

The Economic Club of New York

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Lord Robert Cecil

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April 27, 1923  
Hotel Astor

MR. OSBORN: I am sorry, gentlemen, that we are nearly thirty seconds late in beginning the proceedings of the evening, but Mr. Ely will catch up before we get through.

The meeting will be addressed by Lord Robert. He will come in at about 9:15. That is only 15 minutes later than the hour at which these meetings are usually begun and as there is to be no other speaker than Lord Robert, except such questions as may be asked perhaps from the floor, the club officers are of the opinion that the meeting will take its usual course in concluding.

This is the occasion of the annual meeting and the Chair recognizes Mr. Oakes, Chairman of the Nominating Committee.

MR. OAKES: Mr. Chairman, there is an apocryphal story that some three years ago at 4 o'clock A.M. in a smoke-laden room four men in their shirt sleeves nominated the President of the United States. Of course, we all know that that story is not true, but nevertheless, if it were true, they made a good job of it I will tell the world, in my judgment (applause).

A few days ago four gentlemen of this Club met in another office at 4 o'clock P.M., in a smoke-laden room, but not in their shirt sleeves, to nominate the President of the Economic Club, and it is our pleasure, gentlemen, to present for re-election the very distinguished scholarly and competent presiding officer who has been your President for the past twelve months, a man who possess all the qualifications for that office and, in addition, is a most holy man, because he has a

“church” in his middle (laughter and applause).

When we came to choosing the vice-president, we were confronted with a very serious task. We know what onerous duties devolve upon those officers (applause). They are about as important as an amplifier in a boiler factor or the third button on a coat-tail, but, nevertheless, they found the duties such that we regretted, as much as we would love it, that we were compelled to accept the declination of the president of the Southern Pacific Railroad, and as we relieved him of the onerous duties, we also thought we ought to relieve the merchant prince as well, and therefore, we named two new candidates for vice-president.

As to the Executive Board there are five vacancies by the law, but we had no difficulty, because the vacancies became such de jure and we selected the substitutes degage.

We hope that our action will meet with your approval. We have done the best that we know how for the benefit of the Economic Club and in the words of Shakespeare, whose anniversary we celebrate this week, “You take it, and take it as you like it”. (Applause)

There is no element of surprise in this report under the inexorable laws of the Society. The report has been on every cover and I think it is unnecessary to read it, except to say that the Committee reports for President, William Church Osborn (applause); for Vice President Ogden L. Mills, and Howard Elliott; Executive Committee, George Gordon Battle, Herman M. Biggs, Walker D.

Hines, Frank Seaman and Francis H. Sisson. We respectfully submit the report to the Society (applause).

MR. OSBORN: You have heard the report. Are there any other names? The Chairman recognizes Mr. Herbert S. Houston.

MR. HOUSTON: I move the report of the Nominating Committee be accepted and the Secretary be instructed by the Club to cast a unanimous ballot for the nominees as our officers for the ensuing year (applause).

MR. OSBORN: You have heard the resolution of Mr. Houston. Those in favor will signify by saying “Aye”. Those opposed, “No”. It is so ordered.

Accept my thanks, gentlemen.

Mr. Ely announces that he has cast the ballot.

We wish to draw to your attention some matters that we hope are of great mutual interest, and I will ask one whom you know very well to open the matter to your interest, Mr. Henry Morgenthau, former president of this Society (applause).

HONORABLE HENRY MORGENTHAU: Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen, The Chairman told you there is to be no other speaker. What am I? We have something on our hearts, we, the management of the Economic Club, and, unfortunately for me, I made a suggestion which seemed to have had a favorable reception by the Executive Committee and I, therefore, have been entrusted with the task of presenting it to you.

You probably know that we, the Economic Club, are part of the Ely constellation, consisting of some very fine, and all of them, successful enterprises. Mr. Ely has for years been conducting the greatest university of its kind. He has taught our wives and daughters all about the current topics, about history, literature, etc. He has supplanted us. We are no longer the “Sir Oracles” in our homes. We used to be able to put across a great many things. Nowadays the ladies speak up with a great deal of courage and as they tell us they have been told at the Town Hall such and such a thing, and that we don’t know it all (laughter).

Now, my friends, there has been a great service rendered. It has put us on our mettle, and we have had to learn something about these organizations just like ours, which have always given to their patrons a great deal more than they had a right to expect, and I feel now that the Town Hall has been erected and stands there unfinished, two floors, not yet finished, that we ought to take stock with ourselves and recognize that we owe some obligations to that enterprise.

We of the Economic Club who have for twelve years listened to these splendid discussions,

participated in these joyful dinners, and have done this all at a nominal expense; we ought to feel that we ought to do our share, besides the 3,000 people who have contributed to completing the Town Hall, that we ought to undertake to contribute something.

Our constitution forbids us to levy an assessment. We don't want to ask you to vote to contribute anything, but we want to tell you in a few words what a great enterprise this is, how necessary it was to stabilize it, to perpetuate it, and not have it disappear. We have not had a hall of this kind uptown at any time. We have had to go from hotel to hotel and seek our homes there. The only place of its kind is Cooper Union. This was needed, and these various organizations, or the managers thereof, encouraged the building of the Town Hall, and now I think that it has been positively demonstrated that it is a great success, and it is up to us to contribute our mite towards completing it.

I made the suggestion to the Executive Committee that we should recommend to the members of this organization that everyone of us who can afford it should at least contribute \$100, and I want to tell you that if you do, those of you that do, are not giving it as a present. It will enable the completion of the two upper floors. There will be a club there to which you will be entitled to membership. You will be permitted to make use of a library, and if any small or even fairly large group of us wish to discuss some economic problem we can meet at Town Hall and do so, and we are going to show that this building has been erected to have a home where people can meet with any prejudice or partisanship; where everybody can get a hearing; that that building not

only ought to be completed, but when completed it should be free and clear of debt.

Now, my friends, I do not think that I appeal in vain. It is nothing to most of us to contribute this sum, and I want to urge you individually to think this over and feel that these duties that we perform because we are forced to are not the only ones, we ought to voluntarily do things that should be done, and that we should feel impelled to do them because we ought to appreciate what has been done for us by the Economic Club (applause).

MR. OSBORN: Ladies and Gentlemen, I heartily second what Mr. Morgenthau has said. A few days since I visited Charlottesville, Virginia, and stopped at the grave of Thomas Jefferson, and upon his stone is engraved, “The Author of the Declaration of Independence, The Statute of Religious Liberty in Virginia, and the Founder of the University of Virginia.” There is no mention of the fact that he was President of the United States. There is no mention of the fact that he was American Ambassador to France. His title to fame rested upon the foundation of these three great institutions, the institution of Liberty in the United States, the institution of Religious Freedom in Virginia, and the institution of learning at Charlottesville, known as the University of Virginia.

Tonight, in a much humbler way, we are asking you gentleman to have sympathy with an institution which is being founded and developed and carried out in this, our great city,; an institution intended, well-fitted, and constantly exercising in its powers, the development of the

public spirit, of public opinion, and of public life in this, our great Metropolis; an institution educating the men and women of the city for their public and civic duties.

And it is for the development, for the strengthening and upbuilding of that institution that we ask your assistance so that it may be comparable in its future life to that great organization on the lower east side created by Peter Cooper, Cooper Union, one of the most enduring and magnificent enterprises in our city, and one that has gone along beside the great current of Metropolitan life forever alive, and we ask your assistance for this somewhat corresponding institution with the idea that it may plant its roots deep on the stream of the life of our city and of it may be said, as time goes on, “And it shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water whose leaf also shall not wither and whatsoever it doeth shall prosper.” (Applause).

I will now ask Mr. Abbott to address you on this matter (Applause).

MR. LYMAN F. ABBOTT: Mr. President, Ladies and Gentlemen, Mr. Osborn says that I am asked to address you about the Town Hall. As a matter of fact, I am simply a little American lion who has been commandeered to occupy your attention until the great lion, the British Lion of the evening, shall have made his appearance (laughter).

But Lord Robert Cecil has so engaging a personality, has so clear and impartial a mind, is so fine a representative of British law and British culture, and is so able a representative of the



fundamental belief in the brotherhood of man, that I feel it an honor to serve even in a minor capacity, as the least of his supernumeraries.

New York is one of the most clannish communities in the world, and I am not referring to the Ku Klux Klan (laughter). It is split up into racial and intellectual creeds, blocs. You can get the intellectual point of view, of politics, labor, social, economic and art that interest you by going to various places and hearing various clubs or addresses, and the members of those groups and blocs and associations hear only their own opinions. They are rarely willing to listen to the opinions of others.

We are clannish, we are as clannish in New York as the Vermont Village of which I heard last summer, a little Vermont village in which half a dozen solons of the village led by the patriarch of the village, Uncle Silas, were seated on the platform porch of the little general store and post office and suddenly they saw coming down the elm-shaded street a young man who was manifestly dressed in clothing made in Boston, which set him down at once as an alien and a renegade, and he came up to the platform, lonely and wanting to join in the conversation, and as a matter of introduction, he said, “It looks like rain, don’t it?” And Uncle Silas turned to him contemptuously and said, “No, ‘tain’t going to rain”, and went on with his conversation. The young man went into the post office, came out, stood about a little awkwardly, and Uncle Silas, relenting a little, said, “Who be ye anyway?” The young man said, “My name is Thompson. My father was born and raised in this village.” Uncle Silas said, “What was his first name?” and the

young man said, “Alonzo”, and Uncle Silas said, “Alonzo Thompson, who used to live out near the whaling place?” “Yes”, said the young man, “He was my father.” “Well,” said Uncle Silas, “Maybe it is going to rain” (laughter).

Here in New York it is typical of the groups in New York to be unwilling to welcome a member of another group until his credentials are established, and I think the Town Hall is going to contribute a very valuable thing to this city and this community because it is going to enable us to get together in groups. One group at the Town Hall is going to find out what the other group is thinking of. It is going to be a kind of League of Nations for the citizens of New York (applause), and it is very appropriate that on this evening when we are to hear from our distinguished guest about the work of the League of Nations in international matters that we should set our faces towards a project for creating a home for conference, for a league of our own citizenship, and that is why I am glad to have an opportunity as one who has been interested in a long time in the Economic Club, in the Civic Forum, in the League for Political Education, I am glad to have this opportunity to say my word in behalf of the enterprise which we owe to Mr. Ely (applause), and which I think we ought to support by our money as far as we can and by our sympathetic interests, even if we have not the money. I thank you (applause).

MR. OSBORN: I am going to ask Mr. Sisson to speak to us (applause).

MR. SISSON: Mr. President, Ladies and Gentlemen: I am very glad indeed to be allowed the

privilege of adding my voice of approval and appreciation of the splendid work which has been done on behalf of the Town Hall and to express further the hope that the Economic Club will respond in kind to the appeal made.

Some of you may have heard the comment that Josh Billings is reported to have made, that the trouble with the American People is not so much their ignorance as the tremendous number of things they know that ain't so, and I believe that any agency that they want to set up in our great community here that will minimize to some extent at least a number of things that we know ain't so, is deserving of the support of every good citizen and of every intelligent man and woman.

As has been said, the tendency of New York life is to divide up into classes and into cliques and into blocks, and lack of contact perhaps produces more evils than any other single evil in our civic life.

You will remember the old story of Dr. Johnson who sat one evening in his favorite taproom and saw a stranger enter and asked his favorite Boswell who the man was. Boswell looked him over and told him he could not say who he was, but he was undoubtedly a stranger. He said, "I will call him over and perhaps I can arrange an introduction," and Dr. Johnson replied curtly, "No, I don't want any opportunity to meet him. I don't like the man and if I met him I probably should like him."

And so I think that the lesson is one that we may take to ourselves in our own civic life. I see in this Town Hall not only an agency for bringing together in closer contact our heterogenous groups, but also a home for the intelligentsia of the city, for those of our intellectual community here to get together in this club-house, in this clearing house of ideas, for common advantage.

I read not long ago the statement by Aristotle spoken to that wonderfully intelligent civic community which, perhaps, marks the pinnacle of human achievements in civic life, in the Athens of the golden days of Greece, in which he said, “The only real success is that which is achieved by expressing ourselves fully in service to others,” and surely that immortal fact has come down through history with as much force today as it had in the days of Athenian citizenship. The expression of service to others, the opportunity for such expression which is open to us through the Town Hall, seems to me to be one of the most attractive and important elements that you should have at stake, not only a money stake, but more than that, a social and intellectual stake in the progress of New York City.

Idealism without efficiency, somebody has said, is futile, and efficiency without idealism is fatal. But here in Town Hall we have an opportunity for combining idealism and efficiency, the sense of service to others and of profit to ourselves which seems to me to be peculiarly attractive.

I believe that an efficient democracy can only be based upon a sound understanding of the great current topics and economic laws in which we are all living, and that anything that helps to

disseminate a better understanding, a sounder thinking, a wider intelligence, must be reflected in an improved civic life, in better business, and in much more delightful intellectual and cultural existence.

I remember hearing Mrs. Douglas Robinson, one time, when asked to describe her own distinguished brother, Theodore Roosevelt, in as brief a term as possible, after thinking it over a few minutes, said, she thought she should call him “The Great Sharer”, and that seemed to me to be peculiarly fitting and wonderful, “The Great Sharer”. What better tribute could any of us have paid to us than that of being willing to share what we have for the benefit of others, and by sharing I mean, not only our money, but our sympathy and our interest and our intellectual life and our civic spirit to the extent of our ability, and so I think that if we will view this problem, not a large one, fortunately, in that spirit of service, and in that spirit of sharing, if you please, and also in that spirit of profit, and of personal profit, we will all be delighted to accompany Mr. Ely in this great adventure which he has undertaken. The opportunity is ours to improve to our great mutual advantage; I am sure (applause).

MR. OSBORN: I will call on Professor Fagini.

PROFESSOR FAGINI: Ladies and Gentlemen, I remember hearing on one occasion a story that was told away back in the days of Lincoln and Douglas. They were walking together in the streets of Chicago and they met a citizen of that burg who was apparently under the influence of

some strong potable, and Mr. Douglas said to Mr. Lincoln, “There is one of your fellow-Republicans, Mr. Lincoln”, whereupon, Lincoln said, “No, I don’t think so. He looks more like a Democrat to me”. “Well,” Douglas said, “Let us ask him what he is”. So they stopped the man and they said, “My friend, are you a Republic or a Democrat?” “Well,” he replied, “I am a Republican with the symptoms of a Democrat” (laughter).

Now, there is a profound moral to that story. You have the Democrats on the one hand and the Republicans on the other. You have all sorts of these blocks, or “blocs” as we should say if we were spelling it without a “k”. It is of the highest importance that they should get together. The salvation of the world depends on our getting together, and whether we are for the League of Nations or against it, whether we are militarists or anti-militarists makes no difference. Whatever we are we should have the symptoms of the other fellow. We should know enough about him to be able to sympathize with him, to understand his point of view, for, after all, we do not really quarrel, we are not enemies. If we only understood one another we would see that we are all pretty much alike.

Now, the magnificent function of this Town Hall as has been said much better than I can say it, has been to bring people of all different minds and opinions and antecedents and ideals and ideas together, that they may talk things over.

And now to come down to a very practical matter, what we want is \$100 from each of you

(applause). I speak for myself very humbly. I exist; I do not live, on a professional salary. I asked Mr. Ely whether he would accept that \$100 in doles from time to time, and on his saying, “Yes”, I have paid him the first \$25. I shall save up for the next \$25 as soon as possible, but all four of them will be paid in due time. I simply submit myself as Exhibit A. (applause).

MR. OSBORN: Before asking Mr. Ely to speak next, I am going to ask if there is anybody on the floor who — this suggestion was made to me – if there is anybody on the floor who wishes to say anything favorable on the subject, and if so, we shall be delighted to hear it. I take it that you are all favorable to this subject and that, therefore, you consider it unnecessary to speak, and I am going to ask Mr. Ely to talk to us (applause).

MR. ELY: I am going to make an incredible statement. I am going to say quite frankly to you, to every man here, that there is something that we want that you have got, and that is not in your pocketbook, never was and never will be. Of course, we would like the \$100. Man shall not live by bread alone, but he cannot get on without bread. Bills cannot be paid except with the current medium with which bills are usually paid. But that is not what we want. We would like very much to have something else. We would like to have the good-will, the interest of every man here and we would like something more than that. We would like his enthusiasm.

As Mr. Abbott said a minute ago, we represent about everything there is going, we in this room tonight, views on every possible subject on which views can be held, but there is one big, fine

things we have got in common and that is citizenship, without regard to race or creed or views about politics or anything else; there is one, great, big splendid platform on which we all stand. But as citizens we vote, unless the weather is too pleasant when Election Day comes, and we do not do many other things as citizens. Isn't it rather a good idea that without regard to party consideration or to divergent views about Leagues of Nations or anything else, that as citizens we should think of the common welfare, the common good, that we should discuss these great, big interests that affect our children and will affect our children's children? Well, that is just the idea, a common meeting place where anybody can come and bring all his baggage of cranky ideas and his full outfit of prejudices with him and air them as far as the patience of other people who come will permit, always remembering the well-known definition of a bore – a bore is a man who talks so much about himself that he does not give you a chance to talk about yourself (laughter).

The Town Hall, such as it is, modestly struggles with the facts. The facts are rather favorable, but it is embarrassing to be compelled to state them or to say things that are not in accordance with the truth. As a matter of fact, the Town Hall over here on 43<sup>rd</sup> Street, the threshold of which some of you are so unfortunate as never yet to have crossed – but it will be very easy to remedy that misfortune, please do it – has been over here on 43<sup>rd</sup> Street for a little more than two years, and during those two years there have gone in and out multitudes, two hundred thousand, perhaps, probably more than that, men and women have gone in the Town Hall and heard all kinds of civic and social and economic questions discussed, 1,000 public school teachers among



them.

This very day something went on this morning. Lord Cecil spoke. As a matter of fact, as many people as could get in got in, and this evening something else is going on. I forget what it is, but I venture to say it is something interesting. Sometimes five times a day there have been meetings held in that building, and twice or three times, well, that often happens. In addition to this place for public discussion there are these two floors over the hall itself. Those two floors are to be devoted to the purposes of a club. For two years that valuable space has been unused, because it seemed better to get our money first rather than to spend it first and to get it afterwards, a practice, however, which is frequently followed in our New York life.

We would like to be able to finish those floors and to erect a club there that will not represent the division of family life, as is often the case with clubs, but the contrary; where men can come, and women; where a man can come with his wife, with his son, with his daughter, with all the family to the same club, and where the first shock he will experience will be the unaccustomed inexpensiveness of it all.

Why, think of it, a club where you don't pay twice as much as you might pay somewhere else, but where you even pay a little less; a club right in the center of our great civic life here. So this club of men and women is to be there with a rather unusual membership. I mean a membership to some extent chosen of persons doing different kinds and grades of work invited to become

members, so that, let us say a journalist and an artist may come into friendly contact with one another.

You men, if you care for it, by just joining in this popular expression of interest, will have the privilege of being guests of that club for five years without any payment of any dues, and without any increase in the dues of membership in the Economic Club. Done once, it is done for keeps, if I may say so, and we would like to do something else. We would like very much to have this Town Hall get to be more and more known as a kind of house of friendliness where almost anything a friend can do, somebody there will have at least the wish to do. We have been frequently asked to help persons to supply the place of a departing cook (laughter). We shall not attempt to do that always, but if you are in any kind of trouble with your cook or your plumber we shall hope that you will find the remedy somewhere else, but, at least, if you want sympathy, telephone to the Town Hall (laughter).

There are going on in this town so many different kinds of things that there is not a man here not even the city editors of our great newspapers, who can keep track of them all. We are going to try and be a place that attempts to know what goes on everywhere, even up in the Bronx or over in Brooklyn, and to keep you informed if you would like to be informed, a central place, a clearing house of opinions and friendliness.

What this big city needs, after all, more than anything else, is the outstretched hand of sympathy.

It is to be willing always to agree with the other fellow on the subject of the weather, when it is impossible to agree with him on any other subject; an atmosphere of friendliness, of sympathy, and of interest.

Now, remember, the occasion of all this is that a good friend, after a good many years, 3,000 people, not one or two, but after a quarter of a century 3,000 people made possible this building over here. Now, another friend, who wishes her name not to be mentioned in public, has been kind enough to propose to make a very handsome subscription, half a million dollars, inviting us to match it, and it is a question whether, if one person is willing to give a half a million, how many persons are there willing to give \$100. That is the plan. Please do not feel that there is any compulsion about it at all, or that anybody is put under any pressure to anybody else to do anything that he is not disposed to do, but, as this matter is put before you tonight by the suggestions of persons who are not most interested in the Town Hall, it is your fault if it is done tonight. It is your fault. Your virtues are to blame.

I have had the great pleasure of coming in contact one way or another personally with the members of this club, of over several thousand men, a mighty good lot of men. It has been a pleasure and a delight to see you all, and it is because there has been such an atmosphere of friendliness and good-fellowship and public spirit here— well, that is the explanation of it all (applause).

I may say that Lord Robert Cecil, this is, as you know, his last day in New York, and it was not convenient for him to get here earlier than a quarter past nine, and that is why we have been trying to put these few minutes to a use which none of us will regret as the years follow.

MR. OSBORN: Ladies and gentlemen: The election of 1920 shut the door upon the League of Nations. Indeed, as a Democrat, I am willing to admit that the election slammed the door to since then, and especially lately, there have been symptoms of a desire to reexamine the subject, and with greater tolerance. I have much sympathy with the fears and the apprehensions expressed on this subject by many important and distinguished minds. Similar fears were expressed by some of the most patriotic of our citizens with regard to the Constitution of the United States. Patrick Henry said, of the Constitution, in the Virginia General Convention, "I look on that paper," referring to the Constitution, "As the most fatal plan that could possibly be devised to enslave a free people."

That was said of the Constitution of the United States. That great document met similar opposition from many important quarters. It was before the people for consideration for several years, and it narrowly escaped rejection. It is not unfair to hope that similar fears expressed and apprehensions with respect to the operation of the League of Nations in its separate and very different sphere will prove equally groundless.

To the followers of those on the other hand who have approached this subject filled with partisan

rancor and who have pictured the horns, the tail and the cloven foot, what a surprise it must be, and what a surprise to see and to hear the great gentlemen of lofty character, of gifted mind, of very great sincerity and of very great ability, who honors us with his presence this evening.

In my observation and reading, the American people have ever been profoundly impressed by the character of its public men. It is not because of their achievements but of their character that we revere George Washington and Abraham Lincoln and in a lesser sphere it was because of his character that Grover Cleveland impressed himself upon the American people.

I think that we can regard the League as open to discussion. The distinguished President of the United States lately said that he would not enter the League by the side door or by the cellar or by the back door. But, my friends, that leaves it open to us to back in by the front door (laughter and applause).

Even stranger things than that happen in this curious world of ours. Our Guest, therefore, may feel that his arduous visit he received and open hearing, that he has made a profound personal impression on the American people and that he has aided us to place this question upon the basis of reasonable discussion.

We have been honored in past years by the visits of the representatives of the great nations of the world. But this is the first visit that we have had from the representative of the 62 Nations and

people from the rest of the world; and it is far more than a figure of speech when I say that I have the honor of presenting to you the Ambassador of the civilized world, Lord Robert Cecil.

(Applause)

#### LORD ROBERT CECIL

Ladies and Gentlemen: This is the last opportunity that I shall have on this visit of speaking to an American audience in America. I am going away, I am sorry to say, tomorrow. It is not a mere phrase, to say that I deeply regret that my visit has come to an end. I have received at the hands of everyone unlimited and unstinted kindness. Your courtesy and hospitality are well known throughout the world; certainly, they have never been bestowed with greater lavishness than they have been upon me. And it is not only that. I am profoundly conscious that I have been received with an immense amount of generosity as well. I have spoken to audiences containing, I know, many of those who disagree with me on the great question with which I am connected and some, perhaps, who doubted the opportuneness of my visit at all; and yet, from all of them I have received the utmost kindness and generosity. And, may I add, that I have received equal generosity from the organs of the press; even those who are most opposed to the League of Nations have treated me personally with the utmost civility and forbearance. I thank them, I thank you, I thank your fellow citizens for all this, and I hope – I hope that those who disagree with me will not think that I have misunderstood their kindness. I have never imagined that because they have treated me with that distinguished courtesy, their opinions formed I doubt not after deep consideration and with the highest motives have in any respect varied or weakened.

I accept their hospitality and kindness as it was meant and I do not seek to draw from it any conclusion, any suggestion that they have modified or changed their opinions.

Well, now, ladies and gentlemen, at the end of my visit may I recall the objects which I venture to explain at its outset I had in coming here. I said then; I say now; that I did not come to make any request, still less to give any advice to the people of America. I came, in the first place, to give them, if they wanted it, and those that did want it, any information on the subject of the League that I might have. I cannot tell whether I have succeeded in imparting any information, but it may be that I have done so for, after all, the testimony of an eyewitness is always worth having and always contains some element of vividness, of actuality, shall I say, which no amount of reading and reports and accounts of others will ever quite succeed in conveying.

I have tried to tell you what I myself have seen; what I myself know about the working, the objects, the aspirations, the purpose of the League of Nations, of those that compose it, and if I have succeeded in, it may be, dispelling some misapprehension, clearing up some doubt, making something evident which before was obscure, then I have succeeded to that extent in the object of my visit.

But it may be that in the course of utterances, which have been far too numerous for the patience of my auditors, I may have gone a little further. One cannot always be sure in these matters. I

may have overstepped the pure line of giving information which I have had laid down for myself. I may have been led into something like advocacy from time to time. I dare say it is so.

If, in so doing, I have been indiscreet or presumptuous, may I take this opportunity of tendering to you all a very sincere apology. But I hope that in judging me, you will consider the temptations under which I was. Consider the effect of the first view and experiences of your country or someone who has never seen it before. Some of you, I daresay, may have experienced this yourself, but, if not, try and imagine what it is for a European, for an Englishman, accustomed to small countries, crowded lands, believing, as indeed I do, in the great merits of my own land and my own fellow-countrymen, but yet coming to something quite fresh, quite new; these vast stretches, these enormous productions of wealth; this marvelous transformation in a few years of something like a mighty field into a city, all these years; the vastness of them, the novelty of them, the immense possibilities that they mean; these are things which must strike the imagination of anyone, however cold-minded and however unmovable he may be.

And then may I say that not the least among these striking things that I have seen, – a people of marvelous kindness of heart, of generous conviction, of untiring energy. You may conceive to yourselves how someone possessed, if you like, with an idea, a great idea, anxious, passionately anxious to do something to secure the peace of the world, however little he may be able to do; and, believing that there is an institution, there is an instrument, which can accomplish or can help to accomplish these greatest of all objects, and then being presented with these vast



possibilities, these ideal people for the purpose, people of generous impulses, fresh idealism; and do not be too hard on him if he has been sometimes swept into advocacy and propaganda when he meant to confine himself to facts and information. (applause)

Not many days ago I met a very distinguished fellow citizen of yours who is an opponent of the League and I talked to him and he told me of his ideas about the relations between Nations, his eagerness for peace, his disbelief in force and his belief in common understanding. And as he talked I could not help feeling, and at least I said, “Why Senator”, for he was a Senator, “You are the very man we want to help us. It is that sprit we want in you. Can you not come over and give us your assistance” but that was in private (laughter).

We Ladies and Gentlemen, on the other side, let me try and describe to you in a very few words, – I am not going to detain you long this evening, – how the great experiment looks to me. For it is, whatever we think of it, one of the greatest adventures that mankind has ever been engaged in (applause). It is not merely that we seek the cooperation of nations for the common good in the ways that I have so often described, for humanitarian, for social, for labor, for other purposes, – excellent things in themselves. I believe an immense lot has been done by the League in those directions. But that is not the only thing. Still less is it that the League is charged with the duties so well described by one of your fellow citizens last night, the duties of adjudication, adjustment and mediation, the settling in one word of the quarrels and difficulties between nations; also a very necessary part of the League organization and League work, also something which in my

judgment, for the reasons I have tried to explain often enough, the League has achieved a marvelous degree of success, so great that I claim for it that in no single instance where a dispute has been submitted to it for adjustment or mediation or adjudication has it failed, – not one.

But that is not the only thing. The great thing, greater than all of these greater than all its achievements, greater than the creation of the court or the setting up of the mandate system, greater than all these is its function in helping to create a new spirit among nations. That is its object. Without that none of the other things will ultimately and permanently succeed, and if that new spirit can be created, then we are sure that in one way or another we shall achieve our purpose.

And what is the new spirit?" It is nothing less than this, the application of the fundamental principles of Christian morality to international relations, an attempt to apply Christianity to a purpose for which it must have been intended, it was intended, but as to which there has been an almost complete neglect during the nineteen centuries since it was founded.

I do not say that the League can do this. I do not say that the League can create this new spirit, or that it can apply it. I am not so foolish as that. That must be done by other agencies, agencies which are continually working for that purpose, agencies which are powerful for that purpose, but what the League can do is to create an International organization which shall be favorable to such a spirit, which shall enable that spirit to have its full and fair throw and not to maintain the

old organization of nations which was based fundamentally on rivalry and hatred and which has created an atmosphere in which the true spirit of international brotherhood could not possibly survive.

And this great object, the greatest of all that we are aiming at, the one thing that really is worth trying to do, I claim that it does show signs of growth. I remember in 1921 we were discussing the Albanian question. The representatives of Albania and Serbia were there. They were – shall I say extremely critical of one another? – A spirit which threatened even to degenerate into recrimination. Luckily, it did not get further than that. And what happened in 1922? Why, a statement of the most pacific kind of Serbia that the relations between the two countries were better than they had ever been before, that they had never been so good, and that the cause of it was the spirit and action and influence which the League exerted between the two.

Or, take the case of Austria, a case that I have too often cited, perhaps. Still, what an example! What a commentary on the old system! A country in dejection and in despair comes to an Assembly, largely consisting or partly consisting at any rate of representatives of those countries with which it had until very lately been fighting a desperate war; comes to other countries from whom it had separated, who had all the bitterness which close connections severed sometimes brings, ask for help. Immediately, a response. All those affected get up and offer of help – not to Austria because she is Austria, but because she is a Sister Nation in distress. Surely, that is some proof that this instrument, this experiment we are conducting is really producing some of the

results which the most sanguine of us are hoping for in the future.

Ladies and gentlemen, do you not think that an enterprise of that moment, an enterprise of that character, an enterprise of that novelty, is not unworthy of a nation who has still some of the virtues and the enterprise of pioneers. That, at any rate, has sometimes been a grave temptation to me. But the other object with which I came was to me, at any rate, quite as important.

It was with the object of obtaining information and instruction from those to whom I came. I have learned a great deal. At any rate, I have been given the opportunity of learning a great deal. (Laughter) And I hope I have profited by it. I went the furthest west that I could go in the time at my disposal, to the state of Iowa, to Des Moines. And I asked one of the citizens who displayed there, as all your fellow citizens always have done, the utmost desire to meet any wish that I expressed. I asked him to take me out to a farm and show me what the life of a farmer in the Middle West was like, as far as you could see it in a casual visit. We went a little way out of the town to a farmer and we had the pleasure of finding him at home, and I had the opportunity of talking to him. Of course, that was relatively near the town, relatively in a thickly populated district, but even there one could not help feeling here was a man living more or less by himself, magnificent country, great stretches of rolling fertile fields and cultivated land, as far as the eye could reach, living ideal conditions, from some points of view, with his family all around him, with apparent comfort and content, much more than a thousand miles from the sea coast, four thousand miles from the nearest point in Europe; and anyone who had any imagination must

have wondered how such a man could keep in touch with the events of these far off lands, and how he could really picture to himself, unless he was a man of great imagination, what the news from Europe really meant. And Europe is, unfortunately, for the time being at any rate, the storm centre of the world. I confess that my surprise was there was not, as I have so often heard talked about, the aloofness of this population, but the marvelous alertness, the marvelous vividness with which he seemed to grasp and understand the great problems, the great world problems in which I was interested. I am not talking of him alone, but of the whole of the people I met in that district. I think that was due not only to their imagination but to their candor and generosity. But the fact remains that whatever the cause I found there, as I found in every city which I visited, the most intense interest in this question, the greatest anxiety to hear about it, an audience as attentive as any man could wish to speak to, questions showing that many, at any rate, of those who had followed, who had heard, – for aught I know every one of them had followed closely the argument necessary sometimes detailed and tedious, which has been addressed to them. That was a great experience. Here was this vast population removed by thousand of miles from where I lived, yet realizing what after all is the truth that they were interested in these very problems which I had come to speak about; and that they recognized that far away though they lived, they too had an interest in the preservation of the peace of the world and even in the preservation of the peace of Europe. And, another thing, I found, – for it is now my time, if ever, to speak to you of what I found – I found not only an intense interest in these problems, but I found as far as I was able to judge, and, of course, I recognize that my opportunities of observation were very, very tiny, but still I am merely telling you my experiences – I found not only intense interest but a

complete acceptance of the general proposition that it was the duty of all the nations to cooperate together for peace and for other common objects of mankind.

I cannot say, I do not suggest for a moment, that they accepted the proposition of the League of Nations. I do not say that for a moment. But they did accept the view that isolation was an impractical ideal, that it was an ideal (applause) and that some attempt must be made to answer the great question: What are we going to do with reference to this international problem?

That indeed is the question that I came mainly to ask. What advice have you got to give me on this subject? I can give you information. Can you give me any advice? That is the question which I have ventured very respectfully, to put over and over again. Just to consider what the problem is as it looks to us. I do not want to restate it at any undue length. But what are the short simple facts which we cannot get out of?

That we in Europe have been through, with your help and assistance, this desolating war for four years. During that war we have suffered prodigiously. I am not talking of my own country. In some ways we in England have suffered less, far less, than many other countries of Europe. But taking it as a whole, the suffering has been prodigious. Millions of dead; tens of millions of wounded; hundreds of thousands of millions of money expended. That is what has happened. Desolated fields, destroyed governments, anarchy in some countries, bankruptcy in others, hardships in all. That is what the war has meant, and we who have lived very near it, within the

sound of its guns, who have heard from hour to hour and from day to day this fortunes of battle, who have lived preys to the most terrible anxiety, who have known many of our nearest and dearest either killed or maimed, this great terrible trial and catastrophe has come close to us, has seemed to us, as indeed it is, the greatest evil that has ever happened to civilized mankind, and calls instantly for some method, some step to be taken by us in the interests, not of ourselves only, but still more of the young generation that is coming after to prevent, if it be possible, the recurrence of the catastrophe which, if it does recur, must overwhelm the civilization itself.

That is the problem. What is the answer? As I say, I am not trying to insist on the acceptance of this or that solution. But what is to be the answer? We cannot leave it there. I do not think that any man can leave it there or any woman. We must find some way out. We cannot permit the world to go back to the old conditions which brought this dreadful state of things and which, unless changed, must bring again a recurrence of a still more dreadful state of things.

Well, I ventured to ask that question from the very moment I came ashore, and I have had some very interesting suggestions made. I see in one of your magazines, one of your reviews, "The New Republic" a very interesting proposal. It consists of the outlawry of war, an international court of justice, an economic conference, and ultimately, if Europe is good, acceptance of the League.

Well, that is a very interesting proposal. I accept it with great interest. There have been other

suggestions, suggestions of a distinguished fellow citizen of yours, Senator Pepper, and I wish to thank all of them. They have seemed to me very interesting and very valuable and I can only hope as time goes on they may gain in definiteness and authority. In any case I thank them heartily for what they have done and I thank not only them, but the many others in my audiences who have by their questions shown a desire to elucidate the subject and to make suggestions tentatively for its solution.

Meanwhile, what am I to say? How does it leave the solution which we have adopted in Europe, the solution of the League of Nations? Has there anything been said to me which shows to me a real alternative to that, something which will do as well, which I can go back to Europe and say, “You are all wrong. The right plan is something quite different from your League. Abandon that and take up some new plan.” Well, honestly, I cannot say that the suggestions have reached that point. (Laughter). And what of the League itself? What is its position? It is a living organism. It is a real thing. It is living and it will live and grow. (applause)

I say it will live because I have attended three of its assemblies and I know that at each of the assemblies it has been measurably stronger than it was at the last. And I know, for I have heard them say it, the kind of attitude that the nations, and, particularly let me add, the smaller nations, more confidently, more convincingly, have adopted toward the League. They believe in it. They think it has done great work. They are sure it is going to do better work. They are determined to go on with it, whatever happens, whoever joins them, or whoever does not join them. (applause)



I say it without the slightest fear of doubt or contradiction; the League is not only succeeding, but every year it succeeds more than it did the year before. Its success is increasing success; and its life every year, every month, becomes more firmly established and better assured.

I said before, and I say again, that however I may be carried away by argument or by rhetorical enthusiasm, I do not desire to ask you anything. I desire to lay the fact before you. I desire, if I can, to receive assistance from you, but in any case to put you in a position, so far as in me lies, to form a judgment on these great questions.

I know that many of you are far better qualified, even, than I am, – and I have given eight or nine years of the closest attention to the subject, – to know all that there is to be known about it; but so far as I can help at all, my information is at your disposal. But I ask nothing. I ask nothing.

I am not here, as I see it has been genially suggested, to induce America to come into the League in order to prop up the British Empire. (Laughter) I have a great regard and esteem for the forty or fifty nations not belonging to the British Empire, which are already in the League, but I am afraid I do not attribute to them that degree of altruism which a desire to prop up the British Empire indicates is their only purpose in coming into the League. (Laughter and applause)

Nor am I here to ask you to support the League in order to support international credit. That is not the purpose of the League, except in so far as the reestablishment and settlement of peace

cannot fail to reestablish and improve international credit.

No, ladies and gentlemen, that is not my purpose; that is not my object. May I venture to quote to you a phrase or two from a very interesting speech I heard from Senator Pepper last night.

He appealed to those who heard him to dissociate the discussion of these great problems from the merits or demerits of particular schemes and he asked them to avoid the wish to arouse prejudice and promote parties' ends. That was an appeal which he had every right to address to his fellow countrymen. I have no such right but may I say that if I were speaking to an audience of my countrymen I would endeavor, less eloquently, to express precisely the same idea. After all the importance of this issue, right or wrong is prodigious. I am not here to talk to you about a scheme, a visionary fantastic scheme of a few impracticable theories. That is not the atmosphere in which the League was created. It is not the atmosphere in which the League works. It is a business proposition, aimed carefully, constructed at least as carefully as human beings could construct it with the object of securing peace, the lives, the happiness, the liberty, the property of millions of their fellow men. It may fail or it may succeed but the issues involved are prodigious. It is impossible to exaggerate their importance. If the advocates of the League are right this is the only workable scheme that has yet been presented to the world to accomplish these great ends. There is, as far as we know in Europe no other scheme before the world for the purpose. It holds the field. It is the only thing we have to look to. It is the one plant in the storm to which we have to cling. That is the way we regard it. That is our attitude towards it. And therefore I do venture very respectfully to say that it must be treated and approached by all men and women with any

sense of responsibility, with deep seriousness, with the utmost earnest attention, with the spirit with which men approach the deepest problems of their own life and the most urgent difficulties of their own country. Even that is barely sufficient to fit a man for really coping with this great, this terrible, this far-reaching problem. Believe me; I do not come to prop up the British Empire or to protect international finance or anything of that kind. I come solely and entirely to see whether I can do anything to assist, however humbly and however slightly the cause of the peace of the world. I desire peace with all my heart. I desire the cessation for all time of that orgy of lasting cruelty which we know as war (applause).

Surely that is a sufficient reason for any man's action. Is it necessary to search about for other motives? If he will not do that, if he will not take some exertion for a cause of that kind that cause is likely to appeal to him. And after all I am the advocate of no new thing. I have no new message to give to you or anyone. I am but repeating as the rule for nations that which was laid down as the greatest blessing for men 1900 years ago – PEACE ON EARTH AND GOOD WILL TOWARDS MEN (Prolonged applause).

#### QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION

THE CHAIRMAN: Ladies and gentlemen, it is said that a Norse hero was possessed of such skill that he could allow javelins to be thrown at him and catch them in their flight. Lord Robert has given to many of us an exhibition of even greater skill – the ability to answer questions from

the floor, and he is ready to again receive from you such questions as you may be prepared to ask him. I hope that those of you who are inspired to ask some questions will do so without fear or favor.

A VOICE: Mr. Chairman, may I ask Lord Robert whether in his judgment France has an alternative to the occupation of the Ruhr.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: I myself think that the alternative to the occupation of the Ruhr would be a reference of the whole dispute, including the difficulties as to the safety of France, which in my judgment are an essential part of the dispute to the League for its consideration and recommendation. I believe that might be done. I hope it will be done. I am quite ready if it is desired to go more fully into the question of the Ruhr, but I understand my questioner now only asks what in my judgment is the alternative to its occupation. I say the alternative to this occupation is a reference to the League. (applause)

MR. ABBOTT: I should like to ask Lord Robert if he considers Article X as the heart of the League.

LORD CECIL: Well, I avoid metaphors when I can (laughter), and I will only say that in my judgment, Article X, as I have said to many audiences is of less advantage than its advocates believes and of less injury than its enemies fear. I believe that its main merit is that it constitutes,

however ambiguously expressed, a denunciation of wars of conquest. I believe its main defect is that it was so expressed that many people thought it went a great deal further than it does.

(Applause)

A VOICE: Why has Germany not been asked or invited to become a member of the League?

LORD CECIL: Because from the time of the signature of the Treaty of Versailles, no country has been asked to become a member of the League. All the countries that have joined the League, – and they are quite a large number since that time, have applied for membership, and I am afraid that it would be altogether indefensible to make a special exception in favor of Germany, (Laughter and applause) and extend to her an invitation to join. But I am, as I have often said, extremely anxious to see Germany a member of the League, and I believe, and I give you my belief for what it is worth, that if she applies, she would unquestionably be admitted as a member of the League.

MR. LEVINSON: Would France accept the decision of the League?

LORD CECIL: On the Ruhr question?

MR. LEVINSON: On any question.

LORD CECIL: I do not know whether she would or not. But I think, if I may say so, very respectfully to my questioner, that the question is really rather misconceived. It conceives of the League as a body which decided questions and imposes their solution on those who are concerned in the dispute. That is not the attitude which in fact the League has ever adopted, and I hope it never will adopt in regard to any of these questions.

What it does is to seek a solution, by conference and conciliation and discussion, which will be acceptable to all parties concerned.

Take, for instance, the solution of such a question as the Aland Islands question, or the Silurian question. These were questions submitted to the League for its advice. It advised a particular solution, taking the utmost pains to make its solution as fair and as just to the parties as it could and as likely as possible to be accepted by them. And, in fact, in both cases, the decision was accepted and the question has been disposed of, I hope, forever.

But where the decision is not accepted, the League has finished its functions it can only advise, – it cannot impose. In the case of the Vilna dispute, for instance, it advised Lithuania and Poland to accept a particular solution. They both rejected it, and all the League could do, did do, was to implore them, successfully, at any rate, to refrain from resorting to war upon the matter. That is the function of the League, to seek solutions and not to impose them.

I believe – this is only my belief – that the group of questions involved in the occupation of the

Ruhr, – that is to say, the payment of reparations, the security for its payment, the ultimate safety of France if Germany recovers and resumes her strength, and there may be other questions subsidiaries to those – all this group of questions, if they were once got into the atmosphere of Geneva and were dealt with by the parties sitting around the table and talking them over – I am myself profoundly convinced, and I happen to know, that very good judges share my opinion – a solution would be found, not by any sort of compulsion or imposition, but by general agreement, a general give and take, without which after all no solutions of any difficulties can be found.

(Applause)

A VOICE: May I ask if Article X can be relieved of its ambiguity?

LORD CECIL: There is a regular machinery, as my audience probably knows, under Article 26, for amending any of the articles, and if sufficient reason were shown for making Article X more clear, or for striking it out altogether, I have very little doubt that the assembly would assent to that course. But at present, the great majority of the members of the assembly, though I do not know that they are special admirers of Article X, regard it as innocuous and, in some respects, since it denounces wars of conquest, better than nothing.

It might express more clearly, more definitely. But they do not disapprove of it and therefore, unless there was some good reason for doing it, unless there was some great advantage to the cause of peace to be gained from changing Article 10 I doubt whether on their mere motion, on

their own initiative, without any such motive, I doubt whether the Assembly could think it worthwhile to change Article 10. But if there was a motive for doing so, that would be quite a different thing.

A VOICE: Will Lord Robert explain the voting power of the British Empire, including the colonies?

LORD CECIL: Yes. Each of the Dominions of the British Empire has a separate member of the League and therefore, as far as votes count at all you may say that the British Empire has six votes if you like to put it in that way. I am asked to explain that. The explanation as a historical matter, of course, is quite simple. The dominions were furnished their contingents in the late war. They fought in the late war as separate entities with their own organization, and they fought, if I may be allowed to say so, with great courage and devotion (applause). When it came to the end of the war and peace was to be made it seemed fantastic and ridiculous that they, who had fought and bled during the war, should not be consulted as to the terms of peace and they were therefore admitted to the conference of the Peace at Paris.

Having been admitted to the conference of the Peace, it was almost a matter of course that they should become members of the League. There is no reason for differentiating between them and others who had been allowed to attend the conference as separate international persons at the Peace.



But I imagine my questioner wants me to go further than that (laughter), and to explain what is the justification. What is the advantage or disadvantage of this arrangement? I have done so once or twice before. To my mind it is right and advantageous to the League, as a whole, that these dominions should be separately represented, but perhaps I had better explain in the first place that it is no disadvantage. That is obvious. Votes, except in the election of members, and on one or two other occasions, do not count in the League because every decision, as a decision, has to be unanimous. Moreover, the decisions themselves do not amount to more than recommendations to the nations which compose the League. The whole conception of the Assembly of the League being a kind of Parliament and the Council of the League being a kind of executive committee is a delusion. That is not at all what happens. There are no divisions, or if there are, they do not produce any results because, I say, there is the rule of unanimity in the first place and the fact that the powers of the League are consultative in the second.

But I think it has positive advantages, at any rate to the League. I think the whole conception of the League, the idea that it will be the focus for the public opinion of the world, necessarily involves that all public nations, all the nations and the separate nationalities should be there represented. For instance India. I regard it as of great importance that the three or four hundred millions of Indians should have somebody of their race and color to come and speak to the Assembly and represent to them what is the feeling of India in certain questions where it differs as it does differ, from the feeling of the great majority of the Assembly.

Therefore, I think that from the point of view of making workable a true representative of the public opinion of the world, it is right and desirable that every self-governing community, which is the test put into the covenant, should be able to come and express its opinion as an entity to the League. And I think that only in that way will you get a symposium of the opinion of the world.

Now I come to the last point, which is: Does this give an undue advantage to the British Empire?

Well, of course, I don't regard that as quite so urgent and terrible a question as people who do not belong in the British Empire. (Laughter) But I do say seriously, and without joking, that in my judgment it does not in fact increase the influence of the British Empire in the least; and for this reason: That instead of speaking with one voice the British Empire speaks with six voices. I do not say they are often discordant voices, but they are not always completely in accord. We do not quarrel at the League. At least our purpose is to avoid quarrel. But you will find in the records of the League several occasions in which dominions of the British Commonwealth have differed from the mother country and differed from one another. I have a very vivid picture myself of a representative of one Dominion expressing with great clearness what he thought about the policy and administration of another dominion. Therefore, I don't think that the six votes increase the influence of the British Empire. And I will repeat what I have given several times before; an example which I think myself has some bearing. Suppose the United States were in the League – if you can imagine such a thing – (laughter) suppose that they were divided into six different self-governing communities. Would they have more influence in the League if they

were represented by gentlemen speaking for the whole of the United States with all its authority, or would they have more influence if they were represented by six delegations not perhaps always in accord with one another, speaking for different sections of the United States? I venture to think that anyone who thinks over it carefully and impartially will agree that in the second case the United States will have less influence than in the first (applause).

Indeed, I know some reactionary persons in my own country who regard – I do not myself – but who regard the splitting up of the votes of the British Empire, not as a strength to the British Empire, but as a grave and insidious menace to its very existence. (applause)

A VOICE: Why, in the opinion of Lord Robert did France not first play the question of the Ruhr before the League?

LORD CECIL: I think that is, if I may say, a very proper question. I think it does admit of a fairly clear answer. By the Treaty of Versailles, as we all know, Germany was condemned to pay certain sums of reparations and a reparations commission was set up with certain powers over those payments and over the exaction of those payments and among those powers was the power to declare by a majority when Germany had committed what was called a voluntary default in payment. Last fall Germany was declared by the majority of the Reparations Commission to be in voluntary default. Thereupon, the sanctions provided by the treaty, or by that part of the treaty, came into operation. And amongst them a clause, the effect of which was speaking from

recollection – that Germany – that the allied powers might respectively – that is the important word – impose upon Germany economic or other pressure.

The questions are raised by that phraseology, at least as obscure as Article X. One was whether that meant that the Allies had to act all together or whether they could act separately and it was argued – I won't express my opinion myself – that “respectively” meant that they might act singly. The other was, what was exactly meant by “economic or other pressure”.

The French held that it meant that they could act singly; that is to say that they need not act unanimously and therefore the refusal of England to join will not matter; and that the “economic or other pressure” will embrace occupation of the industrial district of the Ruhr for the purposes of obtaining the products of that district directly or putting pressure that would be exercised by the occupation of her industrial district.

I confess, I think it very difficult to say myself, that the occupation of the Ruhr from that point of view did not come within the expression, whatever it exactly was – “economic or other pressure”.

Therefore France said: We have a right, notwithstanding the abstention of England – we have a right under the Treaty to occupy the Ruhr, and by the same Treaty, Germany is precluded from treating that occupation as an act of war. There is no doubt about that. That therefore, when we

occupy the Ruhr, we are not in fact committing an act of war or any act outside international law. We are merely as it were “levying execution for our just debt”, as we have a perfect right to do. No international question therefore arises. We are entitled to go into the Ruhr by our Treaty rights. We see no reason, therefore, to submit any question to any international authority. We are merely carrying out our rights. We claim to carry them out and nobody has any right to question our action.

I was asked why France did not refer it. That is the reason why France did not refer it. I want to guard myself, though, because personally, with the greatest respect for France and her Government, I think her action was most ill-advised. I regret it. I do not think it is likely to produce the results she aims at. I am afraid very much, with the condition Europe is in; I personally have a very great repugnance for anything that even savors of violent action. And I cannot admit, do not admit, I do not think anyone suggests that the League is precluded for intervening in the matter. On the contrary, the League in my judgment, under Article XI, has a clear or rather, any member of the League has a clear right to bring the whole question before the Council or the Assembly for open discussion. I do not think the right goes further than that. But that, after all, is the whole purpose of the Leagues.

I am asked sometimes why that has not happened. I can only say that France, taking the view she did, and Belgium joining her, and Italy being more or less in accord with her, there were three of the powers of the League who did not think this was a proper occasion for the discretionary

intervention of the League under Article XI, and undoubtedly communicated that view pretty plainly to the other members of the League. It became, therefore, a very serious question whether, in the exercise of the discretion given by Article XI, it was desirable or was not desirable to bring the matter before the League. I myself held, and have always held, that sooner or later it would be desirable under that article to bring the matter before the League. When that moment will come seems to me to be a very difficult and delicate question to decide. As far as I am concerned, I have always held that it must be left to the full responsibility of the executive governments, as they are the only people who are really in a position, from their knowledge, to form a judgment as to whether and when such an intervention will be desirable. I therefore felt that as far as I am concerned, as far as my own conduct is concerned, that we ought to take every opportunity to urge that this question should, at the earliest possible moment, be referred to the League, but to say to the Governments at the same time, “We cannot undertake to say whether now or a fortnight hence, or a month hence or six months will be the best time. You must be the judges of that” – but we say, I am speaking for the moment as member of the Legislature at home – that this reference ought to take place at the earliest possible occasion (applause).

A VOICE: Inasmuch as the Versailles Treaty does not in any way mention the possible occupation of the Ruhr, would not France under her interpretation of economic pressure be just as much justified in the occupation of all of Germany as she is in the occupation of the Ruhr?

LORD CECIL: Well, you must not misunderstand me. I do not say that I assent or dissent from

the French interpretation. That is a matter of law on which I had rather not express any opinion. But I do not agree that because it may be argued with great force that the occupation of a particular right; industrialized district which, in the first instance, was intended to be not a military occupation, but a civil occupation, because you hold that to be something in the nature of economic pressure, that you could also hold that the occupation of a whole country, including the political capital and a number of other districts, which have no special industrial significance, is also economic pressure. This question may be said to be a question of degree, but, of course, almost everything is a question of degree, and when you carry the difference of degree far enough, it becomes a difference in kind, and I certainly could not hold that whatever may be thought of the occupation of the Ruhr as economic pressure, that the occupation of the whole of Germany can be regarded as other than a political measure. (applause)

A VOICE: What, in Lord Robert's opinion, would be the difference of the international relations of the United States if we were members of the Court as proposed by President Harding, as opposed to those that it would be if we were members of the League of Nations?

LORD CECIL: It is true I am going away tomorrow (laughter), but still, as long as I am here, I must not be, without the grave breach of every kind of decorum, put into a position of either supporting or differing from the head of your state. (applause)

MR. OSBORN: I feel that we have trespassed enough upon Lord Robert's patience, and the

Chair recognizes a former President of the club, Mr. Frank A. Vanderlip. Frank A. Vanderlip.

(applause)

MR. VANDERLIP: Mr. President, Lord Robert is sailing tomorrow. He has had a most extraordinary experience in this country. It has been, he has said, one of deep interest to him. It has been one of great instruction to us, of great value to us, and it seems to me it would be fitting on the eve of his departure, in the presence of this great audience, to express some satisfaction, some appreciation for what he has done here, and I would like to propose a resolution expressing profound gratefulness for his trip, for his many speeches that have been do instructive, and to hope that he will have a safe return and that his great work for the peace of the world will ultimately be crowned with success. (applause)

MR. OSBORN: I feel that it is hardly necessary to put the resolution. Nevertheless, those in favor of Mr. Vanderlip's resolution will please say "Aye". The motion is unanimously carried and the Chair will not put the negative.

One last word from Lord Cecil.

LORD CECIL: I only want, in accordance with an English custom, at any rate, to thank you for your courtesy and kindness to me, particularly for your vote of thanks. May I say that I hope you will not forget me. I certainly shall never forget you. (Applause)