Senate discussed the treaty we heard very little of the real defects and evils of the settlement, which lie plainly in view and relate chiefly to the economic and territorial settlements; but the Senate spent its entire energy in trying to hobble and limit, or even wipe out, the constructive and hopeful features of the treaty—I mean the League of Nations. They were apparently satisfied with all that was bad in the treaty—critical only of the good.

The radicals on the other hand, while they declare that they favor the League in principle, prefer to see no League at all rather than to see a League coupled with so much that they regard as unjust in the other arrangements. Apparently they take the position that while our allies were good enough to fight with and fight for: they are not good enough, their motives and purposes not pure enough, to warrant our association with them in promoting world peace. And they apparently assume that the treaty and the League are rigid and uncleavable instruments: and that they will be used for the worst conceivable purposes. As a matter of fact, provisions are made in the treaty for effecting any desired modifications, or for meeting new world contingencies that may arise.

I can understand, I think, the opposition of the Conservatives. They want no change; they wish to retain the semblance of a security that has already disappeared, they flourish upon the real doubt, the honest hesitation, felt among some groups in America as to the neces-

sity of coming out of our old-time isolation and assuming new responsibilities and duties in world affairs. It is more difficult to understand the apparent willingness of some of them to go into a League provided we are assured all the possible benefits which may flow from such an association, and are subjected to none of the worries, expenses, or responsibilities that all the other nations must suffer.

But what I cannot understand is the attitude of some of our American radicals toward the Treaty and the League. One of the most surprising and disheartening points of view developed at Paris was that of certain radicals who came there—not only Americans, but British—demanding that their extreme program be **forced** upon the Conference. They wanted Mr. Wilson to use all of the enormous economic, financial and other power of America to force upon our associates our own interpretation of the American ideas of settlement. They seemed desirous of forcing their views upon the world: not of trying to co-operate with a world in which, however defective we may regard it, we must yet live, and out of the sorry materials of which we must construct the future world, if ever we are permitted to have any part in that construction. We do not forget that Lenin to-day is a tyrant in behalf of ideals. Probably Mr. Wilson could have forced the program of an ideal peace, or most of it, down the throats of our allies in their desperate situation: that is, in their extremity they would have signed a scrap of paper. But would it have been accepted by the French Chamber, or the British Parliament, or even our own people? Probably some Frenchman would soon have played in the Saar Valley or in the Rhine provinces the game that d'Annunzio played at Fiume. Would we then have raised armies to force our neighbors to the standard we had prescribed? There has been a flood of criticism of the Japanese-Chinese settlement—which indeed was far from the ideal —but have we heard any suggestion that if the President had forced an ideal solution at Paris, we here in America would have raised armies and spent billions of dollars in maintaining that settlement?

No, there had to be give and take at Paris: the peace on the whole could not be forced: it had to be adopted. The very essence of the League is assent.

All these things are elements in the present confused situation: but the real cause lies underneath all personal or partisan bias, deeper, indeed, than defects in constitutional machinery. It lies—as it always lies in America—with us—with the people. If the people in America

were clear in their minds, and determined in their purpose, Washington would instantly respond. It is because public opinion is not yet really clear—as those politically-minded men at Washington well know—that nothing is done.

I think there are two general reasons for this vacillating attitude of public opinion. First, a sheer lack of knowledge or understanding of international affairs. We have been an isolated people, with a positive and traditional policy of "avoiding entangling alliances." We not only fail to understand other nations: we are ignorant of our own place in the world, or of how vitally our interests are tied up with those of other nations. We were forced into the great war against our will: we do not see how inevitably we shall be forced into the next one, unless we take positive means of preventing it.

The second reason strikes deeper. I venture upon it with some trepidation, for it opens such a wide and fundamental criticism of the American spirit as it now displays itself, that one dare scarcely speak of it at all, briefly.

Many of those who were in Europe during the trying months of the Peace Conference, have returned to America with a deeper affection for their country than ever they had before: a profounder confidence in her power for good or for evil in the world. At the same time, this new feeling sharpens their sensitiveness to the defects which hamper the free expression of what is best and noblest in her.

While we have grown in power and riches: while we feel the pride of superiority more and more, we have been content with a kind of phrasy morality—a morality which we are unwilling to submit to the hard tests of reality. Our whole life abounds in such phrases. "Democracy" for example—the true spirit of which we refuse to consider in connection with the realities of the steel towns of Pennsylvania and Illinois. We have had an ingenuous belief in that blessed phrase, the "melting-pot," by which foreigners are magically changed into the likeness of true Americans by virtue merely of drawing in the air of Bleecker Street in New York or Salem Street in Boston. It melts of itself—without any bother or expense to us! Or, do we ever think of questioning how far we really enjoy the "free speech," the "free press," the "free assemblage," glorified in great phrases in our constitutions. I will not multiply illustrations. It seems sometimes as though the greatest need in America to-day was for some perambulating Socrates to chase our pet phrases into corners and explode them with common sense.

So it has been with the idea of world-peace. Certainly we are for it! It is our tradition! We want no war. Hurrah for peace! As long as the idea remained in the hazy clouds of a vague idealism we were for it: but when it was presented to us in the hard, ugly, specific aspect of reality in which we had to surrender some of our aloofness and security, and accept new dangers and duties, we lost heart. We were afraid. We began to bicker, and doubt. And there we are to-day!

In this diagnosis I hope you will think I have been extreme. I hope you will think I have exaggerated. I hope you will even think my judgment has been swayed by the intensity of my feeling concerning the present attitude of our common country—and that I am wrong in my estimate. I leave it to you!

And now, in contrast with America, which was loudest in proclaiming the League of Nations, which was instrumental in securing its adoption at Paris, the European nations are going forward bravely with the organization of the League, while we are vacillating and talking. If we have failed in fulfilling the promise to the world of our idealism: they have not failed in responding to the utter need of the world. A League of Nations is actually in existence to-day: and growing in spite of us. It has received the sanction of practically the entire civilized world—except America. On March 20, 1920, fifteen nations had signed and ratified the treaty of Versailles: thirteen other nations, neutral in the war, which were invited to join the League, have done so. Four other states, not mentioned in the Covenant, have asked to be admitted to the League. To-day we stand as the only important nation of the world outside the League: we stand with Honduras, Nicauragua, Haiti, the Hedjaz, Cuba, Portugal and a few other minor states in having failed to accept and join the League of Nations.

The Council of the League has already held four important meetings and decided crucial questions in which we have had no part. Any one of these decisions—it must not be forgotten—if they should involve the world in war, would inevitably also involve us. We are plain fools if we imagine that we can keep out of the world's future quarrels. We could not keep out of the Great War, try as we would, nor can we keep out of future wars.

The Assembly of the League is going straight forward with its preparations for its first great meeting to be held this year—whether

we are there or not. The Secretariat is already firmly organized and at work, and we not represented. The Permanent Court of International Justice, which will ultimately become a kind of world Supreme Court, has actually been given its start and—though without the advice or consent of the Senate—the most distinguished legal authority in America, Mr. Elihu Root, is a member of the organizing committee.

The first International Labor Conference provided for in the Covenant has already been held—at Washington last October—with American representatives in attendance. Other departments of the League are forming, commissions are being appointed, inquiries instituted, funds raised, an official publication is in being—and we sulking in our tents—or else backing into the Conferences with hushed voices, and a ready dread of the United States Senate—as we have already backed into the Court of International Justice and the Labor Conference. Or we are listening at the keyhole of international affairs, as we did recently at San Remo. Although the decisions now being made affect us, as the most powerful of the nations, as much, if not more, than any other country, we have nothing to say about them. In short, all the world is organizing, not with us, but without us, and possibly, if we continue our present policies, against us. These are plain, hard facts—not to be met by happy phrases, or easy generalizations, or confident appeals to our independence and power. We cannot live to ourselves alone: we cannot serve ourselves alone. Germany tried it upon a tremendous scale, and failed utterly.

I have endeavored thus to present the situation as honestly as it lies in my power to do. It remains only to suggest possible remedies: possible methods of meeting the really tragic situation in which this nation now finds itself. And here, I am conscious, I can offer little that is new. I can see nothing for it but to go forward with a persistent, patient, determined campaign of education—just what we are now doing, but **more of it.** The facts of world interdependence, the truth as to the real situation in Europe, need to be more vividly presented. We need a wholesale puncturing of phrases, and great wholesome doses of reality. We need to consider, also, some change in our constitutional machinery by which there can be team-play in international affairs between the executive and legislative departments of our government. Most of all we have got to acquire a new sense of proportion, and discipline our spiritual pride. We are not the only people in this world!