

REVIEWS OF BOOKS

Seeking World Order: The United States and International Organization to 1920. By Warren F. Kuehl (Vanderbilt University Press, Nashville, 1969).

Seeking World Order by Warren Kuehl is an account of the American role in promoting international machinery for the prevention of war up to the time of the United States Senate's final rejection of the Treaty of Versailles in March 1920. Although beginning with a discussion of early European and American plans for international organization, this book concentrates on the period from 1890 to 1920 with special attention devoted to the era of the Wilson administration and the constituting of the League of Nations. Kuehl focuses primarily on the views of American internationalists and their efforts to make an international organization a reality.

This study well deserves the attention of students of American foreign policy. It is the most detailed and comprehensive monograph thus far published on the subject. It also represents the most extensive research and synthesis of documentation yet undertaken on the league question. Kuehl's use of contemporary newspapers and periodicals, as well as tracts published by various peace groups and proponents of international organization, is unsurpassed. *Seeking World Order*, moreover, is based on a considerable body of manuscripts, including some little used but important collections of documents. Kuehl has investigated public records and approximately forty collections of private papers. They include the papers of such prominent Americans as Edward M. House, Henry Cabot Lodge, Elihu Root, Henry L. Stimson, William H. Taft, and Woodrow Wilson. Kuehl has neglected neither the papers of American pioneers of the movement, such as Raymond L. Bridgman, Hayne Davis, and Benjamin Trueblood, nor of peace organizations, such as the League to Enforce Peace, the New York Peace Society, and the World's Court League.

It is abundantly evident in this study that a wide variety of views existed in the United States as to the composition and functions of an international organization. The study further substantiates the view that the American concept of a league of nations did not originate in the decade immediately preceding the Paris Peace Conference of 1919. Its roots may be traced well back into the 19th century.

Kuehl's assessment of the American debacle over the league of nations issue is undoubtedly the most interesting and useful of his appraisals. He rejects the interpretation that the defeat of the Treaty of Versailles and with it the Covenant of the League of Nations was due primarily to political partisanship or personal animosities. Senator Henry Cabot Lodge, for example, is portrayed as a man of convictions and principle whose decisions were determined by issues rather than political expediency or a hatred of President Wilson. It is also clear that Kuehl does not agree with the thesis that the United States Senate did not reflect or represent the views of the American public in attacking the Covenant and attempting to modify

it by means of reservations. Kuehl maintains that the struggle was basically over ideas and "because not so much one between those for and against the League as it was between those who could not agree upon the nature of the League they wanted" (p. 339). Furthermore, he contends that the Covenant "did not reflect the prevailing patterns of internationalist thought which had emerged in the United States" (p. 344). Thus, the Senate's rejection of the Treaty of Versailles was done neither in disregard of public sentiment nor without reasonable justification.

Kuehl fixes responsibility for the rejection of the Covenant principally on Wilson. Wilson, he asserts, may have been the foremost champion of a league; but he was only an internationalist-comelately, and a generalist on the subject at that, who failed to cooperate with league proponents and to keep fully informed as to their thinking. Consequently, by remaining aloof, Wilson forged a document for international organization which was not in keeping with current thinking. Article X, for example, with its controversial guarantee of political independence and territorial integrity was too radical for most Americans. In other respects the Covenant was not advanced enough. Wilson's intransigence resulted, therefore, not only in an unsatisfactory and unpopular Covenant but also in the alienation of league supporters, whom he desperately needed in the ensuing struggle with the Senate.

Seeking World Order, therefore, supports the charge voiced by John Chalmers Hinson and others that the debate over the league was grounded on honest and fundamental differences of opinion rather than partisan politics or emotion. Kuehl also joins an increasingly growing number of historians who have been critical of Wilson's role in the league movement. Kuehl, however, is less critical of Wilson's unwillingness to yield to Senate reservations as he is of Wilson's attitude toward those internationalists who favored the creation of an international organization. Unlike many of Wilson's critics, however, Kuehl states that Wilson's decision to participate in the negotiations at the Paris Peace Conference was sound inasmuch as it insured the creation of a league of nations.

While *Seeking World Order* is the most detailed account available on international organization, and makes a notable contribution to our understanding of the league of nations issue, it is by no means the definitive study on the subject. Kuehl's book contains a number of misleading or inaccurate statements. Chapter twelve which discusses the efforts at the Paris Peace Conference to formulate the League of Nations Covenant is a prime example. Kuehl contends that Secretary of State Robert Lansing did no more than comment on various league drafts prepared by Wilson (p. 267). He also leaves the impression that Lansing believed that guarantees should be the heart of the Covenant (p. 275). Actually, Lansing fervently urged Wilson and Colonel House to make an international court the nucleus of any plan for a league of nations and strongly opposed Wilson's mutual-guarantee concept. He suggested a negative or self-denying guarantee only as a means of mitigating what later became Article X of the

Covenant. Kuehl also confuses attempts by the American and British delegations to reach an accord on a league plan in January 1919 with the efforts of the conference's Commission on the League of Nations in February to reach an overall agreement on the details of the Covenant (pp. 270-271). His statement that all British drafts for a league of nations, including that of General Smuts, had provided for a world court (p. 280) while incorrect is perhaps more pardonable. This has been frequently asserted by historians. However, it was not until the close of January 1919 that any member of the British delegation specifically called for the establishment of a permanent, international court. Until then none of the plans prepared by members of the British Government (the Phillimore *Draft Convention* of March 1918, the Smuts Plan, and the various proposals of Lord Cecil) had specifically called or provided for the establishment of a permanent court. The Smuts Plan, in particular, advocated the use of ad hoc arbitration panels, stating that it would be difficult to establish a permanent court in light of the problems in finding a method of selecting judges.

In his selection of sources Kuehl made some curious but not vital omissions. He failed to examine the papers of Wilson's official advisor on foreign policy, Secretary of State Lansing, which are available at the Library of Congress. Lansing's role in the formulation of the League Covenant, it is true, was negligible. His views on the league were not solicited or acted upon by President Wilson. Nevertheless, a perusal of Lansing's papers would at least have prevented Kuehl from depicting Lansing erroneously. And while Kuehl examined the records of the Department of State, he neglected researching another relevant group of records also on deposit at the National Archives, namely the voluminous records of the American Commission to Negotiate Peace. These records contain a multitude of league plans received by the American delegation to the Paris Peace Conference.

Redundancy and repetition also characterize segments of *Seeking World Order*, making reading often tedious. This is due to Kuehl's overconcern with the details of countless plans for international organization. A discussion of such plans is indeed warranted, but objection is raised to the necessity of elaborating upon so many of them, especially those of similar content or the more impractical schemes of dilettantes.

Perhaps the biggest disappointment in *Seeking World Order*, however, is Kuehl's treatment of the movement for modern international organization in its embryonic stages. Kuehl often neglects or fails to sufficiently explain the motivation or justification for a particular proposal, policy or development. He does not exercise sufficient value judgment, rarely challenging, for instance, the practicability or merits of 18th and 19th century schemes for international organization.

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