

Pamphlet

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HISTORY OF

The

WOMEN'S INTERNATIONAL LEAGUE
FOR PEACE AND FREEDOM



U. S. SECTION

1915 - 1940



JANE ADDAMS

Pamphlet

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WOMEN'S INTERNATIONAL LEAGUE
FOR PEACE AND FREEDOM

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Women's International League

U. S. SECTION

The Women's International League for Peace and Freedom grew out of the anxiety and strain of the early days of the World War. It began in an International Congress of Women, called by British, Dutch, and Belgian women to protest against war, meeting at The Hague from April 28 to May 1, 1915. Jane Addams, the chairman of the newly formed Woman's Peace Party in America, was asked to preside. Delegates representing twelve countries, including seven of the belligerent nations, surmounted difficulties and braved public opinion to attend. The forty-seven United States delegates were detained on their boat for three days by British authorities, and finally landed only two hours before the Congress opened; while most of the English delegation were caught by the cessation of traffic on the North Sea, and never arrived.

The delegates organized The Women's International Committee for Permanent Peace, consisting of not more than five women from each nation, with Miss Addams as International Chairman and with headquarters in Amsterdam. This was to become, in 1919, the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom.

At the 1915 Congress a series of resolutions was passed, which offered a statesmanlike foundation for a treaty of peace; they attracted the interest of President Wilson, and many of their ideas reappeared in his famous "fourteen points" (speech to Congress, January 8, 1918). Examples are the discrediting of secret treaties, the denial of the right of conquest, the right of a population to decide on its own government. Nor did the influence of the Congress end in theories, for these same principles were carried over into the Covenant of the League of Nations. The Congress also advocated a "permanent Council of Conciliation and investigation" and a "permanent Court of Justice." This move toward arbitration had its effect in the Covenant of the League, in the World Court, and in the Kellogg-Briand Pact.

Another resolution made by this first Congress is particularly interesting in the light of subsequent accomplishment. "The International Congress of Women, advocating universal disarmament and realizing that it can only be secured by international agreement, urges, as a step to this end, that all countries should, by such an international agreement, take over the manufacture of arms and munitions of war and should control all international traffic in the same. It sees in the private profits accruing from the great armament factories a powerful hindrance to the abolition of war."

The resolutions were presented by delegations of women to government leaders of fourteen countries, both neutral and belligerent. The most urgent suggestion was one for a Conference of Neutral Nations, sitting continuously to seek possible terms for peace and to present them to the belligerents as occasion offered. This proposal was welcomed by most of the fourteen nations.

During the next months the women made every effort to bring such a conference into being. The unwillingness of the United States government to call it or even to participate was the only obstacle; but one which proved insurmountable. Next an unofficial conference of individual neutrals was planned. This actually opened in Stockholm, in January, 1916, financed by Mr. Henry Ford; but its appeals were in vain, and after thirteen months it passed out of existence when Mr. Ford withdrew his support.

In America, the Woman's Peace Party held its first annual meeting in January, 1916. It had been organized one year before at a mass meeting in Washington. The impetus had been the war-protest lecture of Mrs. Pethick Lawrence of England and Mme. Rosika Schwimmer of Hungary, who helped crystallize the pacifistic impulse felt by many Americans at that time. The new Woman's Peace Party had grown quickly, attracting during its first year about forty thousand members, and showing tremendous activity in peace propaganda. At the 1916 annual meeting it voted to become the United States section of the Women's International Committee for Permanent Peace. The demands for a convention of neutral powers and for the nationalization of armaments were common to the platform of the Party and the resolutions of the Committee.

Other 1915 planks of the Woman's Peace Party were: A "Concert of Nations" to supersede "Balance of Power;" the removal of the economic causes of war; and the appointment by our government of a commission of men and women, with an adequate appropriation, to promote international peace. In 1916 there were added an opposition to compulsory military service; a recommendation for a joint commission to deal with United States-Oriental problems; and a statement of the principle that military protection for foreign investments should not be expected.

The next annual meeting was held eleven months later, in December of 1916. It took up the problems of minorities and the solutions which might be effected through the federal form of government; and also discussed the famines which were widespread in many countries, pointing out the direct connection of famine and war.

The whole of the year 1916 and the first months of 1917 were saddening, filled with unheeded protests by the Woman's Peace Party against the imperialism of the South American policy and against the change of feeling, both in the administration and at large, which led us into the World War. When the country was at war, nothing was left but even vainer protests, as for instance against conscription without a referendum, or on behalf of the conscientious objectors. The National Board, at its first meeting after America entered the war, declared to the branches: "We have avoided all criticism of our Government as to the declaration of war, and all activities that could be considered as obstructive in respect to the conduct of the war and this not as a counsel of prudence, but as a matter of principle."

In the same statement the work of the State Branches is described. Being in their work independent of the National Board, they had been following various lines, some in Red Cross work, food conservation, and other war relief efforts; others in protecting civil liberties; others in lectures and classes on international justice.

At the annual meeting of the Woman's Peace Party in December, 1917, continued work was urged for a League of Nations and for substituting law for war. "Let those of opposed opinions be loyal to the highest that they know, and let each understand that the other may be equally patriotic." With this spirit the peace-lovers went forward into the passions and the bleak hatred of the war months.

When peace came, and the Peace Conference was announced to meet in Paris, plans were upset. The Women's International Committee for Permanent Peace had expected to meet at the same time and place as the treaty negotiators; but since Paris was not neutral territory and women from the Central Powers could not come there, Zurich was hastily decided on.

The Zurich Congress passed unanimously a strong resolution on the famine and the food blockade, asking that the inter-allied machinery already in existence be used for peace, through the immediate distribution of necessities. No action was taken by the Paris Conference on this plan.

When the Treaty of Versailles was made public the Zurich Congress was in actual session and was, we believe, the first body to protest the terms. Protest it did, in no uncertain language. Its series of resolutions began as follows:

"This International Congress of Women expresses its deep regret that the Terms of Peace proposed at Versailles should so seriously violate the principles upon which alone a just and lasting peace can be secured, and which the democracies of the world had come to accept.

"By guaranteeing the fruits of the secret treaties to the conquerors, the Terms of Peace tacitly sanction secret diplomacy, deny the principles of self-determination, recognize the right of the victors to the spoils of war, and create all over Europe discords and animosities, which can only lead to future wars."

The diplomats were patient though unmoved. The Allied press was bitterly critical, for few people at that time saw the danger in the Versailles Treaty. Only after a year or two did the views now common begin to develop.

Suggestions on the League of Nations were made to the Conference, but also without effect. The Zurich Congress could not approach unity on the question of whether to advocate the League, as then set up, and so no position was officially taken.

Many women told the Congress of their experiences in the war, or in the revolutions which several countries had undergone. There was no embarrassment, much less bitterness, in these exchanges between recent "enemies."

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The name of the organization became The Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, and the headquarters was changed to Geneva to be near the League of Nations. Emily Greene Balch was elected International Secretary and Jane Addams, who had been International Chairman, was made International President. She continued in this office until her resignation in 1929, when she was appointed Honorary President.

A few months later the Woman's Peace Party held its annual meeting and voted to become the United States section of the reorganized body. From here on this brief outline will confine itself chiefly to the United States section. The story is one of unremitting labor for many principles, and of translating them into governmental action. The most important of these we shall try to trace.

In April of 1920 the United States Women's International League met again, and found itself at variance on the League of Nations question—that is, on whether to support the existing League. This continued for some years, the W. I. L. declaring its hope for “a League of Nations which renounces economic and military coercion.” Finally, at the annual meeting in 1927, recognizing the League as likely to continue in its present form for some time, the W. I. L. voted that it “desires to see the United States enter the League of Nations, providing only that it does so with the understanding that the United States is exempt from any obligation to . . . join in exerting military pressure.”

Points set forth in 1915 and still maintained by the W. I. L. include: education of youth for peace; measures to remove the economic causes of war; total and universal disarmament; pacific settlement of international disputes and establishment of legal machinery for such settlement. In 1920 we first enunciated our stand against military training, and in 1922 against lynching.

The aftermath of the war brought many calls for help: the terrible famine in Europe; and in the United States the fever of deportations, the conscientious objectors and other political prisoners still in jail, the curtailment of constitutional liberties. Pan-American relations demanded attention, for American imperialism in Haiti and San Domingo still continued, and Mexico was in the turmoil of a new government.

The third International Congress in 1921, held in Vienna, discussed education and the problems of minorities and passed a resolution that, since class struggles as well as national conflicts were evil, the members should strive “to transform the economic system in the direction of social justice.” This declaration received much sensational comment and many wild accusations.

The Washington Conference on Limitation of Armaments, in 1922, enlisted the energies of the W. I. L., as of American pacifists generally. Apparently their influence was felt by the American delegates. Later in this year a W. I. L. Emergency Conference met at The Hague, calling for revision of the Treaties and for an international economic conference. It is interesting to note that the French section protested with the others the Poincare policy of French occupation of German territory.

In 1923 much work was done in the United States to spread information on the provisions of the National Defense Act. An analysis of this Act was published by the W. I. L. and widely noticed.

The following year Washington was chosen as the seat of the fourth International Congress, to which delegates came from twenty-two European countries. At the close the European women were sent on a tour as far as St. Louis in a train called the Pax Special. They visited twenty-three cities holding meetings and making speeches. The fifth International Congress took place in Dublin in 1926, adopting an excellent statement of objectives.

During 1925 and 1926 especial attention was given in the United States to the problem of economic and financial imperialism. We were successful in 1925 in having drafted and introduced into both houses of Congress a resolution aimed against economic imperialism (Sen. Con. Res. No. 22, 1925, and Sen. Con. Res. No. 15, 1927.) This bill was especially devised to prevent the United States from becoming involved on behalf of citizens' investments in foreign countries.

The W. I. L.'s standing protest on the Haitian situation found concrete expression when, in 1926, we sent to Haiti a committee of six—including two colored women—to study conditions there. Their recommendations were pre-

sented to President Coolidge and were published under the title "Occupied Haiti." They advised particularly that an official inquiry be authorized, and subsequently, under President Hoover, such an inquiry was undertaken. The findings of this official commission, which coincided closely with those of the W. I. L., resulted in the withdrawal of the marines and new treaty arrangements.

The W. I. L. policy of combatting imperialism has found additional expression in action in regard to Cuba, Nicaragua, and Liberia, with important results.

Professor Francis B. Sayre of the Harvard Law School, who was later appointed Assistant Secretary of State by President Franklin D. Roosevelt, was asked by the W. I. L. in 1927 to draft a model arbitration treaty. This was widely circulated by our group, laying the foundation for the understanding of the Kellogg-Briand Pact. Mr. Sayre's model was actually being circulated six months before M. Briand made his proposal which led to the Peace Pact. In the same year thirty thousand signatures were collected, asking President Coolidge to initiate the treaties for the outlawry of war. At the presentation of these to the President he announced his intention of beginning conversations with M. Briand on the subject of an outlawry of war treaty. The W. I. L. continued pressing this matter until it was finally brought to a successful conclusion in 1929, with ratification by the Senate of the Kellogg-Briand Pact.

It was in 1927 also that a threatened war with Mexico was stopped in the nick of time, our army turned back from its journey to the border, by the concerted protests of pacifists all over the country.

An interim Congress met in Honolulu in the summer of 1928. The following winter the W. I. L. helped in the work that brought about the cutting of the cruiser-building program from seventy-one to fifteen, and influenced the abandonment of two imperialistic loans, the Manchurian loan to Japan and the Cumberland proposal for a loan to Nicaragua.

The Sixth Congress, meeting in Prague in 1929, was marked by the resignation of Miss Addams as International President and the appointment of an executive committee to succeed her. Miss Addams was elected and remained until her death, Honorary International President.

The W. I. L. had long advocated a general disarmament conference. In 1932 this finally came to pass in Geneva. To this Conference pacifists brought over eight million signatures on petitions for disarmament. Of these, six million, for total and universal disarmament, had been collected by W. I. L. workers, by ceaseless activity in many countries. In America a Peace Caravan started at Los Angeles, traveled ten thousand miles in a progress across the country, holding meetings and gathering signatures, and finally arrived in Washington with a great escort of cars. The East Room of the White House was crowded with women from many states as bundle after bundle of petitions was passed up to President Hoover. The petitions were later taken to Geneva for the opening of the Disarmament Conference.



Jane Addams with Mrs. Franklin D. Roosevelt and Mrs. Hannah Clothier Hull at the dinner held in her honor on May 2, 1935, in Washington, D. C., commemorating the twentieth anniversary of the League.

While this Conference was in process, the W. I. L.'s own seventh International Congress convened in Grenoble, according to the now established policy of holding a session every three years. In September, 1934, an emergency Congress met in Zurich at which the statement of aims was revised and enlarged.

In the meantime, the continuous effort of nineteen years to find a way of curbing the private profits and traffic in munitions had come to a climax. In January, 1934, Senator Gerald P. Nye agreed to introduce a resolution into Congress to investigate the manufacture of armaments. After the appointment of the committee to conduct the hearings, the W. I. L. put all of its power into nation-wide publicity and support of the investigation. 1934 also marks the passage of the bill to give independence to the Philippines. Since 1921 the League had worked for such a step.

Efforts of peace workers to bring the United States into the World Court seemed about to reach success in 1935; but after a hard-fought battle the plan was defeated. This failure, disappointing though it was, left a renewed determination to carry on the work for the court.

The League celebrated in 1935 its twenty years of activity. At an around-the-world broadcast from Washington on May 3rd, ambassadors and statesmen paid tribute to the League and to one of its founders, Jane Addams. The addresses which honored her, and her reply linked in a few minutes the capitals of five nations as the speakers took up the program in Great Britain, France, Russia, Japan and the United States, a new experiment in international hookup which proved a complete success.

Three weeks later Jane Addams died, her generous life fulfilled. The stone above her grave reads thus:

JANE ADDAMS

HULL HOUSE

WOMEN'S INTERNATIONAL LEAGUE

—a fitting memorial of a spirit that expressed itself in action and courageous service.

Aware of rising international tensions, the W. I. L. in 1936-'37 cooperated in the two year Emergency Peace Campaign. It also joined with some forty national organizations in setting up the National Peace Conference. This body adopts a wide common program into which the specialized aims of the different groups fit but commits no organization without its specific approval.

The ninth International Congress met in 1937 at Luhacovice, Czecho-Slovakia, with the cordial cooperation of the Czech government, local officials and business organizations. A large group attended from the United States, meeting there leading women from all parts of Europe. Since then the U. S. Section has assisted with plans to give aid and hospitality to many of these same persons, as well as others, now political refugees from the land of their birth.

Appeals from members in Puerto Rico led to a two-day conference in Washington on March 8-9, 1940, on the whole question of United States policy in this island. The speeches were sufficiently important for printing and public distribution and were a continuation of our work through the years for better relations with Nicaragua, Haiti, Mexico, Cuba, and other Latin American countries.

The furious outburst of European war in September, 1939, has not surprised us—it has only filled us with sorrow. George Lansbury, famous English peace leader, said shortly before his death, "Some day they will know that we are right." We continue to strive towards peace in many lines of endeavor, leaving no way untried that may help toward the beautiful, the distant, the inevitable, goal. As Jane Addams wrote in "Peace and Bread," nothing could be worse than the fear that one had given up too soon, had left one effort unexpended which might have helped the world.

All who are interested in our program are invited to join the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom. Send \$1.00 and your name to the National Office, 1734 'F' St. N. W., Washington, D. C.