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World Conference
for
International Peace through Religion
(formerly *Universal Religious Peace Conference*)

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TO THE INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE

of the

WORLD CONFERENCE FOR INTERNATIONAL PEACE THROUGH RELIGION

Greetings:

The Executive Committee of this Conference met in Geneva, Switzerland, August 12 - 14, with sixty members present.

The meetings were held in the Athenee, and in addition to the Committee members, a large number of invited guests attended and took part in the proceedings.

Two public meetings were held in the Salle Centrale, one on Wednesday afternoon, August 12th, and the other on Thursday evening, August 13th.

At the first meeting the report of Commission No. I was made the basis of discussion. At the second meeting the question of Disarmament as a moral problem was the theme. On both of these occasions, the crowded hall and the interested attention of the public indicated the growing enthusiasm for the work of the Conference.

Reports were received from Commissions Nos. I, II and III, and discussed.

The Report of Commission No. I, which is now complete, is in the hands of the Editorial Committee and will be issued early in the year 1932. The Reports of Commissions Nos. II and III will also be finished and ready to be issued later in the year.

Inasmuch as the Report of Commission No. IV is dependent upon the findings of the other three Commissions, and will serve as the program of the Conference, its report will not be available until the Conference meets.

Mr. K. Kodaira came from Japan to be present at the meeting, as the representative of the Japanese Committee. He told of the large and enthusiastic regional meeting held in Tokyo in May, and of the intention of the Japanese group to develop its work to the utmost.

A long and interesting report was presented from Mr. A. A. Paul, Secretary of the Indian Committee.

The Executive Committee met in Geneva at a time when it seemed that conditions which had been almost hopeless were about to improve. Some weeks before, attention had been drawn to the serious conditions of affairs in Germany, and President Hoover then made his spectacular suggestion that a moratorium should be granted on all reparations and debt payments for a period of one year. This declaration was universally applauded and accepted by the principal nations involved. The directors of the Bank of International Settlements, together with representatives of the interested governments met in Basle and found the means of making effective the President's proposal. Conditions improved in Germany and everybody had a lighter heart. It was confidently expected that a turn had been made in the long hard road and a better day was at hand.

Realizing, however, that it would be some time before conditions could become normal, the Executive Committee voted that the Conference in Washington scheduled to be held in 1932, should be a regional Conference sponsored by the American Committee, and that the American Committee be authorized to make all the arrangements and invite as many or as few foreign guests as in its judgment should be wise. No sooner had the meeting adjourned than reports began to be heard from England of new and serious financial difficulties which were facing that great nation. Before the end of the month the Government fell and in the emergency a National Government was formed with Ramsay MacDonald at its head, the various Portfolios being taken by men of all parties. After many serious efforts to balance the budget and meet the difficulties, early in September, the British Government made the startling announcement that in order to save the situation, the Government would depart temporarily at least, from the Gold Standard. This naturally threw the banks of Continental Europe into more or less confusion and many other Governments almost immediately followed the lead of Great Britain in this matter. Before the end of September, it became evident that world conditions were so serious that it would not be wise to attempt any such large undertaking as the holding of a World Conference in 1932.

A meeting of the Business Committee, together with a few invited advisors, was held, and it was voted that the Washington Conference should be postponed, and the decision as to whether or not any Conference should be held in America in 1932, be left to the judgment of the American Committee.

Further conferences have been held, and advice sought from many quarters, and it now seems that the decision arrived at was a wise one.

The situation at present, therefore, stands as follows:

1. The World Conference which was to have been held in Washington will be deferred and whatever Conference is held in America in 1932 will be strictly an American Conference.
2. A meeting of the Executive Committee, together with invited guests, will be held in Geneva in the summer of 1932.

3. The Executive Committee will continue its work of organizing and perfecting the means of co-operation between the religious leaders of the various countries.
4. The Executive Committee will promote the intensification of the work in the various groups and regions, as for instance with the Indian Committee and the Japanese Committee, and will attempt to create Committees in other countries.
5. The Executive Committee will co-operate with other agencies in support of the Disarmament Conference and will work to make effective its findings in all the nations.
6. The Executive Committee will arrange through the Business Committee to maintain in Geneva during the meetings of the World Disarmament Conference a Secretary and a Committee who will keep in close and sympathetic touch with the Conference and its work, and will issue bulletins from time to time addressed to the various religious groups and those religious leaders throughout the world who have given their allegiance to the World Conference.
7. The Executive Committee will stimulate the work of the various religions in every land and help to create public opinion that can be brought to bear upon the Conference, and make known to its responsible delegates the desire of all people everywhere for a lessening of the grievous burdens that arms and armament have laid upon their shoulders.

It was agreed that there should be held in Geneva a meeting, on the eve of the convening of the Disarmament Conference, where addresses will be given by representatives of all the religions, and which will focus attention of the religious mind of the world upon the importance of this great undertaking.

At such a time as this, with the problems that need to be solved, and with the resources available for making the Disarmament Conference a success, it is confidently believed that all the members of the International Committee and those interested in the World Conference will agree that the year 1932 can best be devoted to this cause, and in the way indicated in this letter.

A complete report of the Geneva Conference is being printed and will be mailed out at an early date, and later on, when the American Committee has had time to formulate its own judgment, it will inform the members of the International Committee of its plans for a Regional Conference.

Never since we began has there been a livelier or more intense interest in the work of this organization. The field has widened and as we go forward we feel that every step is a step toward the holding of the great World Conference which we first had in mind. When it is held, all this preparatory work will help to make it a greater and more decided success.

Faithfully yours,

HENRY A. ATKINSON

General Secretary.