

The Soldier and the League

(By Major Wade H. Phillips.)

If it were a new baseball league, soldiers would probably speak out louder and longer than other folks. But when it comes to the League of Nations, a matter considered within the realm of politics, it is difficult to get up an argument among the men in khaki. They are about as lazy in that score as was the colored trooper who landed in France and after a few days moping and observing, was asked by his pal what all this was about anyway.

"Well, it's like this," said he. "De best I kin figure de French are fighting for Alice and Lorena, de English is fightin' cause dey just naturally don't like de Germans, and us Americans, well, we're fightin' for souvenirs."

No; that this question of doing something to prevent wars has not been thought over by the fighting men. During the long trench watches, during those rather thoughtful moments before zero hour called them over to the top, most of them have probably wondered why some bright person does not invent a better way to settle trouble. Most soldiers have strong convictions along this line and their average judgment would I think be equally as safe as any other class.

THE LEAGUE LINE-UP

In order to express some observations on the proposed League of Nations from a soldier's standpoint, let us look in the first place at the line-up of the nations of the world on this question. According to late reports it is about as follows:

- 1st—For the League: United States of America (Senate willing), Belgium, Bolivia, Brazil, British Empire, Canada, Australia, South Africa, New Zealand, India, Cuba, Ecuador, France, Greece, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Italy, Japan, Liberia, Nicaragua, Panama, Peru, Poland, Portugal, Rumania, Serb-Croat and Slovene State, Siam, Czechoslovakia, Uruguay—total 34.
- 2nd—Invited to join, but "On the Fence": Argentine Republic, Chile, Colombia, Denmark, Netherlands, Norway, Paraguay, Persia, Salvador, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Venezuela—total 11.
- 3rd—Outside pending good conduct: Germany, Austro-Hungary, Turkey, Russia, Bulgaria, Mexico.

Now what fair-minded American patriot, citizen or soldier, would have the United States move out of groups one into groups two or three?

We would certainly feel away from home in the 2nd group, composed of those nations which were either pro-German during the war or were humiliated by the Kaiser and his crowd. The United States is used to moving in the best circles of society, which appears to be included almost entirely in the group of nations in favor of the League. It will be noted, therefore, no way to play neutral on this question.

Aside from wanting their country to

take its place among the greatest and best nations, our soldiers were told their country was fighting not only to make the world a safe place to live in for the present but also the war was being waged against war itself. The L. of N. (League of Nations) may be regarded as a war insurance company. It is to furnish protection against war instead of the old worn out system of big armies and navies, which in the past have only served to bring on the very disaster they sought to prevent. If the new system is proposed to use law and public opinion to keep the peace, to settle disputes, and to prevent resort to such things as human blood, no one should be too impatient in war prevention than the soldier. It is his body that called for. Something then is needed to make war more difficult. It must break out, it must be legalized and not allowed to spread. As far as any soldier is concerned, war should be as simple as possible. Now, the L. of N. attempts to do this very thing. So each has been told about what it can do and what it is best to examine the covenant as drafted and see for ourselves. The purpose for these are rather simple. The reading of it should not matter anyone, not even a United States senator. Briefly its main provisions are as follows:

PROVISIONS OF THE LEAGUE

Its purpose is to enforce international law and maintain peace.

Member nations in good standing may withdraw after two years. The members agree to disarm competition shall be on the job to bring this about by recommendations.

The private manufacture of munitions of war shall be discouraged and members shall be kept informed as to such manufactures.

Attention shall be given to any war or threat of war and suitable action taken to prevent same.

Each member agrees to defend the other in case of attack, steps to be taken to be decided by the League.

Disputes among League members shall be arbitrated disputants to wait nine months after submission before making war.

Any member not submitting a dispute which may lead to war, same will be investigated by the League and settlement recommended, both facts of dispute and offer of settlement being then published to the world.

Against members going to war in disregard of the covenant, a blockade shall be waged as to commerce, finance, and communication; each member shall forbid its people to deal with or communicate with such warring power.

In such case the League council will recommend what armed forces each member shall contribute to protect the League covenant.

The council of the League shall be

offered to settle disputes and prevent wars between non-member nations and the league shall take steps to this end. No treaty hereafter entered into by any member shall be valid unless registered and published.

All treaties among members inconsistent with the League are abrogated. Regional understandings like the Monroe Doctrine for securing the maintenance of peace shall not be disturbed.

Colonies and territories emancipated by the war will be placed under the tutelage of certain nations on behalf of the League until they can stand alone.

The League will endeavor to secure fair treatment for labor and for the peoples under league control; prevent traffic in women and harmful drugs; supervise trade in arms and munitions when necessary; maintain freedom of communications and equitable treatment for the commerce of all league members; established an international court for the settlement of disputes under international law.

All positions in the League are to be open to women. The League covenant may be amended at any time by majority vote and a nation dissenting to an amendment adopted, ceases to be a member.

Our soldiers in Europe have wondered not so much how this war happened but how Europe can ever have returned to peace. Europe appears to be normal when fighting. Geography and history have not taught us what it is like over there; one has to see it, to mix with it. Europe, the smallest of the continents, about the size of the United States, has four times our population. It would be had enough if all those people were the same race and language but for centuries 25 or 30 nations, different for the most part in customs, government, race and language have inhabited Europe. There is no melting pot. Multiply thirty times our friction with Mexico during recent years and you have some idea of it. Nationals in Europe have not united nor have their boundaries changed in ages save as a result of war. There being no bonds of union, the peoples irritate each other, jealousy, hate, suspicion have flourished among them. Americans have been hurt to hear Allied soldiers abuse each other. British soldiers rarely learned French, on the ground that "the frogs" should learn English; "Yes," said a French lieutenant finishing a conversation as to the next war, "but you know the English have always hated France." Both English and French soldiers were outspoken against the Belgians, condemning a nation on account of a few spies. The Russians were rotten; the Italians would not fight, they said. These opinions, fomented, it is true, by Bosh propaganda, were not entirely the result of the war; they existed already. Europe accepts these national antipathies as a matter of course, while in the past ambitious rulers have played upon them to make war at will.

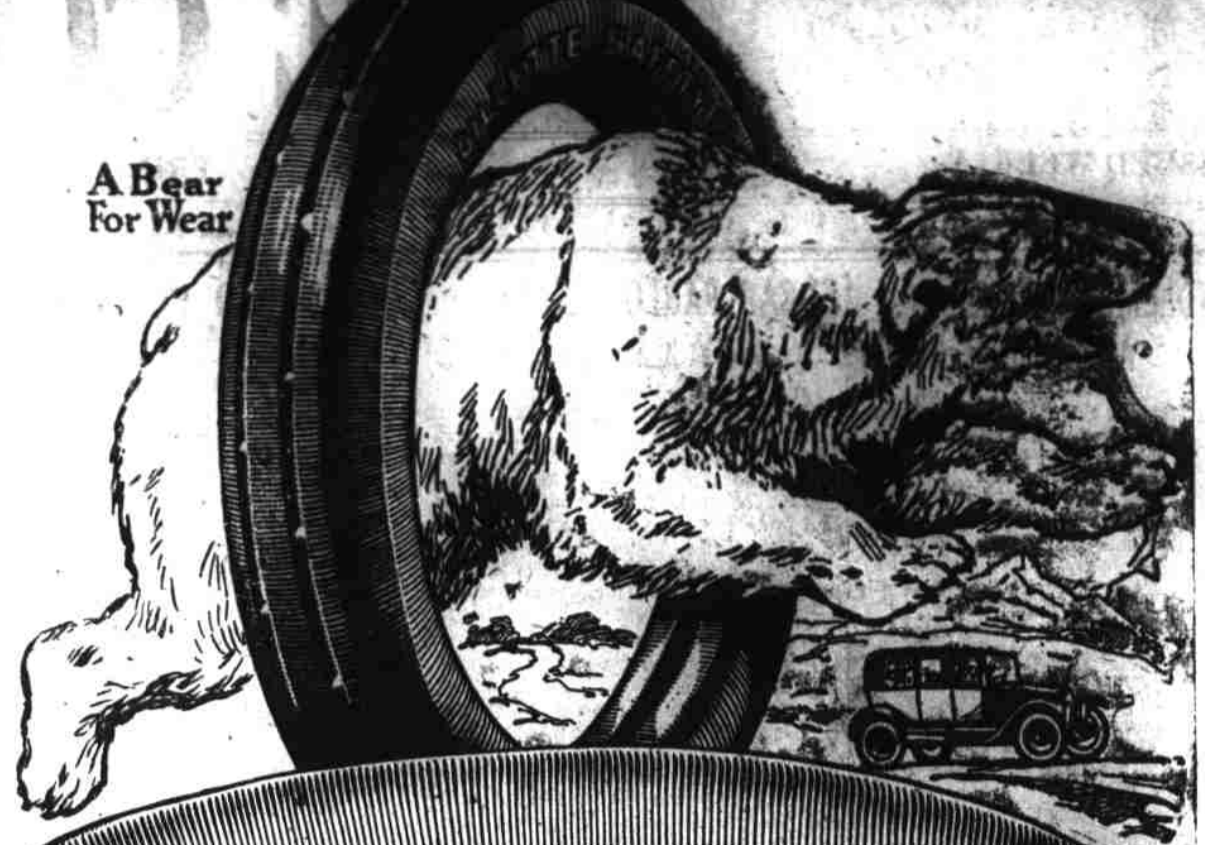
However discouraging these conditions appeared, there has come into each fighter's breast during this war the dream of some solution to war. If the soldiers while doing their best had thought the same struggle would have to be made again by their children, they would have been deprived of much righteous inspiration. But

the council of the League shall be

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