CONDITIONS OF WORLD PEACE

I

DEEPER CAUSES OF THE WAR

I thank you for the cordiality of your reception, and I again assure you that it is a very great pleasure to me to be here to-night, in Houston. It is the first time that I have had the opportunity of visiting your great state. I hope that it will not be the last.

To-night I propose to deliver to you the first of two lectures which deal with the subject of the conditions of world peace. The two lectures are interdependent, and what I shall say to-night will not be complete without what I hope to say to-morrow.

I take it that there is no man or woman who realizes what the last Great War meant in human suffering, in human agony, in human tears, who does not hope for a peaceful world in the future. It may be that that hope is vain. It may be that peace is not possible to the human race, but it must be that all men and women who understand the horror of the last war, or who can foresee the horrors that another war would bring, shall seek to make peace, lasting peace, as certain as human ingenuity and human will can make it.

It therefore behooves us, who are interested in public

1 The second course of public lectures on the Godwin Foundation of the Rice Institute, delivered by His Excellency, the Right Honorable Sir Auckland Geddes, British Ambassador to the United States, at the City Auditorium of Houston, May 12 and 13, 1921.
affairs that we should examine into the condition which would make world peace possible and world peace stable. The best way to approach that is, in my belief, to examine the state of the world before the Great War, to see, if we can, how it was that war came about, and then to see if it be possible to avoid a recurrence of the conditions which made the war.

I have read, I have heard many explanations, as to the cause of the Great War which lasted from 1914 to 1918. Many of them, I agree, emphasize real contributory causes of the war, but many of the causes that one hears ascribed do not seem to me to have had much to do with the actual outbreak of war. I would like to-night to cast back rather further into the past than most of those who have explained the causes of the war have done, to see if we can discover why a world superficially prosperous, a world superficially well doing and well being, should suddenly have been seized by a great suicidal mania and plunged into a struggle which has left it a very much less pleasant place to live in. You here, in this vast young state, the people of these United States, were dragged into that war which began for reasons altogether outside your boundaries. Some of the reasons that brought you into the war were in being, were growing, had an existence and a momentum of their own, long before this state was founded, before even the United States had a separate national existence. Before the war, in the year 1913 or early part of 1914, the state of Europe was extraordinarily interesting. The whole of European life from 1900 on was marked by a steadily increasing instability; it did not at the time pass unnoticed by the watchers on the towers of national life, but it passed unnoticed by the great mass of the peoples, whose view in these things must always be more restricted; and that instability in European
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life came as the inevitable result of a process which had been proceeding for many years.

Europe, in 1815, ended a period of struggle, and ended it exhausted; but one little country, placed in a group of islands off the northwest coast of Europe, was less exhausted than the others. It was heavily in debt, it is true, but full of energy and with its man power almost intact. Britain, during the Napoleonic Wars, although fighting to a limited extent on land, had made her great effort at sea, and that effort had left her Mistress of the Oceans, commanding the trade routes of the world. That country was only at the very beginning of its development, and three great new factors which had been gathering force and gathering power during the Napoleonic Wars were at the disposal of Britain. These three new factors were the use of steam as a motive power, the use of improved iron, and later steel, for building machinery for constructing great carriers, and the third factor, at that time still in its infancy, was the use of credit and the machinery of modern finance. With those powers placed in its hand during the early part of last century, and with a steadily growing momentum as the century passed, Britain developed a vast industrial system and became, in the words of one of her own leaders, "the workshop of the world." Her ports grew. Her trade developed. She became a distributing center for the goods of all the non-European ports of the world, to Europe, and of all Europe, to all the other ports of the world. Her power developed. Her strength grew. Her population multiplied, but they no longer followed the old traditional paths. Instead of working on the farms and on the land they were engaged in the new power-driven factories. Their demands became enormous. The cotton that you grew was gathered together and swept across the ocean to the mills of Lancashire. The
food that you grew was gathered together and swept across the ocean to feed the teeming population of the English cities. Soon other nations noticed the gathering strength that this industrial development gave, marked the increasing wealth that this industrial development brought, and they followed in the path of industrial development. In Germany, in Italy, to a small extent in Russia, to some extent in France, to some extent in Switzerland, to some extent in the Scandinavian countries, this industrial expansion commenced; but of the European countries that were not in the movement at the beginning, the industrial development was most marked in Germany, and the system which the British economists of that day approved and recommended was, that the food and the raw materials should be grown overseas, manufactured into finished products in England, and then sent abroad to pay for more food and for more raw materials. The population of each of these countries that became industrialized multiplied, grew, increased to such an extent that it was no longer able to find its nourishment from its own soil. Toward the turn of the century a process which had been under way for several years, for many years before, unnoticed, unappreciated, began to have an effect upon this system which Europe had developed. You began to develop a vast industrial life. You, America, began to devote a large part of the energies of your population to industrial activity; your markets were closed or partially closed by the protection of high tariffs to the products of the European factories, but all the time the population engaged in industrial work in Europe, more especially in Germany, was increasing and increasing and increasing.

Now, it might be said that each of us who is breathing in this room at the present moment is affecting the air for all the other people in the room. It is true. As you breathe
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it makes it more difficult for me to keep on speaking. That is not your fault. That is a necessary condition of a meeting of this sort. Exactly in the same way, entirely within your rights, when you imposed the tariff upon imported manufactured goods and stiffened and stiffened the tariff, entirely within the exercise of your own proper rights, you changed the conditions of life in Europe. There was no reason why you should not. There was no reason why Europe should not have expected you to do so, but the fact was that as your tariff was raised the conditions changed in Europe, and as time went on the great industrial states in Europe, which were in a position quite unlike yours, because they were not able to feed their own population from their own soil while you were still exporting food in increasing quantities, were forced to look around for markets where they could sell goods to countries from which their food could come. And to you, who have had no part or lot in such a time, the anxieties of the statesmen of those countries are almost inconceivable.

Now it so happened that Germany had fought a war with France in 1870 and 1871. It so happened that the men who had fought in her army had always looked forward to the day when France would seek to reverse the decision of that older war, and had built up a vast military machine which would prevent France striking at their country; and it so happened that by the time the profound economic difficulties which were affecting Europe in the years before the late war began to make their impress upon the minds of the people, these soldiers in Germany were growing old. Men who had fashioned the greatest military machine the world had ever seen, men whose whole lives had been devoted to making the German army, men whose whole souls were imbedded in that army, these men were
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growing old, and the chance of using that army in their lifetime appeared to be growing dim. Then, as the difficulties began to affect Germany, these men said, "Here is the way to break through the circle which impedes our development, which hinders our national life. Here is the weapon ready at your hand. Crush France; sweep back Russia; go to the Black Sea. Here is a weapon the like of which the world has never seen." And Germany was prepared to listen to that talk because she was soaked in a sort of perverted Darwinism which made her believe that the life of nations was as Darwin had pictured the life of beasts, a life of struggle in which only the fittest could survive. Her philosophers had taught her that. Her scientists had made her believe it. Her soldiers told her it was true, and she seized upon a weapon that lay to her hand to cut her way out of a real economic difficulty that was of no human being's deliberate contriving. The situation surely was not an easy one, but do not forget that it was partly the result of your perfectly legitimate and proper national action, of imposing tariffs upon imported manufactured goods; that it was partly due to the outward pressure of British manufacturers seeking markets and again markets, and having to find markets as the price of national life. Through the years that had passed Britain had been transformed from an agricultural country into an industrial country, unable to support its population during the working weeks, only producing enough food to feed its people during the holidays of the year, half of Saturday and Sunday and a few bank holidays, and for all the rest of the year dependent upon food bought in markets across the seas; not bought with gold, for there was not sufficient gold to export, but bought with goods manufactured in England and sold in the overseas markets. And Germany was finding
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the same pinch, the same difficulty; and then, ignoring the fact that the difficulty was economic, turned and said, "Here, here is the weapon which will cut our way out."

There were many contributory causes. There was a feeling of soreness in Germany over the result of the Agadir incident, which you may remember, when Germany tried to secure a foothold in Morocco. There was a belief in Germany that she was being hemmed around by malevolent states intent upon her destruction. Whereas all that was forming around her was a union of states which realized that Germany was treading the paths of madness and might break out like a wild beast at any moment. But at the back of everything, behind the war fever of the German soldiers, behind the militarism of Germany, behind the counsel given by the soldiers of Germany, behind all the ostensible things that could be ascribed as the cause of the war, there lay this extraordinary abnormality in the economic condition of Europe: western Europe had ceased to be self-supporting, had become dependent upon the markets overseas for the bare necessities of life, not for luxuries, but for the bare necessities of life, for the corn and for the meat to keep life in the bodies of their peoples. Her population had expanded, had grown; her cities had multiplied, and something else had happened: her people were no longer the same sort of people mentally that they had been in the old days. The population was really small in pre-Napoleonic days. Civilization was in the main a rural and agricultural civilization with a comparatively small number of great towns and a great number of small towns; but though there were cities such as London, Paris, and Vienna, in the main the people were in contact with the country, in contact with the open air, with the open-air life, with the growth of food, with the changing of the seasons; and again, in the main, they lived
very much in the same district where their forefathers had lived, where their homes were, where they, in their turn, established new homes, and although a few people went away overseas to found new dominions, in the main, in those days before Napoleon, the population stayed very much where it had always been.

Then came the application of power, of steam to the factories; the use of steel; and the enormous expansion of business, made possible by the scientific use of credit, and the people were drawn like iron filings by the power of a magnet into the cities; away from the country-sides their forebears had known, away from the open air into the slums, crowded almost beyond endurance, into little houses that stood back to back, facing narrow lanes. And the slums of the cities of Europe, of the manufacturing cities of Europe, increased and grew and multiplied, and the people of the slums, hard-working, well-doing, worthy people many of them, held down by small wages, gradually came to realize how hollow had been the promise of prosperity that drew them from the country to the towns. Still, as the economic pressure increased, as the industrial system developed, the movement of the population became more and more marked, so that the young men would spend a month or so in this city and a month or so, perhaps a year, in that, and then a month or two in another city, and so on. The family ties were broken; and if the men married they often had to leave their wives, and perhaps their children, behind, never to see them again, and the whole system as it developed began to outrage that most deep, most powerful of all the human instincts, the instinct of parenthood. Women employed in the mills, men employed in the factories, at the furnaces, at the forges, finding employment in city after city, were too often without the ties of family, without
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these strongest of all anchors, the hands of little children clutching at their knees. The men and the women of Europe that were developing under the industrial system as it reached its pre-war height had not only those influences working upon them which their forefathers had not had, but they were also able, better than their forebears had ever been, to understand the nature of the conditions which affected them, for they were the first generation of educated workers, instructed workers. Compulsory education had swept across the country and seized upon these men and women while they were boys and girls in the villages, in the slums of the cities, wherever it might be that their lot was cast, and had taught them to read and had taught them to write, and in some measure, a considerable measure, had taught them to think, and they began to think of the conditions which surrounded them, the conditions which held them as in a vise.

Now, the German workers were perhaps better educated than those of any other European country. They were suffering from all the disabilities that affected these men and women, seized by the great industrial machine of Europe, forced to work here, to work there, and work wherever work was to be found, and no longer could the German Government rest certain that its people were loyal behind it; and added to the fear of the German Government about its economic position, added to the whisperings of the militarists, added to the incitements of the generals and the admirals, added to all of that, came the German Government's fear of the German populace that was thinking, that was realizing, that was beginning to say, "This life, from my youth to the day of my death, means for me nothing but work that might be the treadmill that leads to nothing except perhaps the birth of children who will follow me upon
the treadmill. This life is not worth living.” That was an attitude of mind, new in Europe and not confined to Germany, which had a profound effect upon the moment of the coming of the war. The German Government believed that the days in which it could trust its people, unless it had led them victoriously through war, and through all the difficulties which encompassed them and ensnared their feet, were numbered. The German Government feared that if it did not lead its people then to war, when success seemed sure, and were forced to later, they might not answer. And so war came, caused by real economic difficulties which existed in the background, if one uses the word “cause” to mean the setting of the stage, the placing of everything in position, so that minds intent upon using a military machine could provoke the conflagration. There were real difficulties, difficulties which were produced by world-wide conditions and which were not the sole product of European life or activity. That does not mean that the war could not have been avoided. I believe that it could have been avoided if there had not been in Germany a party that was intent upon forcing war, but the conditions which made it possible for that party to produce war were, in my view, the conditions which had been developed by the application of steam and steel and credit to the development, to the fostering, of the industries of Europe. Out of that had grown these great, inflated populations, out of that had grown the great mass of the cities, out of that had grown the conditions in the slums, out of that had grown the steadily increasing and steadily strengthening contest for markets, and as the application of steam, of steel, of credit to manufacture extended outside Europe to the other lands of the world, the pressure became greater and greater, and
still more great, until the whole European situation had become unstable in a high degree.

Those of you who studied the war, who studied not so much the fluctuating battle-line where the bullets were fired and the shells exploded, but who studied the leadership, the national leadership in the war, will have noticed that the war tended to divide itself into two parts. The first part lasted from 1914 until toward the end of 1916, and during that time there was a great deal of wrangling about scraps of paper, about breaches of international law, about breaches of the laws of war. Everybody thought it worth while to stress such breaches strongly—and so it was. Germany's attitude in regard to the invasion of Belgium was indefensible, a monstrous position for a power that had undertaken to protect Belgium; but I ask you to notice what was stressed, up to the end of 1916, and also that although the German violation of Belgium was no more defensible in 1917 than it was in 1916, we heard little or nothing more about it. The whole meaning of the war as expressed by the leaders of the nations changed. It became a war for freedom. It was a war to crush militarism. It was a war to make the world safe for democracy. And toward the end those were the sole battle-cries, those were the things that the nations were fighting for. A profound change in point of view had taken place. Why? Because every great nation that was engaged in the war before you came in found that the conditions under which its working classes were living were such that they could not be regarded as permanent, and to maintain the enthusiastic support of the working classes for the prosecution of the war, was forced to realize that at the back of everything was a great economic question and a great social need. The war sprang as a tree springs from its soil, from the conditions created
by the industrial revolution. As that became realized, the position of the worker stood out more and more clearly, and the promises made by the national leaders in all good faith were, that after the war the governments would build a land fit for the men who had fought to live in. So it was that the war changed, from being a war to preserve treaties to a crusade—changed during the closing months of 1916 in its whole aspect, in its whole ideal. It changed from a war fought to preserve the integrity of Belgium, fought to preserve the sanctity of treaties, to a war fought to preserve democratic freedom, to preserve the interests of the wage-earners, to preserve, to improve, to change their lives. It was necessarily so. The very nature of the cause that lay at the back of everything in the war made that inevitable. Even as we lived through it, it was clear what was happening. In retrospect now that we are four years away, almost five years away, from those days at the end of 1916, it is clearer than ever that the war was the result, in the last analysis, of the conditions, the unstable conditions, created by the industrial revolution and by the great development of factory production, with all that that implies to men and women, to cities and to nations.

And now a large part of that old structure, that economic structure of Europe, has been torn down, is broken, shattered, disintegrated by the war. In some places, as in the cities of Russia, complete collapse has followed. In some cases the collapse is less complete. In others there are great industrial troubles as the process of readjustment proceeds; but no country in the world at the present moment is free from the effects of that vast struggle that took place on European soil and on the waters of the earth. There is no country that does not suffer. In Europe we find Russia, disintegrated; Germany, in difficulties; Italy, in
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great difficulties; France, which suffered so heavily in the war, lost so many men, saw so many of her richest territories and cities devastated, suffering still; northern countries of Europe all suffering; the British Isles, because of their industrialization, because of the extraordinary complexity of their economic organization, in some ways the most heavily hit of all the nations of Europe. In Asia we find conditions quite different from those in Europe, but still she is hit so hard that years will be required for her recovery. And you have all to remember that whereas Europe is fundamentally Christian, Asia fundamentally is non-Christian, and as a result of that partly, but partly as the result of long secular tradition, the Asiatic aspect of the present-world troubles is wholly different from that which we saw in Europe. The typical, untouched Asiatic country has a theory of government almost the exact reverse of that which obtains in Europe and here. Whereas the standard, typical European government to-day is essentially as democratic as yours is, the Asiatic governments, uncontaminated by European or American ideas, are essentially theocratic. The ruler rules because he rules. The proof that he has a right to rule is that he does rule. Might is right. Why? Because it is divine. Power is given by the gods to those whom the gods would favor. The theocratic idea of government lies at the back of all the natural Asiatic governments, and the key-note, let me repeat, is that might is right because it is divine, it is heaven sent; the power to rule, the power to compel, the power to be overlord comes from heaven or from whatever spot the particular gods involved choose to inhabit, and as they have given the power, the power must be obeyed. This is almost the exact opposite mental process to that which you find here or in Europe. Now, then, how much of Asia
was under European tutelage before the war? The whole of Siberia from the Ural Mountains to the Pacific, a vast tract of land which makes even the state of Texas look small; India, Indo-China, all under European tutelage, hundreds of millions of people, broadly speaking content because the rulers had evidently been sent by some god who wished it so. Now in the eyes of the ruled the rulers do not seem to be so much favored by the gods as they were. All is not going so well with these westerners as it used to go, and all is not going so well with the trade of this Asiatic country, and the result is that Asia seethes with questionings. "Have the gods withdrawn the favor from those old rulers? Has their power to maintain the prosperity of the country departed? Is a change coming?" are questions which agitate Asia. And as they agitate Asia they affect the whole economic situation in Asia. Profound as are the effects of the war in Europe, they are perhaps still more profound in Asia, and years will elapse before we know toward what end, into what channels, those effects will pour. The changes that are taking place in the mind of Asia are fundamental.

And this country—has it escaped the effect of the war? No. Can it escape? No. You have only got to look at the price to-day for cotton, the price for oil, the price for farm products, for manufactured goods, to see whether this country is escaping the effects of the war upon the markets of the world. This country and all countries in North America and in South America are like all the countries of Europe and all the countries of Asia in this, that they, too, feel the economic effect of the war though they do not all feel it equally. The whole world is affected, and that means that the whole world is concerned in the process of reconstruction and readjustment which has to go
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on during the years to come, a process of reconstruction and a process of readjustment which, if it be wisely led, will take account of those economic disorders from which the world suffered before the war, and which made the war a possibility, until German militarism, gone mad, made it a certainty.

The whole world is interested. No part of the world can escape. And, therefore, no part of the world that I can think of, unless it be the uninhabited polar ice-caps, is not vitally concerned in determining what conditions will make most certainly for world peace in the future.

Having analyzed to-night in some measure the conditions which made for world war, I hope to-morrow to have the opportunity of examining with you the conditions which will make for world peace.

AUCKLAND GEDDES.