

The Peace Treaty and League of Nations
A PLEA FOR RATIFICATION

SPEECH

OF

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OF OKLAHOMA

IN THE

SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

MARCH 9, 1920



WASHINGTON
GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE

1920

169435—20591

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Mr. OWEN. Mr. President, I am in favor of passing the treaty immediately and am quite ready to support the resolution of ratification either with "interpretative reservations," agreeable to President Wilson, or the "Hitchcock reservations," or the "Lodge reservations." The differences are not sufficiently important to justify delay in declaring peace.

The country, with just cause, overwhelmingly demands it, and is incensed with all those who delay it.

The treaty of peace should pass at once because—

1. Our laws should be on a legal peace basis—not on a war basis. The reduction of the high cost of living demands it. The social unrest in our country demands it.

2. All rules and regulations based on war and all war boards and commissions should be revoked. With peace comes automatic repeal of war measures.

3. Our relations with enemy nations are definitely fixed by the treaty, determining our rights as a Nation and as citizens. Billions of dollars are involved, including all alien property, Americans' properties in alien enemy countries, all war damages, and our trade, social, and political relations.

4. The ratification will stabilize Europe and the reconstruction of the nations. It will enable them to pay us, and thus lower our taxes and lower our high cost of living thereby.

5. The more rapid restoration of Europe's productive activities means their self-support, larger exports to us, greater supplies for Europe and for us.

6. It will cause the rise in value of European currency and international exchange, and restore many impaired fortunes.

7. It will strengthen the prestige and standing of the United States, and improve our political, social, and trade relations with all other nations.

8. It will help to end the starvation, social unrest, and growth of radical socialism and bolshevism in Europe.

The covenant of the League of Nations ought to pass, because—

(a) It provides for a mechanism to settle all international disputes, (1) by diplomacy, (2) by conciliation, (3) by arbitration, (4) by a court of international justice, (5) by the council, (6) by the assembly, (7) by delay, (8) by agreeing to respect the territorial integrity and existing political independence of member nations, and (9) to preserve it, (10) by boycott, (11) by blockade, and, if necessary, (12) by military and naval force.

(b) (14) It provides for gradual disarmament on land and sea, to abate the high taxes of preparation for war. (15) It ends conscription and (16) abates private munition making. (17)

It ends secret treaties and (18) gives publicity to all war preparations. (19) It provides a world forum where subject peoples can bring their grievances. (20) It establishes a world assembly where all nations may meet in conference and develop the principles which will promote the peace and happiness of mankind. (21) It ends military autocracies and establishes for all time the rule of civilized democracies. It ushers in a new great era where the diligence, providence, and creative genius of mankind can fully function under the blessings of peace and liberty.

REASONS FOR DEFEATING TREATY NOT JUSTIFIED.

After 12 months of discussion the only irreconcilable difference remaining unadjusted between the President, Senator HITCHCOCK, and Senator LODGE appears to be over article 10, which provides:

"The high contracting parties undertake to respect and preserve as against external aggression the territorial integrity and existing political independence of all States members of the League.

"In case of any such aggression, or in case of any threat or danger of such aggression, the executive council shall advise upon the means by which the obligation shall be fulfilled."

President Wilson, Senator HITCHCOCK, and Senator LODGE are in accord on the United States undertaking "to respect" the territorial integrity and existing political independence of member Nations, but differ on the United States undertaking "to preserve" the territorial integrity, and so forth.

All three agree that the United States undertake "to respect," the territorial integrity, and so forth. President Wilson insists that the United States also undertake "to preserve" the territorial integrity, and so forth, subject to interpretative reservations.

Senator HITCHCOCK agrees that the United States undertake "to preserve," but not to use military or naval forces or the economic boycott "to preserve" unless Congress authorizes.

Senator LODGE refuses to agree that the United States undertake "to preserve" by any means whatever, unless Congress authorizes in each particular instance.

All the world agrees "to respect and preserve," President Wilson and Senator HITCHCOCK agree "to respect and preserve," Senator LODGE "to respect" but not "to preserve" unless Congress authorizes in each particular instance.

It is my opinion that with the overthrow of all the military dynasties and the world-wide establishment of democracies, and the League of Nations with its covenanted safeguards, the world's peace is assured even if the United States remains out.

But to keep the United States out of the league because of the very small differences between the President and Senator LODGE would be defeating a very great end for a very small end. They agree on 99 per cent of the German treaty and are liable to destroy it over a 1 per cent difference. To keep the United States out of the moral leadership of mankind would be a great wrong. To defeat the treaty would be a national calamity and would discredit the United States throughout the world.

If the President's view prevailed on article 10 no declaration of war or voting of war supplies could be possible without con-

gressional action, and Congress would do what was morally right without the supposed moral coercion of article 10 "to preserve," and so forth, as Congress did in the case of Cuba and in the last Great War.

If Senator LODGE's view prevailed the same results would follow without the moral influence of the specific obligation of article 10. The moral obligation would exist any way to restrain an international outlaw from invading peaceful territory and upsetting the peace of the world.

I agree with President Wilson in believing the United States should enter on equal terms and with equal mutual obligations with other nations and not appear to distrust them or seem to seek the benefits of the treaty without being willing to meet our equal share of its burdens. I prefer article 10 as it is, but I am prepared, for the sake of passing the treaty and getting the advantages of it, to yield to the demand of a majority of my colleagues in the Senate. The views of the majority of the Senate are entitled to respect.

The country unhappily believes the differences are not reconciled because of personal and partisan pride.

I refuse to be a party to the defeat of the treaty or to its delay. I am ready to support it in any form and follow any leader who leads to its ratification, and I will not follow any leader who is leading to its defeat or delay.

Mr. President, the remarks which I have just delivered were written on March 7, before I was furnished with a mimeographed copy of the President's letter to Senator HITCHCOCK of March 8, and are subject, therefore, to that understanding where I seem to have misapprehended the President's position.

It appears now to be the wish of the President to have his Democratic associates vote with the irreconcilable opponents of the treaty, defeat the resolution of ratification, and make the "treaty without reservations" the issue of the next election.

I should regard this as a great injury to our domestic interests. The delay in establishing peace has helped to raise instead of helping to lower the cost of living. The defeat of the treaty would injure American prestige abroad.

With the treaty, "with or without reservations," as the campaign issue, the discussion of our vital domestic problems of reconstruction—the cost of living, monopolies and profiteering, and so forth—will be obscured as behind a smoke screen to the benefit of those selfish interests which have been taking unjust advantage of our people.

It will be impossible at the next election to elect a Senate favorable to the treaty without reservations, and every well-informed public man knows it, so that after the campaign the treaty will be in no better position relatively than it is now, and with the "treaty without reservations" as the issue the Democratic Party would have a ruinous handicap.

As far as I am concerned, as an American Senator, who for very many years have ardently and strenuously served my party and my country and supported the administration on all suitable occasions, I decline to assume the slightest responsibility for the delay or the defeat of the treaty.