
League of Nations Petition

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We, Citizens of the United States,

Anxious to avoid war and organize peace in which prosperity can thrive,

Believing that the collective system of the world community which includes the Kellogg-Briand Pact (Pact of Paris) to which the United States is a party, and the League of Nations, can best prevent war,

Mindful of the fact that the United States is participating in many activities of the League of Nations,

Aware that without the privilege of membership in the League the United States is placed at a disadvantage, and the moral integrity of the world community is weakened,

Urge that the United States reinforce the League's contribution to peace by stating the terms under which full membership would be possible; and by appointing in the meantime an official diplomatic representative to the League of Nations to participate in its deliberations.

Sentence by Sentence Explanation

Anxious to avoid war and organize peace in which prosperity can thrive,

The present worldwide depression is primarily the result of the World War and the unfortunate peace settlements which always follow war. International prosperity cannot be restored until fear has been overcome, as the nations grow confident of permanent peace.

Believing that the collective system of the world community which includes the Kellogg-Briand Pact (Pact of Paris) to which the United States is a party, and the League of Nations, can best prevent war,

For fifteen years the nations have been engaged in the building of a world community because they have believed that their problems were international and must be solved by all nations in consultation. The supreme law in the community is the Kellogg-Briand Pact in which the nations renounce war as an instrument of national policy. The United States is a party to this Pact. The most important pieces of machinery through which the world community solves its problems and expresses itself are the League of Nations and the World Court. The issue today is between an organized world community and a breaking-up of the nations into alliances and balances of power which produced war in 1914 and would produce war again. The crisis is grave. We believe that peace is assured if the world community survives the present attacks upon it; if the world community is destroyed war is inevitable.

Mindful of the fact that the United States is participating in many activities of the League of Nations,

In his speech to the Woodrow Wilson Dinner President Roosevelt said: "Today the United States is cooperating openly in the fuller utilization of the League of Nations machinery than ever before." While a decided improvement, this cooperation does not appear to us to be sufficient either for the protection of American interests or for the enhancement of the moral integrity of the world community. The United States cooperates at the invitation of the League. We feel that the United States should have some arrangement by which it would have the right to attend official sessions of the League Council and Assembly.

Aware that without the privilege of membership in the League the United States is placed at a disadvantage, and the moral integrity of the world community is weakened,

Not only is the United States at a disadvantage because of its non-membership but the moral force of the world community is weakened. Germany, Japan and other nations today which wish to escape from the League's obligations point to non-membership of the

United States as an excuse for their own conduct. For the League to have full moral authority it must be universal and the United States is the cornerstone of such universality.

Urge that the United States reinforce the League's contribution to peace by stating the terms under which full membership would be possible; and by appointing in the meantime an official diplomatic representative to the League of Nations to participate in its deliberations.

This sentence of the petition specifically asks for two things:

One, that the United States appoint immediately an official diplomatic representative to the League of Nations to participate in its deliberations. It has been suggested that while the United States is deciding upon what terms it will join the League of Nations, the Government could give the League tremendous moral support in the present crisis confronting it. How could this best be done? By giving the League official recognition by the appointment of an American diplomatic representative. The United States participates in many League conferences. It has just announced a policy of registering all its treaties with the League. Why then should it not recognize the League officially through the appointment of a diplomatic representative? It is quite possible that the Council and the Assembly of the League might reciprocate by granting this representative the right to sit with them when issues of interest to the United States are being discussed. The privilege of sitting with the Council was granted to an American representative when the Far Eastern question was being discussed.

Two, the petition urges that the United States declare terms on which it would be willing to enter into full membership in the League of Nations. Undoubtedly, the majority of thinking Americans believe in the ideal of the League and wish the United States to play its part in the development of the world community. The only serious obstacle to American entrance is the question of whether or not some revisions of the Covenant would be necessary, and if so, what they should be. We do not pretend that the League of Nations is perfect. It is the first effort of man to build a world community. Rather than for us to condemn the League destructively, for its imperfections,

we should support it and assist in its development into a more nearly perfect organization.

Two ways have been suggested upon which the United States might state the terms under which it would be willing to accept full membership in the League. The Government might declare that it would join with certain reservations. This is the way that has been generally advocated for years. Now a new way of approach to American membership has come to the fore. It is being suggested throughout the world that the Covenant of the League of Nations be revised to correct certain imperfections which fifteen years history have revealed and which would meet certain wishes of the American Government.

To talk about revising the Covenant of the League is certainly not a confession of League weakness. No group of men have ever been able to write a constitution that did not need amending in the light of experience. The fact that members of the League are talking about revising the Covenant is a sign of the League's virility.

Of course, there are several schools of thought regarding Covenant revision. The framers of the present petition are absolutely opposed to the suggestion of Mussolini that the Covenant of the League be revised to increase the powers of the great states and weaken the influence of the small powers. The democracy of the League must be maintained. However, on that basis it is quite possible that the Covenant could be revised to make its machinery function more effectively; and to make it possible for the United States, and possibly Soviet Russia, to join without fear or embarrassment.

The purpose of this petition is to demonstrate to the Government that overwhelming numbers of thinking citizens of this country believe that the United States must choose between membership in the world community as against alliances, militarism and war; and, therefore, that these citizens believe the United States should, on certain terms, become part of the organized world community which means affiliation with, or entrance into, the League of Nations.

If you feel as we do, please join in signing the petition. Write for extra copies. Send us the names of your friends.

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