

## Benching World Peace

PEACE BY JUDICIAL DECISION of a court above all courts of the world: that was the grandiloquent design of the Permanent Court of International Justice, established in December, 1920, at The Hague following the mandate of Article XIV of the now neglected Covenant of the presently moribund League of Nations.

This "special institution" of the League, ratified under a separate treaty, was to adjudicate international disputes. But the court could render judgment only in cases voluntarily submitted to it.

Since 1922, when the majestic tribunal's first sessions were held, the world's reputedly best legal talent assembled upon its bench has been asked to pass upon fewer than one hundred cases. And in disposing of them the decisions, like those in courts of law the world over, have been tinged with political expediency.

The most famous decision, in 1931, forbade a German-Austrian customs union on the ground that it would end Austrian independence. Thus the court, at the behest of French predatory interests which feared a loss of trade if the unnatural trade barriers between these two complementary economic units were removed, prepared by its action the Hitlerian Anschluss of 1938. By that time the court had fallen into obscurity.

The formal death knell of the court was rung last month by Britain's Foreign Secretary, when he gave notice that for the duration of the war his country did not feel obligated to submit any international difference to it.

Thus another of the legal mechanisms for solving international disputes has passed into the discard. Locarno, the Nine-Power Treaty, the League of Nations, now The Hague. They failed, as did the thousands of treaties, pacts and conventions which nations in times past have relied upon to prevent international clashes, because they rested on political units which are in themselves always at war.

Within the member nations of all "leagues," those who work and those who demand tribute from the workers are necessarily in constant conflict. The taxing power of the State and the rent-collecting power of the landowners so deplete the wages of the worker that unrest is inevitable. Poverty reeks with rebellion.

Internal conflict tends to extend beyond the national frontiers, particularly when it suits the purposes of the landowners to direct this unrest to "for-

eigners." Investment of the swollen rent fund in foreign countries is another war irritant. And the forced stoppage of trade between peoples who desire to carry on such commerce helps to stir up hostility.

Since international law, like domestic law, merely mirrors the socio-economic conditions existing within a given civilization, and is powerless to correct these conditions, it is a futile instrument for peace. Note how in the present war each of the nations, with legal accuracy, has accused others of violating international law. After the war new covenants will be agreed upon, and when in the next conflict expediency dictates their repudiation it will most assuredly take place. Political expediency is a persistent factor in man-made laws.

The forces that make for peace are internal, not international. Until the shackles of economic slavery are removed from the producers, until land is made free so that no worker need pay tribute for the privilege of working, until all restrictions and taxes on trade are removed, the cancer of poverty will eat its way throughout our civilization. It respects no frontiers. It respects no law.

### MARGIN OF CULTIVATION\*



\* Earnings. 50¢-60¢ a day.