

Senator Capper's proposed reply to the Briand Peace Offer

This item includes the full text of the resolution introduced by Kansas Senator Arthur Capper in reply to the Briand Peace Offer. Signed on August 27, 1928, the Kellogg-Briand Pact was authored by U.S. Secretary of State Frank B. Kellogg and French Foreign Minister Aristide Briand. Designed to end the possibility of another large-scale international war, the Kellogg-Briand Pact was signed by most of the world powers of the time.

Creator: Capper, Arthur, 1865-1951

Date: Unknown

Callnumber: Arthur Capper Coll. #12, Box 26 Folder: Peace

KSHS Identifier: DaRT ID: 216903

Item Identifier: 216903

www.kansasmemory.org/item/216903

KANSAS
HISTORICAL
SOCIETY

Senator Capper's proposed reply to the Briand Peace Offer

Senator Capper's Proposed Reply to the Briand Peace Offer

Washington, D. C., November 21—Senator Arthur Capper (Republican) of Kansas, today announced that he will introduce at the opening session of the Senate a joint resolution providing for the renunciation of war as an instrument of national policy and calling for the settlement of international disputes by arbitration or conciliation.

The Capper resolution is looked upon by those who have read it, as the most important step in international relations initiated by a member of Congress since the world war. It is likely to attract world-wide interest as it indicates a practical legislative move in international affairs by the United States.

The full text of the resolution follows:

Whereas the Congress of the United States on August 29, 1916, solemnly declared it "to be the policy of the United States to adjust and settle its international disputes through mediation or arbitration, to the end that war may be honorably avoided"; and

Whereas Aristide Briand, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the French Republic, on April 6, 1927, publicly declared to the people of the United States that "France would be willing to subscribe publicly with the United States to any mutual engagement tending to outlaw war, to use an American expression, as between these two countries," and proposed that the two countries enter into an engagement providing for the "renunciation of war as an instrument of national policy"; and

Whereas there has been strong expression of opinion from the people and the press of the United States in favor of suitable action by our government to give effect to the proposal of Monsieur Briand; and

Whereas the present arbitration treaty between the United States and France providing for the submission to arbitration of differences of a legal nature arising between them will terminate on February 27, 1928; and

Whereas the United States being desirous of securing peaceful settlement of international disputes and the general renunciation of war as an instrument of policy should not be under obligation to furnish protection for such of its nationals as aid or abet the breach of similar agreements between other nations:

Now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That it be declared to be the policy of the United States:

I. By treaty with France and other like-minded nations formally to renounce war as an instrument of public policy and to adjust and settle its international disputes by mediation, arbitration and conciliation; and

II. By formal declaration to accept the definition of aggressor nation as one which, having agreed to submit international differences to conciliation, arbitration or judicial settlement, begins hostilities without having done so; and

III. By treaty with France and other like-minded nations to declare that the nationals of the contracting governments should not be protected by their governments in giving aid and comfort to an aggressor nation; and

Be it further resolved, That the President be requested to enter into negotiations with France and other like-minded nations for the purpose of concluding treaties with such nations, in furtherance of the declared policy of the United States.

Senator Capper's proposed reply to the Briand Peace Offer

In making known the text of the resolution he intends introducing Senator Capper said:

"I propose by this joint resolution to test the sincerity of our professions that America desires world peace. We have talked much about the desirability of peace, but have done little to advance the cause which the people have so much at heart. Nothing further is to be gained by repeating pious platitudes, by uttering high-sounding moral generalities or by professing to be devoted to international peace and opposed to war. More than ten years after the United States was dragged by circumstances into the most dreadful conflict in human history, half the world is still suffering acutely from the effects of that futile struggle of armed forces. It left bankrupt every European nation that took part in it. It cost nearly ten million young lives. Is it not time that the United States as the world's most powerful, secure and pacific nation should follow words with acts?

"The resolution I shall present is not a radical or extreme statement of American policy. It has the merit of putting into plain and explicit terms the desire of the American people to advance the cause of peace. It omits meaningless moral generalities concerning the part this nation shall play in the world-effort to bring about an era of international understanding and, therefore, peace.

"Our whole history and our best traditions summon us to participate in this effort—to lead it. Geographically the United States in its early history was almost isolated from the world. This isolation has ended. Now we are knit politically and economically by the closest ties with the world. The tremendous progress of science and invention has virtually abolished our geographical isolation. For generations we were the principal debtor nation. Now we have become the principal creditor nation. But whether debtor or creditor, we are a part of the world's political and economic organization and we cannot for a single day escape the responsibilities, obligations and dangers this relationship confers. The duty that rests upon us is to make the fullest use of our great power in the family of nations to promote understanding and peace. No one can make a friend of a neighbor, nor reason with him, by arousing his combativeness. It was that spirit which led Europe, where much rivalry exists, into the greatest war of all time.

"What is proposed by the resolution, is treaties with any like-minded nations to forego and renounce resort to war in difficulties arising in the relations of the contracting parties; to submit issues to arbitration or to judicial decision that cannot be settled by negotiation. Such a treaty was offered to the United States on the tenth anniversary of our entrance into the World War, April 6 last, by the Foreign Minister of France, M. Briand. 'France would be willing', were M. Briand's words, 'to subscribe publicly with the United States to any mutual engagement tending to outlaw war, to use an American expression, as between these two countries'.

"In recognition of this specific offer my resolution specifies the willingness of the United States to enter into such a treaty 'with France or any like-minded nation'.

"Other nations will be found ready to follow that example, I believe.

"As a member of the Foreign Relations Committee, I have followed with interest Lord Cecil's speaking tour in England for peace and reduction of armaments and noted the demand of the powerful British Labor party for the conclusion of a treaty outlawing war between the two English-speaking peoples, and that party's demand for a drastic reduction of naval armaments.

"In these times of peace, the navies of France, Great Britain and the United States cost their taxpayers not less than one billion dollars a year, a tremendous waste of human energy, and that is only part of it.

Senator Capper's proposed reply to the Briand Peace Offer

"There is every reason to consider this proposal for civilized nations to renounce war as an instrument of public policy, a logical and necessary step toward peace. It goes farther, it seems to me, than merely declaring war criminal.

"The resolution further proposes that governments engaging in such a treaty will not support their own nationals in giving aid to aggressor nations in war. And to give meaning to this provision the resolution defines an aggressor as any nation that, having agreed to submit issues to arbitration, plunges into war without making such an appeal.

"This part of the resolution does not prohibit nationals of the treaty nations from supplying aids to aggressors in war, but deprives them of national backing if they do. They must take their own chances in the game of destruction and ruin.

"If M. Briand's proposal be accepted as between the United States and France and offers are made to extend it at once to Great Britain, to Germany, to Japan and to Italy, the chance of future wars would be reduced to a minimum so long as the other contracting nations keep the faith. As it is obvious that they themselves would not go to war with each other and by refusing jointly and severally to aid an aggressor nation, they would thereby make any war between two lesser nations virtually a local affair.

"Finally there is the desirability and importance of having the United States resume the position of emphatic leadership in all that promotes international peace and understanding, a leadership it took and held under McKinley and Hay, Roosevelt and Root, and Taft and Knox. The adoption of this resolution would place our own government in the position of offering a practicable plan to any other nation of the same mind to put war outside the pale as between itself and the United States.

"Within the next year, in February, June and August, the treaties of arbitration with France, Great Britain and Japan expire by their own terms. The adoption of this resolution opens the way for treaties in their place renouncing war between these important nations. Here is a vital matter. We have here a great opportunity to live up to our highest American traditions in this resolution to renounce war. We should make the most of it."