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SECRET.

WAR CABINET.

G.T. 5815.

THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS.

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Memorandum by Mr. G.M. Barnes.

There is a sentence in the address of Mr. Asquith at Manchester with which I am in cordial agreement, namely that in which he pleads for allied understanding in regard to the practical aspect of the League of Nations.

Up to now such a league has been talked about only in rhetorical terms and I am afraid if we don't advance beyond that stage, when peace comes it will be lost sight of altogether, and the nations will begin again in the old bad way of preparing against one another for other wars. I have expressed that opinion many a time, publicly and privately. I find Mr. Asquith yesterday says that "The time has come when the best heads among the Allies who can be spared from combatant and administrative work might be assembled in conference to attack the practical side of the problem, upon the solution of which the future of mankind depends".

An Allied understanding, however, must be preceded by discussion on the part of each of the Allies, and some degree of clearness reached as to the views of each of the Allies. I would therefore suggest that the Cabinet discuss soon the report of the Phillimore Committee and the French proposals with a view to coming to a conclusion as to the basis of discussion between the Allies at such a conference as Mr. Asquith suggests. The speech of the German Chancellor the other day is an indication of how the wind is blowing there. The Germans are going to exploit the idea of a League of Nations. Of course, we know that it will be humbug. But why leave the field to be exploited? I think we should try to come to an understanding with the Allies as to what is meant by a League of Nations, and then formulate the results of that understanding. I believe it might have an important bearing on the minds of the German people if, as I assume to be the case, the plan admitted of a democratic Germany, being admitted to a League of Nations, provided she were willing to give the necessary guarantees.

(Initialed) G.M.B.

2, Whitehall Gardens, S.W.1.  
28th. September, 1918.