THE PEACE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

EDITORIAL BY THEODORE ROOSEVELT

IT is one of our prime duties as a Nation to seek peace. It is an even higher duty to seek righteousness. It is also our duty not to indulge in shams, not to make believe we are getting peace by some patent contrivance which sensible men ought to know cannot work in practice, and which if we sought to make it work might cause irretrievable harm. I sincerely believe in the principle of arbitration; I believe in applying that principle so far as practicable; but I believe that the effort to apply it where it is not practicable cannot do good and may do serious harm. Confused thinking and a willingness to substitute words for thought, even though inspired by an entirely amiable sentimentality, do not tend toward sound action. I think that the great majority of those persons who advocate any and every treaty which is called a treaty for peace or for arbitration would be less often drawn into a position that tends to humiliate their country if they would take the trouble to formulate clearly and definitely just what it is that they desire. Of course there are persons wholly indifferent to the National honor and interest, who, in consequence, cannot be reached by an appeal to National honor and interest; and there are other persons whose ingrained personal timidity is such that they are more afraid of war than of any dishonor, personal or national. Such persons cannot be influenced by argument. But I do not believe that they make a very numerous class, and I have no question whatever that most of the men who, as I think mistakenly, advocate *all* peace and arbitration treaties, have the same standards of honor, national and individual, and the same intelligence, as their fellow-countrymen who disagree with them. I believe that the trouble comes from the fact that they do not clearly formulate what it is they wish. This, therefore, is the first thing to do.

We, the American people, believe, and ought to believe, in righteousness first, and in peace as the handmaid of righteousness. We abhor brutality and wrong-

doing, whether exhibited by nations or by individuals. We hold that the same law of righteousness should obtain between nation and nation as between man and man. I, for one, would rather cut off my hand than see the United States adopt the attitude either of cringing before great and powerful nations who wish to wrong us, or of bullying small and weak nations who have done us no wrong. The American people desire to do justice and to act with frank generosity toward all the other nations of mankind; but I err greatly in my judgment of my countrymen if they are willing to submit to wrong and injustice. Again and again in the past they have shown, and rightly shown, that when the choice lay between righteousness and peace they chose righteousness, just exactly as they also chose righteousness when the choice lay between righteousness and war. In 1776 Washington and his associates scorned the advice of the peace party, and went to war for the freedom of our people. In 1861 Abraham Lincoln and his associates scorned the advice and importunity of the peace people, heedless whether these peace people gave the advice they did give because of timidity or because of a twisted sentimentality. They plunged this country into the most terrible struggle the world had seen since the close of the Napoleonic wars; and thereby they perpetuated the Union and abolished slavery and rendered inestimable services to mankind. In 1898 this country disregarded the cries of the peace people and of those who responded to the throb of the money nerve, and warred with Spain. During the immediately preceding years of international peace, over a million lives of men, women, and children had been sacrificed in Cuba, because here at home the peace people had their way and America did not interfere. Then America did interfere, and, at the cost of considerably less than three thousand lives, all told, permanently stopped the dreadful system of destruction which was gradually reducing Cuba to the level of Hayti. If we had not interfered, probably at least a couple of million more lives would have been lost while good persons prattled of peace and arbitration. By the loss of each thousand lives we averted a million deaths; and the lives lost were all of men, and the deaths averted would have been largely those of women and children. As in 1776 and 1861, so in 1898 we put righteousness above peace; and therefore we obtained both, while if we had shirked our duty we should ultimately have lost both. Cuba and Porto Rico and Panama have enjoyed peace and prosperity, the Panama Canal is being dug, and the Philippines are progressing as never before, because in 1898 we refused to listen to the timid and short-sighted apostles of ease and of slothful avoidance of duty, and dared to play the part of the just man armed.

The proposed treaties with Great Britain and France are avowedly entered into as models to be followed in making similar treaties with all other nations, and what I have to say is said, not with reference to England or France, but with reference to the proposal of having treaties like these with all nations. We already have two sets of arbitration treaties: one the convention between the United States and almost all other civilized powers for the pacific settlement of international disputes, and the other the arbitration conventions between the United States and Great Britain, France, and various other nations. The latter are not important, but they are better than the proposed treaties would be if unamended, because, though they promise but little, they make no false pretenses, and they specifically announce that we will not arbitrate questions affecting our vital interest or independence or honor. The former is an excellent treaty, and it is a curious commentary upon the ignorance of the professional peace advocates that they actually do not know that this general international peace convention, which was proclaimed by the President on February 28, 1910, is far more effective for preserving peace than the proposed treaties would be even if they were ratified. For example, in this convention the contracting parties, including England, the United States, Germany, Japan, France, and Russia, solemnly agree to do all they can to insure the pacific settlement of all international difficulties, agree to have recourse to the mediation of friendly powers in case of disagreement or dispute before an appeal

to arms, and, moreover, what is more important, agree that one or more powers, strangers to the dispute, shall, on their own initiative, have the right, before or during the dispute, before war or during war, to offer their good offices for mediation, and that the exercise of this right can never be regarded by either party as an unfriendly act. They agree to adopt international commissions of inquiry in disputes of an international nature, and they explicitly recognize arbitration as the proper method of settling them where diplomacy has failed, and they maintain the permanent court of arbitration for this purpose at The Hague.

The proposed arbitration treaty is defective, in the first place, because it is not straightforward. It sets forth that all "justiciable" matters shall be arbitrated. The language both of the opponents and the defenders of the treaty shows that even among our own people, and before a cause for applying the treaty has arisen, there is hopeless confusion as to what "justiciable" means. Such being the case, it can be imagined how useless would be the effort to define "justiciable" when a serious conflict had actually arisen, and blood was up and passion high. The wording of the treaty is so loose, it so lacks explicitness, as to allow one set of its advocates to announce that it binds us to arbitrate everything, and another set to say that under it we would not have to arbitrate anything we did not wish to. Now, no moral movement is permanently helped by hypocrisy. Does the proposal in the treaties, if entered into with various nations, bind us to arbitrate the Monroe Doctrine, the Platt Amendment with Cuba, the payment of State bonds to European bondholders, the question whether various European countries are entitled to the same concessions that Canada is to receive under the reciprocity agreement, the right of other foreign nations to interfere in Panama, our own right to exclude any immigrants whom we choose to exclude? If these questions arose, I am sure our representatives would, privately or publicly, inform foreign powers (and indeed would have to inform foreign powers) that the American people would never abide by an agreement to arbitrate them; in which case the only proper course to follow is that followed by the Senate Committee, and to say in honest fashion that there are certain questions which this Nation will not arbitrate at the dictation of an outside body. Critics of the Senate in this matter talk as if it had "usurped" a "right," in reality the Senate has merely performed a duty. Most men of knowledge, who are willing to think, know perfectly well that this country would not, as a matter of fact, keep an agreement to arbitrate all questions of vital honor and interest, even though it were so unwise as to make it; and it is a wicked thing to put us in the position of promising what will not, and cannot, be performed. In such a matter the indulgence of false pretense in the present would with absolute certainty be followed by the breaking of faith in the future. Of course, passing the treaty in the proposed form would not be as bad as leaving the Canal unfortified, and refusing to keep up the navy—the public servants who have gone wrong in these respects have shown themselves both unfit and unfaithful public servants—but it would be a very bad thing to do, it would be discreditable to this country, and it would be an obstacle in the path of peace. *General* arbitration treaties under the best circumstances can only be promises; they appeal especially to sentimentalists, who are never safe advisers, and their importance is usually exaggerated to a ludicrous degree; the really important thing is the practical application of the principle to *specific* instances. The successful application of the principle of arbitration to the controversy between ourselves and Great Britain, settled at The Hague in the summer of 1910, was of high consequence; and Mr. Root, our special representative, rendered a real and great service to the country by what he then advised before the Hague court, at the cost of many weary, arduous months. This disinterested, unpaid, and most laborious and important service, the peace advocates, and our people generally, never properly understood or appreciated, and they never felt properly grateful to the man who rendered it. Such work, which represents the reduction of theory to practice, is more important than the negotiation of any general arbitration treaty, which

must always and of necessity represent merely the public announcement of a theory which it is hoped can be reduced to practice. Even a general arbitration treaty, however, can do real good, if so framed as to be workable, so that it shall not attempt too much, and may actually accomplish what is attempted. But a general arbitration treaty like the one now proposed, avowedly designed as a model to be followed by similar treaties with all nations, which is so loosely drawn that it seems to promise everything, and may or may not mean anything, will either be entirely ineffectual or else can only work mischief.

The fatally objectionable feature of the proposed treaty is the clause providing that the Joint High Commission, which may be composed exclusively of "nationals" of the two countries, but which also may be composed exclusively of foreigners, may, by unanimous vote, or by a vote of all but one of its members, determine that any given question whatever must be arbitrated. It is difficult to characterize this provision truthfully without seeming to be offensive. Merely to speak of it as silly comes far short of saying what should be said. It is arguable that in certain cases either of the two component parts of the treaty-making power, the President or the Senate, should delegate to the other, for certain purposes, the power of exclusive action. But no sound argument can be made for permitting both the President and the Senate to delegate to outsiders, possibly to foreigners, the exercise of a fundamental and vital power. The details of carrying into effect a great and far-reaching policy can appropriately be delegated; but the elected servants of the people betray the interest of the people if they shirk the duty of themselves deciding what that policy shall be. It would be quite proper to delegate to the Joint High Commission many subordinate functions; but the high, the supreme function of deciding whether a question is of such vital importance to the country that it is or is not arbitrable, cannot with propriety be delegated to any outsider by either the President or the Senate. They are elected to perform exactly the vital duties implied in such decisions. If a President, after consulting with his Constitutional advisers, the Senate, could not make up his own mind about such a vital question, and had to have it made up for him by outsiders—possibly foreigners, and certainly not responsible to the people—it would be proof positive that he was not fit to hold the exalted position to which he had been elected. A President unfit to make such a decision himself, and willing to have somebody else make it for him, would also be unfit to perform any of the really important duties of the Presidency.

The majority of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, through Senator Lodge, has submitted an excellent report on the proposed treaty, recommending that the objectionable clause be stricken out. This report contends, as I believe justly, that to ratify the treaties in their present shape would tend to breed disputes which might readily bring about war, because it would encourage foreign nations to open questions which, when we were actually faced with them, we neither could nor would arbitrate. For instance, if a great military power attempted, directly or indirectly, to get possession of such a strategic position as St. Thomas on the Atlantic side of our ocean frontier, or of Magdalena Bay on the Pacific side, this Nation, if alive to its vital interests, would instantly forbid the transaction. Yet this is the exact kind of question which an arbitral court, having regard only for what may be construed as "justiciable," might very probably decide against us; and the ratification of the treaties in their proposed form—indeed, the mere fact that they have been seriously considered—might invite foreign powers to open just such questions.

The majority of the Committee have expressed their views through the report submitted by Senator Lodge, which it is earnestly to be hoped that the Senate will adopt. It would also be an excellent thing for the Senate to adopt, in addition, and not as a substitute, the resolution presented by Senator Root on behalf of the minority of the Committee. This minority report is seemingly designed with the idea of showing more apparent favor to the treaty than is shown by the majority of the Committee; but in actual fact it

would be impossible to devise a more striking condemnation of the treaty in its proposed form than that thus furnished by the men who are painfully anxious to go to the utmost limit in its support that their consciences will permit. Mr. Root, in his "views of a minority," says: "There are some questions of national policy and conduct which no nation can submit to the decision of any one else, just as there are some questions of personal conduct which every man must decide for himself." Exactly! This is a wholesome truth stated in straightforward and manly fashion. Unfortunately, it is a truth which the proposed treaty does not recognize. In the endeavor to seem to avoid amending the treaty, and yet not to permit its unamended passage in such shape as to threaten humiliation and disaster to our people, the able New York Senator has hit upon the device of construing it—in a sense directly opposite to its obvious meaning—by a clause in the resolution of consent to the ratification stating "that the treaty does not authorize the submission to arbitration of any question which depends upon or involves the maintenance of the traditional attitude of the United States concerning American questions or other purely governmental policy." This is admirable; it precisely inverts the position taken in the proposed treaty; and if adopted, in addition to the amendment proposed by Senator Lodge on behalf of the majority of the Committee, it would leave the treaty in a form compatible with the preservation of our National self-respect.

We, the people of the United States, cannot and will not surrender to outsiders the power to determine whether or not we are fit to decide for ourselves what are our vital needs, and what are the policies proper for meeting these needs. In other words, Uncle Sam does not intend to wrong any one, but neither does he intend to bind himself, if his pocket is picked, his house burglarized, or his face slapped, to "arbitrate" with the wrong-doer; and as long as he does not intend so to bind himself, it would be offensive hypocrisy for him to say that he will so bind himself.

The resolutions proposed by Senator Root and by Senator Lodge are in reality equally strong in their repudiation of that indefensible clause of the proposed treaty which would bind the Nation to arbitrate all questions, even though to do so would be ruinous to our interests, if an outside body decides that they are arbitrable. Senator Lodge's proposal is to strike out the mischievous clause. Senator Root leaves it in, but provides by resolution that we are not to be bound by it; and, moreover, excludes from the operation of the treaty "all purely governmental policies," which, quite properly, leaves the clause meaningless and ineffective, as "governmental policies" may include anything and everything, and we are left to be the judges as to what they are. Mr. Lodge's amendment is perhaps a trifle franker, but Mr. Root's is in some ways even more effective, and both should be adopted.

It is our duty, *so far as is now possible*, so far as human nature in the present-day world will permit, to try to provide peaceful substitutes for war as a method for the settlement of international disputes. But progress in this direction is merely hindered by the folly that believes in putting peace above righteousness; while it is of course even worse to pretend so to believe. The greatest service this Nation can render to righteousness is to behave with scrupulous justice to other nations, and yet to keep ready to hold its own if necessary. Our chief usefulness to humanity rests on our combining power with high purpose. Power undirected by high purpose spells calamity; and high purpose by itself is utterly useless if the power to put it into effect is lacking. In the history of our country the peace advocates who treat peace as more than righteousness will never be, and never have been, of service, either to it or to mankind. The true lovers of peace, the men who have really helped onward the movement for peace, have been those who followed, even though afar off, in the footsteps of Washington and Lincoln, and stood for righteousness as the supreme end of National life. Only by acting on these principles, only by following in the footsteps of these great Americans of the past, can we of the present generation effectively work for and secure the peace of righteousness.