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Beverly Geffert

University of Nebraska at Omaha

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OMAHA PRESS REACTION TO THE VERSAILLES VERDICT

A STUDY USING THREE OMAHA NEWSPAPERS

JANUARY, 1919 - MARCH, 1920

143

A Thesis

Presented to the

Department of History

and the

Faculty of the College of Graduate Studies

University of Omaha

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

by

Beverly Geffert

January 1966

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Accepted for the faculty of the College of Graduate Studies of
the University of Omaha, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the degree Master of Arts.

Frederick W. Adams (History)
Chairman Department

Graduate Committee

<u>Roy M. Robbins</u>	<u>History</u>
Name	Department
<u>Paul Adams Polstrom (History)</u>	
<u>Owens D. Howard</u>	<u>Political Science</u>
_____	_____
_____	_____

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CHAPTER I:

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Representatives of twenty-seven nations worked at Versailles in 1919 under the gaze of a critical public much more alert than when the Congress of Vienna had assembled one hundred years before. In contrast to the atmosphere at Vienna, where the press had been completely suppressed because it was considered " . . . the most powerful means used by the pretended supporters of the rights of nations, to the detriment of those of princes, . . ." ¹ the public was kept informed regarding the happenings at Versailles. One hundred fifty newspaper correspondents from the United States attended the Conference out of a total of some five hundred writers. Their opinions represented all of the shadings from the conservative to the liberal ends of the political spectrum. According to Ray Stannard Baker, "There was never before anything like such a gathering of the forces of publicity from every part of the world." ²

One American city, Omaha, Nebraska, with a heterogeneous population representing most of the countries which had participated in the war, understandably reflected a variety of opinions regarding the 1919

¹Ray Stannard Baker, Woodrow Wilson and World Settlement: Written from His Unpublished and Personal Material (Gloucester, Massachusetts: Peter Smith, 1960), Vol. I, p. 116.

²Ibid., p. 121.

proceedings in Paris. Logically, editorial reaction of the city's three leading newspapers in 1919 reflected the national origin of the inhabitants. The Omaha Daily Bee, a staunchly Republican paper, was founded by the Bohemian-born Edward Rosewater in 1871. After his death, his son Victor Rosewater became the editor. The Omaha World-Herald, published by Gilbert M. Hitchcock, had been a Democratic newspaper since 1888.³ The latter reflected the administration viewpoint particularly, for Hitchcock was the acting Senate minority leader during the controversy over ratification of the Peace Treaty. The World-Herald operated a Peace Conference Bureau at Paris in conjunction with the Chicago Daily News.⁴ The third Omaha newspaper was the politically independent Omaha Daily News, a penny paper edited by Joseph Polcar.⁵

With the opening of the Conference in January of 1919, after four years of war and press censorship, people of the world expected the curtain to rise and display proceedings of the vast peace assemblage at Versailles. "An examination of the minutes and documents," according to one study, "Gives astonishing evidence of the amount of time, anxiety, discussion, devoted to the consideration of what to do about public opinion and the press"⁶ When the deliberations were not

³Harl Adams Dalstrom, "The Midwestern Press and American Neutrality: A Study of the Editorial Attitudes of Three Omaha Newspapers Toward the European War, 1914-1917" (Unpublished Master's thesis, University of Omaha, 1959), pp. 5-6.

⁴Evening World-Herald, January 13, 1919.

⁵Dalstrom, "The Midwestern Press and American Neutrality," p. 7.

⁶Baker, Woodrow Wilson and World Settlement, p. 26.

immediately made public, protests began to multiply from every direction. Among them were those of the Bee which declared that, "Until the curtain is raised on the drama now being rehearsed at Versailles, suspicion will attach to all its doings."⁷

The reason for the public's disappointment involved a struggle between France, the advocate of a censored press, and the British and Americans who desired free publication of Conference proceedings. France, the leader of a number of nations long accustomed to a censored press, demanded that Council meetings be secret and that only daily official communiqués be issued.⁸ The democratic presses, on the other hand, protested that news was being withheld from them as a secrecy stunt.

Attempting to reassure its readers, the World-Herald noted that American reporters were able to publish the news from Paris the next morning after developments, while "European papers either have it cabled back or get it in some way a day or two later. While there are American reporters in Paris," the editor confidently predicted, "there is no danger from secret diplomacy."⁹

Captions in the Daily News gave a different picture: "Peace Congress Will be Secret: Protests Result," and "News to be Doled Out"¹⁰

⁷The Omaha Daily Bee, January 17, 1919.

⁸Harold Nicolson, Peacemaking 1919 (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1959), p. 124.

⁹Evening World-Herald, February 8, 1919.

¹⁰The Omaha Daily News, January 16, 1919.

they read, while an editorial in the Bee discussed "Secrecy at the Peace Conference."¹¹

Leaders at the Conference were not only Statesmen, but also politicians. They consequently worried about the "news, opinions, guesses that went out by scores of thousands of words every night and the reaction which came back so promptly from them."¹² Clemenceau did not fear his press because he could control most of it. Wilson, who recognized that giving out half-truths was the worst method of dealing with a democratic press, did not really fear his either, but for a different reason: he felt confident of public support when proceedings began. Wilson and Lloyd George were, however, more aware than the others of the power of public opinion in world affairs and continued to press for increased freedom in distributing information, until a sort of compromise was worked out.¹⁵ Three representatives from each of the Allied and Associated Powers were to be admitted to plenary meetings of the Conference, but the other sessions would still be conducted in secret.¹⁴ Although Wilson's idea was that more and more meetings would become open until, by the end of the Conference, the press might attend all of them,¹⁵ a total of only six plenary sessions were held during the entire negotiations and

¹¹The Omaha Daily Bee, January 17, 1919.

¹²Baker, Woodrow Wilson and World Settlement, p. 117.

¹³Ibid., pp. 146, 196.

¹⁴The Omaha Daily Bee, January 18, 1919.

¹⁵The Omaha Daily News, January 18, 1919.

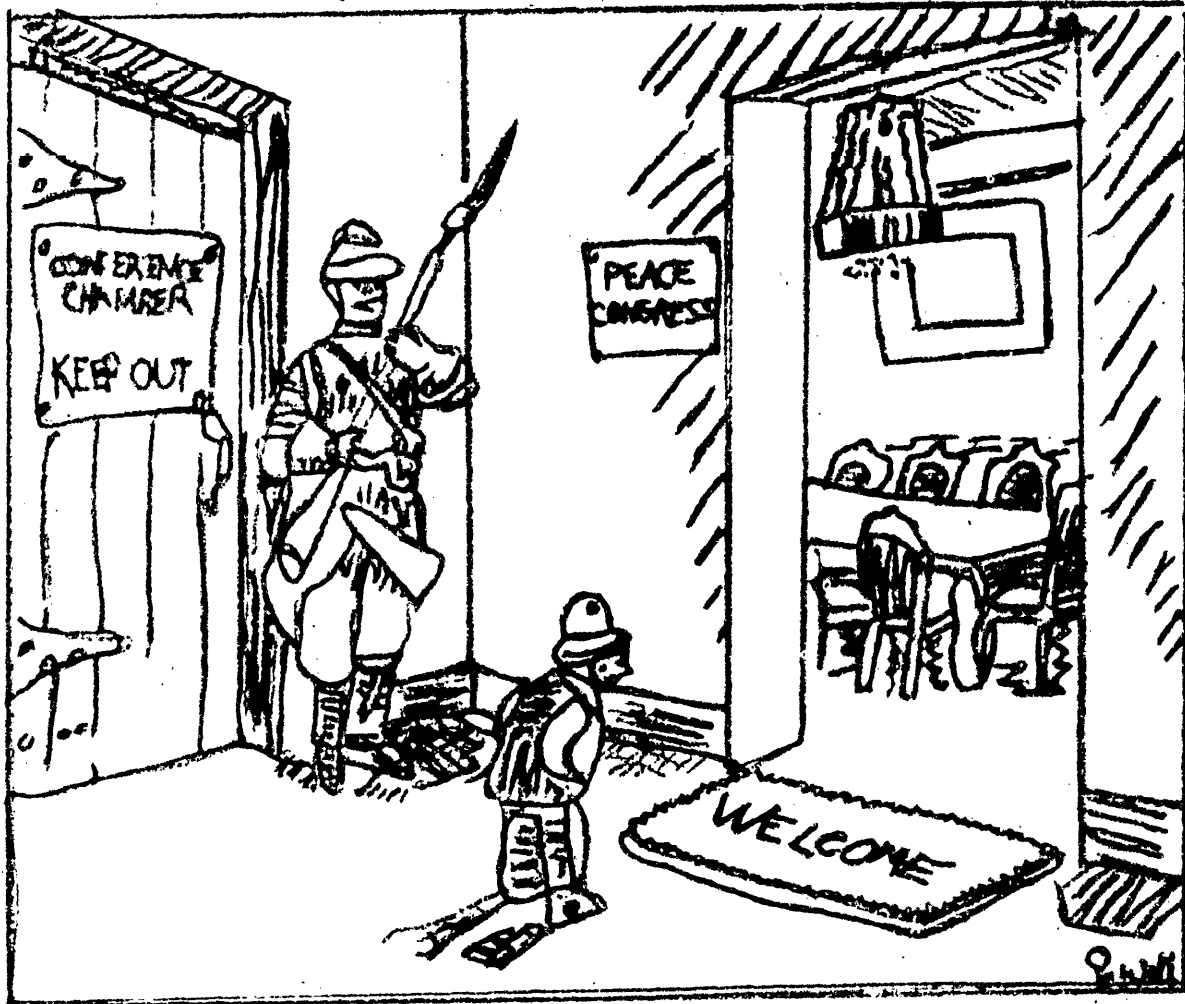
other sessions were kept closed to the press.¹⁶ The compromise meant more publicity than Clemenceau desired but American correspondents were justifiably dissatisfied and "the struggle for publicity was thus a part of the struggle out of war into peace"¹⁷

The attitude of many American reporters is clearly expressed in the cartoon on the following page.

¹⁶Nicolson, Peacemaking 1919, p. 124.

¹⁷Baker, Woodrow Wilson and World Settlement, p. 135.

Open Diplomacy Unvelled



Taken from the Omaha Sunday Bee, February 9, 1919.

CHAPTER II

INTEREST IN CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS JANUARY-JULY, 1919

As deliberations began in Versailles, it soon became clearly apparent that the people of the United States in general, and of Omaha in particular, considered a League of Nations as an essential ingredient of the Treaty.¹ In February of 1919 the Bee stated that the nations of Europe "coming out from under German and Russian domination can be dealt with more easily through a League of the great powers than by any other means."² The European situation completely justified the need for a League, the Bee continued. Admittedly, England, France, and Italy held certain opinions that were not consistent with those of Wilson, but if Wilson's League would guarantee against future war, "that is what we want," the paper affirmed.³

The World-Herald called the League a natural development in a series of associations beginning with the simplest level, the family,⁴ while the Bee's opinion was that no nation would be likely to go to war against the wishes of five strong nations mainly in control of world

¹Evening World-Herald, January 13, 1919; The Omaha Daily News, January 13, 1919.

²The Omaha Daily Bee, February 28, 1919.

³Ibid., March 23, 1919.

⁴Evening World-Herald, February 22, 1919.

affairs. It went on to call the League organization as proposed, "elaborate but easily regulated machinery" ⁵ The Daily News pictured Wilson as the representative of what the mass of people in the world wanted, granted that though the League would not be a cure-all, it contrasted sharply with Clemenceau's suggestion for making settlements on the basis of earlier secret agreements which could never guarantee peace. ⁶ The World-Herald supported the latter opinion, declaring that a League would be necessary also for concluding peace with the nations other than Germany. ⁷

Publication of the proposed League Constitution on Friday, February 14, 1919, elicited enthusiastic response from the Daily News:

Friday was one of the greatest days in the history of the world [The Constitution] is the product of the collective minds of the greatest statesmen in the world who have been trying very earnestly to do the biggest thing that has ever been done. ⁸

The Bee reported Hitchcock's comment that the proposed League organization represented a satisfactory median; "it was neither a 'Monster' nor a 'Sewing Circle.'" ⁹

A not-so-enthusiastic response came from certain opposing Senators who almost immediately began attacking the League. United States entry into a League would endanger the country's sovereignty, they

⁵The Omaha Daily Bee, February 15, 1919.

⁶The Omaha Daily News, January 15, 1919.

⁷Evening World-Herald, April 7, 1919.

⁸The Omaha Daily News, February 16, 1919.

⁹The Omaha Daily Bee, February 15, 1919.

warned. Typical of their attitude was a letter from local citizens to the Bee editor which declared, "We rather that Wilson be humiliated than the United States lose a part of its sovereignty and independence."¹⁰ Another letter pointed out that treaties among nations in the past had time and again failed. The League Constitution would, it predicted, suffer the same fate.¹¹

As if in reply to those fears, the World-Herald asserted that there were no longer any "distant parts of the world" and the Daily News agreed that Wilson had acknowledged American isolation as a thing of the past.¹² "Will we be content," the Bee questioned, "to submit our future treaties to the executive council of the League of Nations and stand ready to assist in enforcing the decrees of that Council?"¹³

The World-Herald replied that

there is no alternative possibility. We must have a league . . . or leave each nation to be a law unto itself, to live or die as superior force decides. . . .¹⁴

Senator Lodge charged that the League would take away America's right of self-defense, but Hitchcock called the assertion "preposterous."¹⁵ To Senator George Norris' argument against maintaining " . . . standing armies for the support of new and individual governments that it [the

¹⁰The Omaha Daily Bee, March 5, 1919.

¹¹Ibid., March 17, 1919.

¹²Evening World-Herald, April 15, 1919; The Omaha Daily News, February 23, 1919.

¹³The Omaha Sunday Bee, February 23, 1919.

¹⁴Evening World-Herald, April 15, 1919.

¹⁵Morning World-Herald, March 1, 1919.

League] is intended to establish among semi-civilized peoples," the Daily News' reply was that a League would instead reduce those forces.¹⁶ "There is no abandonment of the Monroe Doctrine." "If we surrender anything at all it is the right of might to exploit smaller American peoples ourselves."¹⁷

The World-Herald also pointed out the possible dire results of not accepting a League. At some future time when its accomplishments would be an impossibility, "the best there may be left, as a terrible and terrifying alternative, may be the old system of balance of power and entangling alliances," it warned.¹⁸ Discussing the possibilities and probabilities surrounding the League, the Daily News explained that the world's chaotic possibilities already existed, while without a League, the probabilities for betterment could never be attained.¹⁹

One of the movements in the country strongly in support of the League Covenant was the League to Enforce Peace. The World-Herald, reporting on one meeting held in New York, carried the caption: "To Serve Notice on Senate People Demand League." It also reported on a meeting held in St. Louis representing the states of Missouri, Kansas, Arkansas, New Mexico, Iowa, Oklahoma, Colorado, and Nebraska.²⁰

¹⁶Ibid., March 13, 1919.

¹⁷The Omaha Daily News, March 11, 1919.

¹⁸Morning World-Herald, March 15, 1919.

¹⁹The Omaha Daily News, April 15, 1919.

²⁰Evening World-Herald, February 5, 1919.

President Wilson, as the chief advocate of the League, faced both commendation and severe criticism at home. Many people called him simply a "visionary idealist," but the World-Herald defended him as a practical man who "knows what he wants and has an amazing faculty for getting it."²¹ People criticized him, the Daily News protested, because he was really being very just.²²

Wilson's leadership at Paris was also questioned by many people. In February, 1919 the Daily News reported however, that the Allies recognized America's leadership at the Conference²³ and the World-Herald in March expressed a similar opinion. After two months abroad in France and England, Irving T. Bush of Brooklyn, founder of the Bush Terminal Company, said that people who at first felt Wilson should not attend the Conference in person, had gained a new respect for him. The majority of people in the United States, Bush felt, were also in support of the President.²⁴ The London Daily Mail in an article reprinted by the World-Herald admitted that Wilson was the spokesman for European public opinion, but questioned whether he was the mouthpiece for opinion in his own country. An article in the Daily News of April 30, 1919, which carried the heading: "Europe is Throwing Off America's Leadership at Paris," was still more disparaging.²⁵

²¹Ibid., January 29, 1919.

²²The Omaha Daily News, April 27, 1919.

²³Ibid., February 6, 1919.

²⁴Morning World-Herald, March 1, 1919.

²⁵Ibid., March 29, 1919; The Omaha Daily News, April 30, 1919.

It was in the United States Senate, the body which would ultimately either accept or reject the Treaty in the United States, where Wilson faced the harshest criticism. Condemning the tremendous Senate opposition, the World-Herald, in its February 6, 1919, issue, featured a cartoon picturing an awakening man as the representative of public opinion. Lazily stretching as he awoke, he effortlessly pushed politicians opposing the League out of his way.²⁶ "The League of Nations is the way out from the bottomless pit," the paper asserted, and, "the people of the United States can make the league or break it."²⁷

By March of 1919 it was apparent that many of the Senators opposing Wilson's Covenant, were determined to make it, but somewhat differently from what he wanted, for they demanded inclusion of amendments. Criticizing Wilson, the Bee blamed League weaknesses upon his refusal to include original recommendations of certain Republican Senators, supposedly even submitted at the request of Senator Hitchcock.²⁸ Going on to defend Senate demands for revisions in the Covenant, it pointed out that France, Italy, Japan, and others were also insisting upon certain terms. Patriotism rather than partisan bias was prompting the demand for amendments, the Bee insisted.²⁹ It went on to ask why former Nebraskan Senator William Jennings Bryan opposed the League.

²⁶Evening World-Herald, February 6, 1919.

²⁷Ibid., February 26, 1919.

²⁸The Omaha Daily Bee, March 8, 1919.

²⁹Ibid., March 6, 1919.

What are the champions of the swallow-it-whole propaganda going to say when Mr. Bryan takes his stand alongside Henry Cabot Lodge, Charles Spalding Thomas and other senators who have taken exception to the draft of the constitution of the League. . . .³⁰

Declaring that Senator Elihu Root's suggestions for revisions in the League would probably be accepted at Paris, the Bee also reproved Wilson for not including that Senator in the Paris delegation.³¹

When the Constitution of the League finally was adopted in Paris with the suggested amendments, the World-Herald termed it a tribute to Wilson that his country's revisions were accepted while those of other countries were rejected.³² Referring to the Covenant in its revised form, the Daily News pointed out the advantages of changes which had been effected. Domestic jurisprudence was emphasized, there was a guarantee for equality of the sexes, the Monroe Doctrine was specifically recognized, the process for amendment was simpler, and provision for a nation's withdrawal in case of necessity was included. Admittedly, the Covenant was not perfect, but it would meet the need as long as France, Great Britain, and the United States, would stand together.³³

Recognizing that the League issue had almost immediately become a political one, the World-Herald praised ex-President Taft for not following what it termed the party line of opposition. "This issue,"

³⁰Ibid., March 13, 1919.

³¹Ibid., April 14, 1919.

³²Morning World-Herald, April 29, 1919.

³³The Omaha Daily News, April 30, 1919.

it said, "and this duty are too big a matter to play peanut politics with."³⁴ In a dramatic plea for support of the League, that paper declared the destruction of Prussianism and the rule of democracy in its place would not mean the ruin of America. It asked, "Do we want militarism and the rule of might? Do we want freedom for aggression?"³⁵

After a synopsis of the completed Treaty as it applied to the Germans had become public, the Bee commented, "We have not been told what else it contains in its more than a thousand clauses and paragraphs."³⁶ Accusing Wilson of purposely keeping the Treaty from the Senate before its official presentation, Lodge charged that several copies of it had been given out in Paris and as far as he could tell "the only place it is not allowed to come is the senate of the United States."³⁷

The World-Herald insisted that Republican leaders in Congress were misrepresenting their constituents because many Republican newspapers were in favor of the League.³⁸ At a meeting of the League to Enforce Peace which was held in Omaha, more Republicans than Democrats attended. "If applause is any test, the businessmen of Omaha are for the League of Nations," noted one reporter.³⁹ At one of the sessions

³⁴Evening World-Herald, February 18, 1919.

³⁵Ibid., May 14, 1919.

³⁶The Omaha Daily Bee, May 25, 1919.

³⁷Ibid., June 4, 1919.

³⁸Evening World-Herald, May 10, 1919.

³⁹Ibid., May 31, 1919.

the audience had not only applauded, but rose five different times during a speech by ex-President Taft.⁴⁰

"Peace is not a party question in America,"⁴¹ the Bee declared, while the Daily News questioned whether Europe would not "have a very good case of breach of promise against this nation if the Senate refuses to ratify the treaty?"⁴² In a letter-to-the-editor addressed, "My dear thirty-one fossils," one reader wrote of the Senators lined up against the Treaty.

It is handy for the people to have all the reactionaries of the republicans and democrats on one list. Their names will make good reference for the next election day, when they call on the sons of freedom for votes.⁴³

In the face of public support for the League, one paper in confusion declared, "We cannot understand why American senators, who must pass upon the peace treaty, should be actively engaged in promoting a political cabal to oppose and defeat it."⁴⁴ The Daily News asserted, "Not for an instant do we agree with Borah's [opposition] views on the league of nations covenant."⁴⁵ The World-Herald stated that it was, "inconceivable

⁴⁰Ibid.

⁴¹The Omaha Daily Bee, February 25, 1919.

⁴²The Omaha Daily News, March 15, 1919.

⁴³Ibid., March 21, 1919.

⁴⁴St. Louis Post-Dispatch as reprinted in the Evening World-Herald, May 14, 1919.

⁴⁵The Omaha Daily News, May 17, 1919.

that, except for Germany, any nation involved would even seriously consider . . . rejecting the peace and the League of Nations"⁴⁶ The country could not simply remain at war and "The United States senate must ratify the treaty of peace for the same reasons that constrain and compel the Germans to sign the instrument," it continued.⁴⁷ The opposing Senators were charged with insincerity and Senator James A. Reed of Missouri was given as an example; he argued against the League as a part of the Treaty either on the grounds that it was too weak or too strong as the occasion might demand.⁴⁸ As for Lodge's suggested reservations, the editor warned that amending the Covenant a second time would mean ruining the League.⁴⁹ The World-Herald depicted its disgust with those Senators in the cartoon on p. 17.

The Bee proposed that the League be separated from the Treaty and declared that the British agreed.⁵⁰ The World-Herald, on the other hand, declared

If the league of nations is made a part of the peace treaty, it will insure a democratic peace If the league of nations is not made a part of the peace treaty, as now advised by a "round robin" letter of autocratic senators, the peace treaty that must be accepted until it is broken by the next war, will be an autocratic peace . . . which cannot be lasting.⁵¹

⁴⁶Evening World-Herald, May 8, 1919.

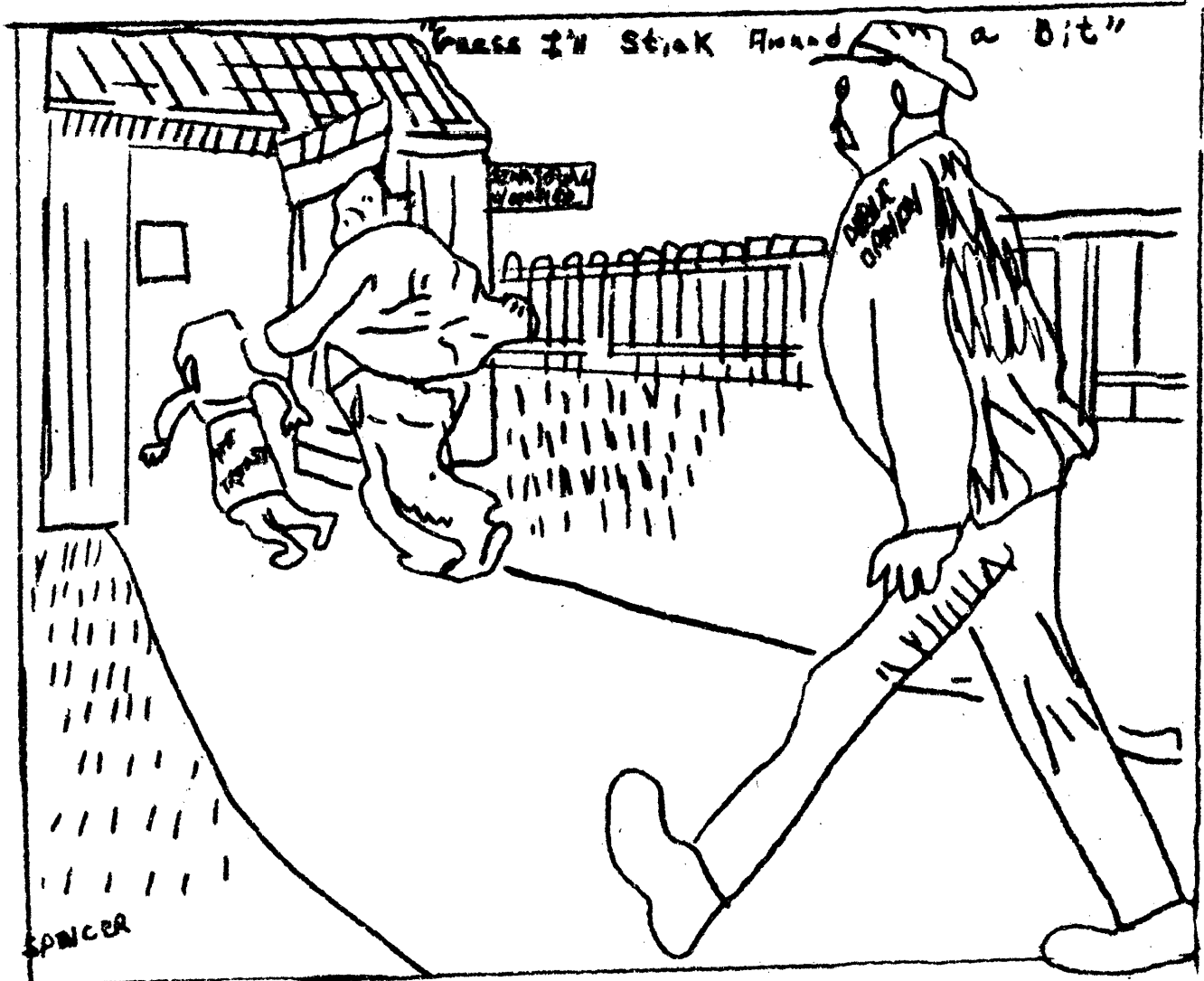
⁴⁷Ibid., May 28, 1919.

⁴⁸Ibid.

⁴⁹Ibid., May 2, 1919. For another viewpoint see Herbert Hoover, The Ordeal of Woodrow Wilson (New York: McGraw Hill, 1958), pp. 281, 284.

⁵⁰The Omaha Daily Bee, March 17, 1919.

⁵¹Morning World-Herald, March 10, 1919.



Taken from the Evening World-Herald,
July 13, 1919.

There would be no later time to consider a League, it continued. "The opportunity will not wait for perfection. It is now when the minds and souls of men are plastic in their grief and horror, or never."⁵²

The first time that an Omaha audience heard public argument against the League was the occasion of a debate between former United States Senator Norris Brown who favored the Covenant, and Duncan Vinsonhaler, a prominent Omaha attorney, who opposed.⁵³ Though of the same political party, they differed sharply on the advisability of entry into the League of Nations. While Brown argued that the League would be a substitute for war, Vinsonhaler replied that it would cause discord instead of peace.⁵⁴ The latter declared that peace should be made quickly without waiting for a League. Entering it, he continued, would require an amendment to the United States Constitution and, consequently, two years of delay. Brown replied that, according to Wilson, the whole purpose for United States entry into the War had been to form a League of Nations.⁵⁵

The Daily News suggested that if the League had to be separated from the Treaty, the Covenant should be ratified first, for "having ratified the covenant the senate could then consistently demand

⁵²Evening World-Herald, April 7, 1919.

⁵³Ibid., March 7, 1919.

⁵⁴Ibid., April 17, 1919.

⁵⁵The Omaha Daily News, April 17, 1919.

modification of European imperialism."⁵⁶ Answering those who blamed the delay in negotiations upon drafting of the League Covenant, the paper retorted, "Without the league, the treaty would be absolutely bad in half a dozen features--even supposing that it could have been drawn at all."⁵⁷

Still, the successive set-backs and delays made people extremely impatient. The Bee complained, "waiting for the peace is getting wearisome,"⁵⁸ and demanded

What all the nations of the world now want more than anything is to know the basis on which peace is to be established, to have the fact announced, and to be set at the work of reconstruction without delay. Enough of time in which to accomplish this had elapsed, and plain folks are beginning to show impatience.⁵⁹

News during the months of March and April had made the people particularly discouraged. Philip Gibbs in a World-Herald article predicted world anarchy in case of failure on the part of the Conference.⁶⁰ The Daily News reported: "Bolshevism Gains as Peace Lags,"⁶¹ while the Bee reported that all of Europe was simply marking time waiting for the results of the Conference.⁶² Then with the upheaval resulting from

⁵⁶Ibid., May 26, 1919.

⁵⁷Ibid., May 10, 1919.

⁵⁸The Omaha Daily Bee, March 27, 1919.

⁵⁹Ibid., March 17, 1919.

⁶⁰Morning World-Herald, March 11, 1919.

⁶¹The Omaha Daily News, March 27, 1919.

⁶²The Omaha Daily Bee, March 29, 1919.

Italy's claims and subsequent departure from the Conference in April, the Bee reported negotiations could end in a row.⁶⁵ When decisions were reached regarding Fiume, the Saar Valley coal mines, and German indemnity,⁶⁴ pessimism changed to optimism almost overnight. That optimism did not last long, however.

Dissatisfaction continued to mount when Wilson did not immediately return from Paris in May as expected. The Bee asked him to come home: ". . . call congress into session, and get under way the important work of freeing American commerce and industry from war restrictions."⁶⁵ While a straw vote conducted by the Bee in July of 1919 could not be used as a completely accurate sampling of public opinion, out of the six hundred and nineteen participating, five hundred and thirty-five opposed Treaty ratification.⁶⁶

Disgusted and disillusioned over the delay at Versailles and the political wrangling at home,⁶⁷ people became increasingly apathetic. A comment made by one prominent member of the Omaha Chamber of Commerce indicated perhaps how people felt just prior to formal Treaty presentation

⁶³Ibid., April 5, 1919.

⁶⁴The Omaha Daily News, April 10, 1919.

⁶⁵The Omaha Daily Bee, May 2, 1919.

⁶⁶Ibid., July 29, 1919.

⁶⁷Ibid., July 29, 1919.

in the Senate. "We are so busy making money," he said, "that we haven't had time to worry about the Peace Treaty."⁶⁸ As reflected by the local press the wheat harvest was approaching in the Midwest and people could not be bothered with world affairs.

⁶⁸Thomas A. Bailey, Woodrow Wilson and the Great Betrayal (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1945), p. 108.

CHAPTER III

TERRITORIAL SETTLEMENTS AND REPARATIONS

Settlements of territorial claims which posed the most vexatious problems for the Conference were seriously criticized in the United States. Running into direct collision with the secret agreements made under the "rule of might" prior to the War, the new arrangements were to help in attaining "a peace such as Mr. Wilson pronounced for . . . resting on justice to all and with no selfish interests of any. . . ."¹

By March 14, 1919, the Bee warned though that

it is by no means certain such a peace will come out of Paris, for the contracting powers on the side of the Allies show some reluctance to minimize their own claims. Nor do the peacemakers incline with zeal to the work of piece makers in their task of rearranging the map of the world.²

A copyrighted article of May 11, 1919, one in a series about the Treaty, dealt sharp criticism to the proposed territorial settlements. It charged that American and British interests had been cared for but that no problem of the European continent had been solved. It cited the facts that 500,000 Slavic and German-speaking people had been given to Italy in spite of protests. Then 3,000,000 German-speaking people had been given to the Czech-Slovakians. On the other hand, Poland was denied territory which formerly belonged to it even though those areas were partially inhabited by Germans. It pointed out too the rivalry

¹The Omaha Daily Bee, March 14, 1919.

²Ibid.

over the Teschen between Poland and the Czech-Slovaks and the dispute between Polish and Ukranian people as well as between the Lithuanians and Poles.³

The Bee indicated support for Czech-Slovak national interests.⁴

Italy's claims produced a great deal of comment in the Omaha press. In an editorial berating Italy for seizing ports along the Adriatic and shutting off supplies to the Yugo-Slavs and others in the area, the Bee protested

It does not seem possible that at a time when the nations are gathered together to calmly determine the justice of all claimants, and to so arrange boundaries in Europe as to provide for the equitable interests of all, that one of the so-called great nations [referring to Italy] should grab seaports and close them to all traffic in order to enforce an asserted right to them.⁵

On the other hand, the editor also criticized Wilson for involving the United States directly in promising justice to the Yugo-Slavs, obviously countering Italian claims,⁶ and accused him of trying to protect American bankers' interests among the Yugo-Slavs.⁷

³The Omaha Daily News, May 11, 1919.

⁴The Omaha Daily Bee, March 10, 1919.

⁵Ibid., March 7, 1919.

⁶Ibid., March 22, 1919.

⁷Ibid., August 2, 1919, September 30, 1919.

The Daily News and World-Herald agreed that the United States should not be held responsible for Italian settlements. American statesmen had not helped negotiate the secret Treaty of London concluded by Lloyd George, Clemenceau, and Italy's foreign minister, Scialia.⁸ Emphasizing that even the London Pact had not given Italy the Piave seaport, the World-Herald called the country's claims to the area only sentimental. Italy was rationalizing by insisting she needed the seaport as protection against Austria-Hungary. The old Dual Empire had been dissolved by war.⁹ Italy's claims were an afterthought, and the country should have recognized the necessity for making certain concessions when it joined the Allies.¹⁰ Lashing out against Senator Henry Cabot Lodge for justifying Italian claims, the World-Herald maintained that such a settlement would make a strengthened cause for enemies of the Allies, and it called such demands "the body and soul" of Germany's justification of everything that autocracy had done since 1914.¹¹

⁸The Omaha Daily News, November 15, 1919.

⁹According to the Pact of London, made before the War, Italy was to obtain important islands and ports on the Dalmatian Coast in addition to the Austrian Tyrol and Italian provinces of the Austro-Hungarian Empire at the head of the Adriatic Sea. That agreement had not taken into consideration, however, any dissolution of the old Dual Empire and consequent rise of small, independent states which could pose no threat to Italy. See Robert Lansing, The Peace Negotiations: A Personal Narrative (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1921), p. 223.

¹⁰Evening World-Herald, May 1, 1919.

¹¹Ibid., May 6, 1919.

When Premier Vittorio Orlando of Italy left the Conference in April, 1919 incensed over the bitter struggle concerning Fiume and Wilson's ultimatum rejecting Italian claims,¹² the Bee termed the incident a "Test of Strength at Paris." Declaring that the citizens of Fiume desired annexation to Italy rather than to the Yugo-Slavs, the paper questioned what it called Wilson's dictatorial stand, and said the matter would prove whether "America has risen to the state of arbiter of the world's fate, whether it be for democracy or not."¹⁵ The Daily News countered that Wilson had already "conceded too much to this old school diplomatic imperialism" and added, "Here's hoping he keeps a stiff backbone and insists on no further compromise on Fiume."¹⁴ This incident, the paper added, had "cleared the atmosphere" and it defended Wilson's stand as being more clearly in line with American ideals than any previous stand he had taken.¹⁵ The Bee sounded an optimistic note by predicting that

The new era into which the world is moving, and the window on the Adriatic, may modify the historic attitude of the Balkans, and Slav, and Latin, Greek and Tartar, Roman Catholic, Greek Catholic, Mohammedan, Jew and early Protestants--all the intricate mixture of racial, political and religious differences--may be tranquilized and brought to harmony under the benign influence of the new rule.¹⁶

¹²The Omaha Daily News, April 23, 1919.

¹³The Omaha Daily Bee, April 24, 1919.

¹⁴The Omaha Daily News, April 25, 1919.

¹⁵Ibid., May 5, 1919.

¹⁶The Omaha Daily Bee, April 25, 1919.

With rumors by the end of April of Orlando's possible return to the Conference, the World-Herald attempted to smooth over the entire rupture, reporting that his absence had not been indicative of a real break in the discussions, but had been "merely [a] suspension of negotiations."¹⁷

Commenting in May upon a temporary arrangement which gave the Yugo-Slavs control of Fiume for a time, the Bee declared Italy's "substantial interests" had still been realized with restoration to it of Trieste, Pola, and other towns in the "irredents." Then too, it had secured free access to the area back of its ports.¹⁸ "Not Machivelli himself could have proposed a happier solution than is reached in regard to Fiume," enthusiastically declared the Daily News. "Better than all this," the editor concluded, "Each delegate can leave Paris in a happy frame of mind, contented and conscience-clear as regards this Adriatic affair."¹⁹ Not quite so optimistic, the Bee pointed out that while Italy had temporarily conceded on Fiume and the Dalmatian coasts, Serbia and its associates were demanding more and more.²⁰

The cautious attitude proved to be the more realistic one, for the issue was not buried; it continued to rear its controversial head, and Wilson threatened to leave the Peace Conference European Councils because of it. He further threatened withdrawing the

¹⁷Morning World-Herald, April 26, 1919.

¹⁸The Omaha Daily Bee, May 6, 1919.

¹⁹The Omaha Daily News, May 7, 1919.

²⁰The Omaha Daily Bee, May 19, 1919.

Peace Treaty from the United States Senate in disgust at Italian proposals.²¹ Withdrawing the Treaty would mean protecting American interests, the editor of the Daily News pointed out, for according to Article Ten the United States would be obliged to help protect the Italian-Yugo-Slav border once it had been set. On the other hand, "Article Ten would be no deterrent to the imperialistic Italians in their desire to pilfer the territory of Serbia and the southern Slavs."²²

Another question which came in for a great deal of attention concerned the cession of the Shantung Peninsula to Japan. Labeling the agreement a "Black Mark," the Bee insisted that it was a weak feature of the Treaty and said there should be no "justification for the retention of the Shantung Peninsula by Japan because it was taken from Germany and not from Japan."²³ Originally China had made the Shantung concession to Germany under duress, the editor maintained, so the area could not be given to Japan if wrongs were to be made right.²⁴

Senator George Norris of Nebraska described the arrangement as a bribe to draw Japan to the side of the Allies.²⁵ Severely rebuked by the World-Herald for his accusation, "Our Shantung Senator" was charged

²¹The Omaha Daily News, December 24, 1919.

²²Ibid., February 16, 24, 1920.

²³The Omaha Daily Bee, July 10, 1919.

²⁴Ibid., July 5, 1919.

²⁵George W. Norris, Fighting Liberal: The Autobiography of George W. Norris (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1945), p. 208.

with trying to smash the Peace Treaty, League, and other constructive work because of the Shantung decision.²⁶ Alleging that a secret agreement for partitioning China had been made between the Allies and Japan, he had helped to stir up senatorial resentment on the issue.²⁷ In reply, Senator Hitchcock claimed that whatever China had lost in the settlement, she had gained under Article Ten.²⁸ "The same senators," he continued, "who now shed crocodile tears over the fate of China have never in all the past raised their voices against her spoliation."²⁹ The World-Herald ridiculed the "feigned" sympathy as "crocodile tears over a rag baby with a paper knife in its canton-flannel heart."³⁰ League enemies were seeking discord with Japan over the issue, Hitchcock charged.³¹ The World-Herald questioned

Do we want to delay indefinitely the restoration of peace, make a mess of the League of Nations to discourage war, and ourselves invite war with Japan, all on account of the Japanese having taken over German concessions and privileges in a very small section?³²

Due to a great deal of anti-Japanese feeling on the Pacific Coast of the United States, the Shantung settlement threatened to

²⁶Morning World-Herald, July 9, 1919.

²⁷The Omaha Daily News, July 15, 1919.

²⁸Morning World-Herald, July 16, 1919.

²⁹Ibid., July 17, 1919. Quoting Hitchcock from the Washington Dispatch.

³⁰Morning World-Herald, July 17, 1919.

³¹Ibid., July 16, 1919.

³²Ibid., July 21, 1919.

become a racial problem. California's Senator Hiram Johnson said that the people of his state should have the right to a decision in the matter.³⁴ Certain Republican Senators were only attempting to capitalize upon anti-Japanese feeling on the Pacific Coast, reported the World-Herald, in an article taken from the New York World. Castigating Senator Henry Cabot Lodge for what it called "Lodge's Bankrupt Leadership", it added that he was unnaturally vociferous in his protests, considering the fact that he had been a Senator during McKinley's administration--the time of granting concessions by China to Germany. He had made no protest then, and furthermore, at the opening of the Peace Conference there had been no secret about Japan's probable demands, so they should have come as no surprise.³⁵

The Bee attributed renewal of the racial question to Japanese threats in face of American opposition to the settlement.³⁶ To supposedly help clear up the trouble, Japan agreed to issue a statement regarding its own intent. When the statement arrived, President Wilson commended it and declared it had cleared the air. Certain Senators, however, were not so easily satisfied.³⁷ Senatorial dissatisfaction was voiced in a subsequent vote by the Foreign Relations Committee to amend the Treaty

³⁴The Omaha Daily News, June 4, 1919.

³⁵Morning World-Herald, July 28, 1919.

³⁶The Omaha Daily Bee, July 26, 1919.

³⁷Ibid., August 8, 1919.

and return Shantung to China instead of awarding it to Japan.³⁸ The World-Herald clearly subscribed to the Chicago Tribune's views. Ridiculing Senator Lodge and his Committee's work, the Chicago Tribune opposed awarding Shantung to Japan and stated that if Lodge's group had as lofty convictions as professed, it should logically declare war upon Japan. The Tribune added:

If it undertakes to continue a policy of redrafting the treaty after its own sweet will, in accordance with the requests of discontents who failed to impress the peace conference . . . it will consider resolutions declaring war on Great Britain, France, Italy, and a few other nations.³⁹

In September, 1919 a Chinese envoy passed through Omaha, but as reported by the Daily News, he expressed no opinion on the Shantung issue.⁴⁰ Not so silent, Senators Norris and Lodge continued their attacks. The former called it the "Outrage of the Age,"⁴¹ and Lodge warned that Japan could become a "Peril to America and the World."⁴² He urged keeping a strong navy in the Pacific to ward off such a threat. Wilson's answer was that the Japanese should be educated through the League, against forcefully taking territory.⁴³

Promising action by the Senate subsequent to the Foreign Relations Committee vote, the Bee accused President Wilson of using

³⁸The Omaha Daily News, August 23, 1919.

³⁹Quoted by the Evening World-Herald, August 28, 1919.

⁴⁰The Omaha Daily News, September 28, 1919.

⁴¹The Omaha Daily Bee, October 11, 1919.

⁴²Evening World-Herald, October 14, 1919.

⁴³Ibid., December 18, 1919.

the Shantung settlement to "redeem the engagements made in secret by Great Britain and France and of which this country had no notice."⁴⁴

It issued a further scathing condemnation declaring

A league that starts by inflicting injustice on a weak and defenseless nation is not calculated to inspire confidence in its integrity. Nothing . . . has so outraged the moral sensibilities of Americans as the award of Shantung to the crafty and rapacious Japs, unless it be the despicable efforts of certain democratic newspapers to justify the outrage by sneering at the patient Chinese, who appeal to us for justice only.⁴⁵

Brought before the Senate for a vote in October, the proposed Treaty amendment to take Shantung from Japan, was defeated by a vote of fifty-five to thirty-five.⁴⁶ With its failure to gain passage, Lodge was compared with Daniel Webster by the World-Herald in an article terming the defeat a personal one as the result of "passion for personal power. . . ."⁴⁷ In direct reply to the article, the Bee thundered

In the course of a long and labored sermon to Henry Cabot. Lodge on the subject of the Shantung amendment, which was voted down, the esteemed World-Herald says:

"He has proposed to upset the movement for a League of Nations, rather than have effective the clause in the covenant of the league which provides that Japan shall return the sovereignty of Shantung to China within a period of ten years."⁴⁸

Asking where the World-Herald had received its information, the Bee insisted that the above-stated provision was not in the Treaty.⁴⁹

⁴⁴The Omaha Daily Bee, August 25, 1919.

⁴⁵Ibid.

⁴⁶Ibid., October 17, 1919.

⁴⁷Evening World-Herald, October 21, 1919.

⁴⁸The Omaha Daily Bee, October 22, 1919.

⁴⁹Ibid.

The World-Herald later announced that Japan had promised to give up Chinese territory after signing the Treaty and consequently Lodge's reservations were "sillier and more impertinent than ever."⁵⁰ Yet Japan's protest over withdrawal of United States troops from Siberia indicated her real imperialistic ambitions, insisted the Bee.⁵¹

As attested by later world incidents, the Shantung issue was not closed then, or for many years thereafter. But it was temporarily laid aside when, with a second Senate vote taken on March 19, 1920, Lodge and his supporters successfully gained a Treaty amendment on the settlement.⁵²

Various other territorial settlements were made at the Conference. Dealing with the Alsace-Lorraine question, the Bee upheld France's wish for adequate defense against another possible German invasion at a future time.⁵³ Columnist Ralph W. Simonds, who served as president of the War Loans Drive and also as a columnist, supported France. In his article which appeared in the Daily News he alleged that the country's fair claims were being reduced at the Conference, and that "in return for 1,500,000 of dead and her ruined northern industrial regions she . . . [would] have neither guarantee against a new German invasion nor reparation for the devastation of the last."⁵⁴ When the controversial Alsace-Lorraine

⁵⁰Evening World-Herald, January 5, 1920.

⁵¹The Omaha Daily Bee, January 21, 1920.

⁵²Herbert C. Hoover, The Ordeal of Woodrow Wilson (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1958), p. 292.

⁵³The Omaha Daily Bee, March 5, 1919.

⁵⁴The Omaha Daily News, April 3, 1919.

region was finally awarded to France, the Daily News endorsed the decision⁵⁵ and told of the forces to be stationed in the Rhineland. They were to be made up mainly of French forces, plus a few British soldiers and about ten thousand Americans. The whole Treaty, the paper asserted, rested on promises to protect France against future aggression.⁵⁶

The Saar Valley settlement, criticized in May, 1919 as containing seeds for continued France-German disagreements, was reported a month later to be quite modified, and the Silesian plebiscite planned to be held under the supervision of an Allied commission was confirmed. The Daily News expressed concern, however, that the United States should have a share in seeing that the plebiscite might be properly carried out.⁵⁷

Danzig, Poland, the city which finally was made free under administration of the League, was mentioned briefly. The World-Herald declared that Germany should not be bound to surrender its authority there before the United States had agreed to proposed arrangements.⁵⁸

The decision regarding Belgium was another point considered. Calling the Treaty arrangement for that country as perhaps the best

⁵⁵Ibid., May 11, 1919.

⁵⁶Ibid., June 16, 1919.

⁵⁷The Omaha Daily News, May 11, June 16, November 11, 1919; Ramsay Muir, The Political Consequences of the Great War (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1931), pp. 75-76. Germany lost her mineral rights in the Saar Valley. In addition, three bridgeheads east of the River were occupied by the Allies for fifteen years. Even after that time, that territory plus an area fifty kilometers east of the Rhine were to be permanently demilitarized.

⁵⁸Evening World-Herald, November 6, 1919.

obtainable under the circumstances, the Bee pointed out that the country's industries were not restored and asked if "generosity might not have gone a little further in the effort to restore to the people of Belgium all that was wrested from them."⁵⁹

Settlements in the Middle East were important to Omaha subscribers. On June 2, 1919, the World-Herald described a meeting of five thousand which was held in the municipal auditorium as a protest against persecution of Jewish people in Poland, Rumania, and Galicia. Speaking to them in an attempt to soothe their feelings, ex-President Taft and Senator Hitchcock reassuringly stated that "the league of nations covenant would be the best means of guaranteeing religious freedom throughout the world."⁶⁰ Prospects for establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine were still remote, however, declared the same paper in July.⁶¹

Referring to Armenia as the most probable mandate for the United States, the Daily News glowingly announced, "In return for this big-brotherly assistance we shall win the friendship of some 4,000,000 Armenians" and went on to predict that Armenia would most likely become self-sufficient in ten years anyway.⁶²

⁵⁹The Omaha Daily Bee, May 6, 1919.

⁶⁰Evening World-Herald, June 2, 1919.

⁶¹Ibid., July 11, 1919; Muir, The Political Consequences of the Great War, p. 84. The final agreement provided that Palestine would become a mandate of Great Britain until its independence.

⁶²The Omaha Daily News, April 19, 1919.

Just a few months later Turkey was accused of being the first to defy orders of the League of Nations. Simonds' column in the Daily News warned that Armenia would again be subjugated by Turkey, but called the position of Britain in Mesopotamia and of France in Syria, safe. The Greeks were, though, unable to hold their position in Asia Minor, he concluded.⁶³

The future of Ireland was discussed with reference to the League. Calling the League a definite step forward for Ireland, both the Daily News and World-Herald painted possibilities of a rosy future for the Irish people.⁶⁴ Doefully, the Bee countered that if Ireland's problems were brought up in a world council, United States relations with Mexico and exclusion of Asiatics would also have to be discussed.⁶⁵ A later vote in the Senate put the United States on record as favoring a Treaty amendment supporting Irish freedom.⁶⁶

Conversely, pro-Irish sentiment became anti-British in tone and Lodge asked that the United States have the same number of votes in the proposed League Council as Britain had obtained by including her Dominions for representation.⁶⁷ Criticizing those who would deny the

⁶³Ibid., July 24, 1919; Muir, The Political Consequences of the Great War, p. 84. In addition to Palestine, Great Britain received mandates in Iraq and Transjordan, while France gained northern Syria. Thomas A. Bailey, Woodrow Wilson and the Lost Peace (New York: Mac-Millan Company, 1944), p. 171. The United States did not accept the mandate of Armenia.

⁶⁴Evening World-Herald, September 11, 1919.

⁶⁵The Omaha Daily Bee, September 18, 1919.

⁶⁶The Omaha Daily News, March 19, 1919.

⁶⁷Ibid., September 10, 1919.

Dominions representation, the Daily News scorned forcing " . . . the dominions back into a position of dependence by denying them representation in the league--and refusing to acknowledge them as political entities."⁶⁸

Comparing Austria-Hungary's disappearance with that of an electric light bulb dropped on a cement floor, the editor predicted that its best days were yet to come. Calling the old Empire "Always an unnatural union of antagonistic races held together by the mailed fists," he added that "its dissolution into small self-governing groups . . . would be welcomed more by its own peoples than by its traditional diplomatic enemies."⁶⁹ Germany would no longer have the old bulwark to lean upon which had been " . . . the master link of the Berlin-Baghdad railway, the antidote for an Italy possibly deserting the original Germanic alliance, the convenient door to a Turkey that might assist kultur by proclaiming a holy war."⁷⁰ Germany's bitterest enemies had become those new nations to the south, the editor concluded, which " . . . were fully awakened to how Berlin used them as dupes."⁷¹

⁶⁸Ibid., October, 1919.

⁶⁹Ibid., June 8, 1919.

⁷⁰Ibid.

⁷¹Ibid.

Sympathies for those newly-created nations as well as for old homelands was in evidence, not only in the newspapers, but in hyphenated clubs which sprang up in various parts of the country. One was the Polish-American club. These organizations were established to protest alleged unfairness to homelands, but the Daily News decried them in a plea for national unity as an antidote to factionalism.⁷²

In April the problem of how to treat the Russians was lightly brushed aside by the Bee which predicted, "Bolshevism will be permitted to die out and not be crushed by force."⁷³ Later, again briefly mentioning Russia and linking its future to the rest of Europe, the Bee predicted that western Asiatic groups might in the future join a second European alliance separate from that of the League. The land-locked nations of central and eastern Europe would be interested in such an alliance, it continued, and cited economic and political reasons to support the theory. Pointing out that Germany would be in a favorable position to trade with a revived Russia, it added that Germany's industrial hope would lie to the east. "A central and eastern European group may not at the moment seem formidable, but it must be reckoned with. In its growth will be found the key to the future,"⁷⁴ was the ominous prediction.

⁷²Ibid., June 26, 1919.

⁷³The Omaha Daily Bee, April 17, 1919.

⁷⁴Ibid., June 26, 1919.

Omaha press opinion unanimously concurred in declaring the German nation alone guilty of starting the War. An article in the World-Herald asserted that "Harsh as the terms may seem to them, they must themselves realize that those terms are the soul of magnanimity and forbearance compared to what Germany would have exacted . . ."75 if it had been the victor. The German people would be allowed to recover industrially, the Bee affirmed, but only so that they could pay back their debt to "the victims of their inhuman rapacity."76 But "if we are to have peace with Germany there must be a Germany,"77 cautioned the World-Herald, and the Daily News suggested that the war debt should not be set outrageously high.78 The real hope for dealing with Germany would be in the League, the latter paper emphasized,79 though the Bee questioned, "Just suppose Germany does not enter the League of Nations; what then?"80 It certainly had shown no interest in joining. As if in reply, the World-Herald in an article reprinted from the Springfield Republican predicted that if the League were emphasized as an agency for making peace in line with the Fourteen Points, and if Germany were promised membership in it, the country would accept the

75 Evening World-Herald, May 8, 1919.

76 The Omaha Daily Bee, May 9, 1919.

77 Morning World-Herald, March 15, 1919.

78 The Omaha Daily News, March 30, 1919.

79 Ibid., May 10, 1919.

80 The Omaha Daily Bee, April 23, 1919.

Treaty sooner than otherwise and without a revolution at home.⁸¹ If the Germans would show genuine repentance, the World-Herald promised, they could "expect to gain a place for themselves in the league of nations and so to stand at least, shriven of their sins, once more a great people among the great peoples of the earth."⁸² The future would depend "almost entirely on the operation of the league of nations," the Daily News asserted, and stressed that

whether Germany will consider herself surrounded by a series of Alsace-Lorraines will depend very largely on the wisdom, fairness and justice with which the league of nations commissions shall manage the occupations, administrations, cessions and plebiscites for which the treaty provides.⁸³

On May 29 the Daily News announced that Germany had delivered its counter proposals to the proposed Allied settlements and added that the "Big Four" were expected to announce any change as a result of those proposals, then ask Germany to sign quickly. The conservative German press, it reported, had adopted an "aggrieved" air and objected particularly to disarmament of the German fleet and reduction of the army to 100,000 men. The German Theodore Wolff, writing in Tageblatt asked, "Does Wilson intend to establish in Europe the slavery that Lincoln abolished? The counter proposals which his people were offering," he continued, "presuppose the entente will not take from Germany its

⁸¹Evening World-Herald, May 15, 1919.

⁸²Ibid., May 8, 1919.

⁸³The Omaha Daily News, May 10, 1919.

ability to pay and suggest neutral commissions to police and oversee plebiscites in disputed territories.⁸⁴

"Many responsible persons admitted that the original provisions were at least stiff,"⁸⁵ and the reparations clause was criticized by those who felt that a specific amount should be named for repayment. The Daily News on May 30 declared "there is no disposition to agree that the amount should be only \$25,000,000,000, as Germany demands," although the editor pointed out that the figure suggested was practically the same as the United States had proposed earlier. Though bowing to all of the counter proposals would mean writing an almost completely new treaty, said Wilson, certain minor concessions could be made which would not materially affect it. He suggested four:

1. Lower reparation payments down to \$20,000,000,000
2. Fix the power of the reparation commission as to decrees governing Germany's internal affairs
3. Allow four years instead of two for the first \$5,000,000,000 payment
4. Enable Germany to acquire merchant shipping by lease, charter, or otherwise.⁸⁶

France though, took a dim view of the counter proposals offered by Germany and announced, "The only reply is to show them our liberty loans, the bodies of our dead, and the Belgian gray book."⁸⁷ Further, France, violently opposed admitting Germany to the League of Nations,

⁸⁴Ibid., May 29, 1919.

⁸⁵Ibid., May 30, 1919.

⁸⁶Ibid., June 2, 3, 1919.

⁸⁷Ibid., May 30, 31, 1919.

but the Daily News suggested that allowing Germany to join would be better than leaving her on the outside.⁸⁸ As a member she would be subjected to all the regulations of the League. Further, not all of the German people, according to the World-Herald, were opposed to the League.⁸⁹

After bitter debate over the terms and threats of forcing Germany to sign the Treaty, the defeated foe finally did sign the document on June 28, 1919, in the historic Hall of Mirrors at the Palace of Versailles.⁹⁰

⁸⁸Ibid., May 31, 1919.

⁸⁹Evening World-Herald, September 27, 1919.

⁹⁰The Reparations Commission of 1921 later set the figure for repayment at \$33,000,000,000. Later, according to the Young Plan of 1929, it was revised downward to \$8,000,000,000. See Bailey, Woodrow Wilson and the Lost Peace, pp. 246-302.

CHAPTER IV

PRESIDENT WILSON'S PRO-LEAGUE TRIP AND OPPOSITION

"YAPPING AT HIS HEELS"

On June 16, 1919, the World-Herald announced that a tentative itinerary had been made for a trip by President Wilson through the United States in an attempt to win public support for the Treaty and League. Though that fact was reported in June, the subsequent ill health of the President delayed the proposed trip, and in July there was considerable question as to whether he should undertake such a feat at all. The Bee, with the impression in mid-July that the idea had been called off, expressed its commendation and noted that Wilson "appears to realize the strength of the opposition, if he does not his own weakness" in a stand on the Treaty.¹

The President did not give up so easily, however, and on August 15, the Daily News reported that the tour would begin after the Treaty had been presented to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. His itinerary called for speeches in approximately twenty-five cities on a route carefully chosen by his personal physician, Admiral Cary T. Grayson, in an effort to avoid the excessive heat of the plains and desert states. Omaha was included in his tour. This would be Woodrow Wilson's third visit to Omaha. On October 5, 1912, he had visited as the Governor

¹The Omaha Daily Bee, July 21, 1919.

of New Jersey then campaigning in the capacity of Democratic nominee for the presidency. Exactly four years later, on October 5, 1916, he had come under the auspices of the Nebraska State Historical Society to review the historical parade of the Ak-Sar-Ben and to begin his speech-making campaign for a second presidential term.

Accompanying the President on this third trip were to be Mrs. Wilson, Press Secretary Joseph P. Tumulty, other secretaries, maids, and various attaches. Twenty-two newspapermen had also applied for permission to accompany the entourage.²

The farmers of the Midwest and the West--the areas upon which the trip would concentrate--were reported to be preparing a list of queries about the treaty. Digests of the Treaty were prepared to answer their questions. Included with the digest were explanations of principal provisions and copies were to be placed in the hands of every farmer by the National Farm Organization.

In opposition to the entire idea of the President's "swing around the circle," the Bee warned that he would "find a great change in public sentiment on the main point. Americans are as thoroughly devoted to peace and all it contains as ever, but they are not persuaded that the proposed league contains all the elements of peace."³ The editor also charged that certain provisions contained the seeds of future wars.⁴

²The Omaha Daily News, August 31, 1919; September 7, 1919.

³The Omaha Daily Bee, August 30, 1919.

⁴Ibid.

In spite of opposition the President began his tour and, with his visit to Omaha scheduled for September 8, the World-Herald promised that strictly non-partisan lines were being followed in making plans for his coming.⁵ The Daily News reported that local members of the League to Enforce Peace, headed by G. N. Dietz, were to have charge of the reception and entertainment of the visitors. After an auto tour of the city scheduled to begin at 9:00 A. M., the President would probably speak at the Municipal Auditorium about 10:30 A. M.⁶ Other plans included using airplanes to drop bouquets of golden rod, the Nebraska state flower, on the presidential car during the parade. Sirens were to sound when the parade started. School children were given permission by the superintendent of schools to watch the entire motorcade and then report to school afterward.⁷ Mayor Smith also urged businessmen to give their employees time off to watch the parade.⁸

On September 7 the Daily News headlines announced, "City Ready to Welcome President" and reported that after the scheduled 10:00 o'clock speech at the auditorium there would be an 11:00 o'clock reception for the immediate reception committee and out-of-town guests. The presidential train would then leave for Sioux Falls, South Dakota, at noon.

⁵Evening World-Herald, September 6, 1919.

⁶The Omaha Daily News, August 31, 1919.

⁷Evening World-Herald, September 5, 1919.

⁸Ibid., September 4, 1919.

The entire parade route was included:

The motorcade would leave Union Station at 9:00 a.m., and head north on Tenth Street to Farnam Street, travel west to 38th and go south on 38th to Pacific Street. Traveling east on Pacific Street it would head toward 36th Street, going south on 36th to Woolworth Ave. The party would travel east on Woolworth to the Boulevard, and go north to Leavenworth Street. Going east on Leavenworth to 16th Street, it should then go north to Chicago, and east on Chicago to 15th St. Traveling south on 15th to Douglas, it would next go west on Douglas to 19th. Heading south on 19th to Harney, then east on Harney to 15th and finally travel south on 15th to the auditorium.⁹

Plans called for local business executives Gould Dietz and Gurdon Wattles to ride in the leading car with the President and Mrs. Wilson during the motorcade.¹⁰

A cordon of soldiers from Fort Crook was scheduled to be responsible for clearing Union Station for the President's arrival and fifty soldiers plus eight officers from Fort Omaha were to serve as ushers at the Municipal Auditorium. Members of the American Legion were also invited to volunteer their services.¹¹

With all details taken care of, the eventful day for the President's visit finally came. His special train arrived in Omaha as

⁹The Omaha Daily News, September 7, 1919.

¹⁰Evening World-Herald, September 5, 1919.

¹¹The Omaha Daily News, September 6, 1919.

scheduled, at 9:00 A. M. after stopping to rest at Underwood, Iowa, from 5:00 to 9:00 A. M. Earlier scheduled to breakfast at the Fontenelle Hotel, the President had wanted to take no chances on the waiters' strike in Omaha and had eaten aboard the train instead.¹²

"I feel at home here," he remarked as he stepped from his train. Smiling, he quipped to a photographer who asked his wife to pose for a picture, "I have no control over that little lady at all."¹³ He appeared well-rested and in " . . . fine physical condition, and better than two years before."¹⁴

An ovation began at the station and continued until the party reached Farnam Street and the residential area,¹⁵ Amid comments and exclamations such as "O, there he is," "Hurrah for Wilson," "He doesn't look as old as I thought he did," and "My, isn't Mrs. Wilson pretty," the motoreade moved rapidly, so quickly in fact, that the assembled crowds could only get a glimpse of the Chief Executive.¹⁶

Both the Daily News and World-Herald reported an enthusiastic response and the latter estimated that a crowd of about 50,000 was on hand to greet him.¹⁷ Homes and buildings were festooned with flags

¹²Ibid., September 8, 9, 1919.

¹³Evening World-Herald, September 8, 1919.

¹⁴Ibid., actually it had been three years since his last visit, according to Daily News, September 7, 1919.

¹⁵The Omaha Daily News, September 8, 1919.

¹⁵The Omaha Daily News, September 8, 1919.

¹⁶Evening World-Herald,
Ibid., September 8, 1919.

and bunting along the parade route¹⁸ and business activity was suspended.¹⁹ The greatest number of people was reported assembled at 15th and Howard Streets where the "President's allusions to the part of labor in the war were acclaimed by cheers."²⁰ Unbridled enthusiasm at the Grain Exchange Building when the parade passed almost led to disaster for several men and women "nearly fell out of the windows" in their excitement.²¹

There were several interesting events along the route. The children at St. Peter's School, located at 28th and Leavenworth, were disturbed because their school had no flagpole upon which to raise Old Glory that morning. Therefore, just a few minutes before the parade was to pass their school, they ingeniously called the fire department. A hook-and-ladder company rushed to the school, the ladder was raised, and a fireman held the flag at the top while the parade passed.

At 27th and Leavenworth Streets a team of horses hitched to a wagon became frightened. As the head of the parade neared, the horses began to run and continued their run-away until stopped by traffic officers at 24th and Leavenworth.

The entourage's only stop was at South 38th Street where at the home of C. N. Dietz, the President alighted and shook hands with elderly Mrs. L. A. Dietz, mother of Gould Dietz and C. N. Dietz.

September 8, 1919.

¹⁸The Omaha Daily News, September 8, 1919.

¹⁹Evening World-Herald, September 8, 1919.

²⁰The Omaha Daily News, September 8, 1919.

²¹Ibid.

The press was lavish in its praise of the First Lady. The Daily News described her attire as follows:

Mrs. Wilson was becomingly gowned in pale blue French voile, exquisitely embroidered. The dress was simply made with a vestee effect of white and a white collar.

The sleeves were short and she wore long black kid gloves, the gauntlets slightly turned back--in accordance with the new French mode.

Her hat, too, was black, in the large, slightly tilted shape of which she is so fond. At one side was a big, soft bow of dull blue and gilt. Within an hour after Mrs. Wilson's appearance at the Union station, a local department store reported a "run" on Shetland veils, "the kind Mrs. Wilson is wearing."

She carried a black and white beaded purse. A tiny wrist watch, encrusted with brilliants, was worn over her black gloves.²²

Wearing a light business suit and brown felt hat with a "modest" blue tie with an "equally modest" tiepin, the President accepted the spectators' acclamations.²³

At the auditorium which had filled considerably before 9:00 A.M., an overflow crowd had gathered to hear the President speak. Cheers continued while he entered the building, and until he began his introductory remarks made after placing "his 'lid' under his seat on the auditorium platform just like an every day citizen would place his hat under his church pew."²⁴

In his speech the President took a firm stand against any reservations for the Treaty and declared that he would gladly give his life if he stood in the way of the Pact's acceptance. Giving close

²²Ibid., September 8, 1919.

²³Ibid.

²⁴Ibid.

attention to the entire speech,²⁵ the audience cheered at that remark,²⁶ and also applauded occasionally at various other points. During the applause, the First Lady questioned Mrs. Draper Smith, chairwoman of the women's reception committee, whether the sentiment were sincere. Mrs. Smith answered that at least ninety per cent of the women were in favor of the Treaty and League.

Commenting afterward, many ladies said that Wilson had dispelled all of their doubts about the desirability of ratification, while others declared that his address had made them want acceptance speeded up even though they had been "heart and soul" for the Treaty anyway. "The President's talk cleared the Shantung question for me," stated Mrs. James Richardson. "I was particularly impressed by his common sense argument: What would be the consequence if we would not accept the treaty because of the Shantung clause?" Mrs. C. L. Hempel, president of the Omaha Women's Club, gave her opinion: "I agree entirely with the President's statement that the treaty must be accepted without reservations. . . . I feel sure the sentiment of the women is with the president on the acceptance of the treaty." Another lady was quoted as saying that "his talk made me more impatient than ever with the men who are holding it up by quibbling."²⁷

²⁵Ibid.

²⁶The Omaha Daily Bee, September 9, 1919.

²⁷The Omaha Daily News, September 8, 1919.

With the conclusion of his address, a crowd surged onto the stage in an effort to greet the President and Mrs. Wilson.²⁸ In spite of the apparent enthusiasm of many in the crowd, and particularly of the female segment, it was reported that "arguments for and against the league of nations were heard on all sides. Argument took to forms of more than words and police were called several times to stop fights."²⁹

Commenting upon the President's visit, the Daily News reported that the crowds during the motorcade in the residential areas had not been as large as in some cities he had already visited.³⁰ The Bee, attempting to minimize the event, captioned its story, "Small Crowds Greet Wilson on Auto Trip" and "Business District Not Decorated." The visit suffered by comparison with his last one to Omaha in 1916, the paper insisted, and fell far short of any previous presidential visit.³¹

An interesting sidelight to the visit with a not-so-rational reaction involved the case of twenty-five prisoners in the city jail. They took an oath to never again support President Wilson because Police Judge Fitzgerald had declared September 8 a holiday and this necessitated their spending an extra day in jail before being brought to trial.³²

²⁸Evening World-Herald, September 8, 1919.

²⁹The Omaha Daily News, September 8, 1919.

³⁰Ibid., September 9, 1919.

³¹The Omaha Daily Bee, September 9, 1919.

³²The Omaha Daily News, September 8, 1919.

The presidential party was not the only Washington delegation touring the country during the fall of 1919. With President Wilson's announcement of plans to tour the country in defense of the League, several Senators violently opposed to the Treaty and League in its original form also made plans for a similar trip. Their trip was to be for the purpose of combating the President's influence and to win support for the opposition stand. Their itinerary included visits to Chicago, Indianapolis, St. Louis, Kansas City, Akron, Salem, New York, and various other cities in addition to Omaha.

Senator William E. Borah was selected to visit Omaha first. E. A. Benson, chairman of the Omaha branch of the League for the Preservation of American Independence, said, "We want the people of Omaha to know both sides of the league of nations proposition. They will get the favorable side from the president. And from Senator Borah they will learn of the perils with which it is fraught."³³ Senator Borah was to arrive in Omaha at 3:30 P. M. on Friday, September 12, Benson later announced, and would travel to the Hotel Fontenelle to be met there by the reception committee. In the evening he would speak at 8:00 o'clock in the Auditorium.³⁴

Four days after the President's speech, the Municipal Auditorium in Omaha was again filled with an audience waiting to hear a discussion of the League and Treaty. Though the audience was not as large as for

³³The Omaha Daily Bee, September 7, 1919.

³⁴The Omaha Daily News, September 9, 1919.

the President's address,³⁵ the Bee enthusiastically described the meeting as follows:

Every seat on the main floor and the gallery was taken, and people were packed along the walls downstairs, and stood back of the last seats in the gallery in rows so deep that those in the rear could scarcely see. In addition, in the gallery men stood and sat on the steps of the aisles.

And they were all solid substantial looking business people, people of intelligence and standing, whether clearly and apparently in business, or in the trades or in the professions. There was but one youth visible in the house. Not an urchin, or clique, or coterie of curiosity seekers such as are commonly used to pack the vacant spaces of a meeting, was visible anywhere.

Plenty of laboring men there were and they made themselves manifest by the volley of questions they fired at the senator. It was these questions, with the close attention given by the remainder of the audience, both to questions and answers, which sounded the keynote or gave the clue as to their character, their state of mind, and their opinions.³⁶

It added that women were in the minority and made up only about fifteen per cent of the attendance. Men came from distances of forty, fifty, and even one hundred miles to hear the Senator, it added.³⁷

When Senator Borah appeared on-stage, the crowd cheered and waved flags.³⁸ He then began his address marked by bitter assaults upon President Wilson.³⁹ According to the Bee, he "smashed up and tore to bits with cold, unimpassioned, indisputable and clearly understood argument the league, the covenant and the entire peace conference with

³⁵ Evening World-Herald, September 13, 1919.

³⁶ The Omaha Daily Bee, September 14, 1919.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ The Omaha Daily News, September 13, 1919.

³⁹ Evening World-Herald, September 13, 1919.

all the adjuncts, hereditaments, and impediments."⁴⁰ According to the World-Herald, on the other hand, he described the President as a tool of Great Britain and "With clever and adroit argument, misleading, . . . untrue assertions Senator Borah so played upon the anti-British sentiment of many of his auditors that he whipped them at times into a frenzy of applause."⁴¹

The crowd was not without its hecklers, however. When Borah declared that men supporting the League loved it more than their nation, "That's not true," came in distinct tones from a side gallery. "Yes it is true, and I'll prove it to you," retorted Borah. Reading from one of Wilson's speeches, he quoted, "This league is greater than the senate and it is greater than the republic."⁴² The Senator went on to say that England had recently asked Secretary Lansing to prepare an army of 150,000 Americans for sending to Constantinople. A lady in the crowd answered back, "No Sir." That same lady, after his speech, stomped down the runway and referring to Wilson said, "I'd just like to see him come here and debate it with Borah."⁴³

Using the pro-Irish sentiment to real advantage, Senator Borah demanded as many votes for the United States as Great Britain and her dominions had in the League. "How many votes are there in all? Be

⁴⁰The Omaha Daily Bee, September 13, 1919.

⁴¹Evening World-Herald, September 13, 1919.

⁴²The Omaha Daily News, September 13, 1919.

⁴³Ibid.

explicit, senator, there are reasons for all these things, you know,"⁴⁴ someone cried, but the audience demanded that the person interrupting be quieted.

Borah then quoted someone as saying incorrectly, that anyone could become a member of the League by a unanimous vote of the member nations. Actually it took only a two-thirds, he corrected. Borah was interrupted again, but this time by a sympathizer. "Who said it was unanimous?" the sympathizer asked at the top of his voice. "If it was anyone in the auditorium, he should be put out."⁴⁵

"Shall Japan ever be permitted to have a voice in regard to what this country shall do and shall not do?" the Senator asked. Cries of "No" were heard from all parts of the auditorium.⁴⁶ Then referring to United States servicemen in Siberia, he charged that their presence violated the United States Constitution. "Someone has said that we fought this war to make the world safe for democracy," he mocked, and the audience broke out in laughter. "Many raised sic from their seats, waved their hats and shouted 'Borah for president, and don't forget Ireland.'" As Borah mentioned Wilson and his work for the League, there were cries of "Impeach him, impeach him."⁴⁷ The Senator also suggested that if time were so important an element in negotiating the peace, the

⁴⁵Ibid.

⁴⁶Ibid.

⁴⁷Ibid.

Senate should cable a message of reservations to Europe instead of calling together another Conference for presenting United States objections. But as he spoke against setting up any League at all, the audience rose to its feet shouting, "That's right," "You've told the whole story," "Stick to it," et cetera.⁴⁸

Commenting upon his speech, the Bee asserted that if President Wilson had found as great support for his viewpoint in Omaha as Borah had for his, the President could have felt that "he held the country and the league in his vest pocket."⁴⁹ It continued as follows:

As it is, the conclusion was that, if the signs are read aright, the league would be doomed in jazz time and with a whoop if the people could only get a fair opportunity to land on it.

.....
 If the visit of the senator has had no other effect, it had made clear that local sentiment is not entirely one-sided in the matter, but that a very respectable element of opposition exists in this section, which has been claimed with assurance by the league advocates. It is a direct reply to the president's statement, made here, that the voice most audible at Washington is not that of the people.⁵⁰

The Bee further claimed that approximately three-fourths or even more of Nebraska's population opposed the League either with or without reservations.⁵¹

In reply, the Daily News pointed out that, "Unfortunately for Mr. Borah's argument [in favor of isolation], it is under this policy . . . that America lived every minute from August 1, 1914, to November 11,

⁴⁸The Omaha Daily Bee, September 13, 1919.

⁴⁹Ibid.

⁵⁰The Omaha Daily Bee, September 13, 14, 1919.

⁵¹Ibid., September 13, 1919.

1918, on the brink of a war that at any time might, and finally did, call to the colors any American of fighting age."⁵²

Senator Hiram Johnson, traveling a different route in general than Borah, visited Omaha. His speech to the local population emphasized his prediction that the United States would have to bear the heaviest responsibility in fighting which could come from League attempts to enforce peace. Describing the Senator's tactics, the World-Herald declared that " 'Hi' Johnson, avowed candidate for the presidency, with a sledge hammer for his instrument and emblem, remains as field marshall of the treaty wreckers."⁵³ Named as his supporters in Nebraska were Frank A. Harrison, John G. Maher, R. B. Howell, Edgar Howard, Luther Drake, Charles F. McGrew, L. D. Richards, Duncan Vinsonhaler, and Victor Rosewater.⁵⁴

Quoting the St. Louis Republic in an article entitled "The Modest Hiram," the World-Herald refuted Senator Johnson's claim that he himself could have written a League Covenant.

Of course, if the world had known that Hiram was able to do it, we would have been saved a lot of trouble. But strangely enough, that part of the world that knew Hiram had an idea that he was a sort of a loose-mouthed demagogue, who jumped continuously from one party to another to reach selfish ends.⁵⁵

While League opponents visited Omaha, the papers continued to

⁵²The Omaha Daily News, September 14, 1919.

⁵³Evening World-Herald, September 17, 1919.

⁵⁴Ibid.

⁵⁵Ibid., September 20, 1919.

give daily accounts of the President's tour. The Daily News reported that the President was receiving his greatest reception from crowds along the Coast.⁵⁶ A few days later however, the Bee publicized reports of a disorderly San Francisco audience which made it difficult for Wilson to speak above its hum. In his speech there he blamed the late President McKinley and his Secretary of State, John Hay, for allowing Germany to become influential in China. Anti-League Senators felt that if the President had been as adamant on the Shantung issue in 1919 as John Hay had been in 1898, the situation in that part of the world would have been wearing an entirely different complexion. They felt that the President should not "cast a slur on a dead predecessor in order to defend his own surrender of a great principle."⁵⁷ Disgustedly, the World-Herald asserted that the entire Treaty and League had become an election issue, and anti-League Senators wanted the nation to enter it with suspicion and unrest so that they could campaign to pull the country out of a bad situation.⁵⁸

When shortly after his San Francisco visit, the President became ill at Pueblo, New Mexico, the Daily News bore the headlines, "Fear Violence to Wilson: No Parade at Pueblo." But after the remaining engagements at Wichita, Oklahoma City, Little Rock, Memphis, and Louisville were cancelled, the President's poor health was given as

⁵⁶The Omaha Daily News, September 13, 1919.

⁵⁷The Omaha Daily Bee, September 18, 19, 1919.

⁵⁸Evening World-Herald, September 19, 1919.

the real cause.⁵⁹

The World-Herald reported that he had suffered a nervous breakdown, and attributed it to a reaction in the digestive organs. He was not being permitted to leave his car, it continued, and his train was being diverted directly to Washington.⁶⁰ The next Daily News attempted to calm the minds of an anxious people with the report: "Wilson No Worse, is Hurried Home." After Doctor Grayson ordered the speed of the train reduced because of the President's suffering, the same publication commented that he had worn himself out by putting his heart and soul into the fight.⁶¹ The Bee caustically commented that if he had not become ill, he could have greeted a few more citizens of the country, ". . . but it is scarcely possible he would have made any deeper impression that he has."⁶²

Through the succeeding anxious days reports about the President's condition were alternately hopeful and pessimistic. On October 2, Grayson declared that his health was not good and called in a nerve specialist for consultation. The following day Wilson's condition was pronounced grave.⁶³

Beginning with October 4, the physician reports became more

⁵⁹The Omaha Daily News, September 26, 1919.

⁶⁰Evening World-Herald, September 26, 1919.

⁶¹The Omaha Daily News, September 28, 1919.

⁶²The Omaha Daily Bee, September 27, 1919.

⁶³The Omaha Daily News, October 2, 3, 1919.

hopeful and Doctor Grayson declared that his patient was slowly mending, though he would not be able to resume the duties of his office for a lengthy period of time.⁶⁴ The Daily News of October 13 attributed his condition to a lesion of the brain, but reassured its readers the following day that Wilson's mind was unaffected. Criticizing the President's physician for what it called scanty reports, the Bee demanded more information for the general public.

To be told that the president has had a restful night, that his appetite is good, his pulse and his temperature normal, his eyesight unimpaired and to have this followed by the further statement that his recovery will be tedious and require perfect rest for a long time does not reassure an anxious public, however it may satisfy the rigidly exact code of professional ethics.⁶⁵

It went on to mention the many rumors which had begun circulating about his "real condition."⁶⁶ The Daily News insisted that Wilson's mind was as good as ever,⁶⁷ while the World-Herald even suggested a congressional investigation to stop the rumors.⁶⁸

Meanwhile, in October during the President's serious illness, Senator James A. Reed was prevented from speaking against the League in Oklahoma because of mob resistance. The World-Herald, though disagreeing violently with the Senator's opinions, denounced the people

⁶⁵Ibid Omaha Daily Bee, October 5, 12, 1919.

⁶⁶Ibid, October 14, 1919.

⁶⁶Ibid, October 13, 1919.

⁶⁷The Omaha Daily News, October 15, 1919.

⁶⁸Evening World-Herald, October 15, 1919.

who had denied him the right to speak. The United States Constitution and basic civil liberties must be upheld at all costs, it maintained.⁶⁹

Quoting from a story in the Lincoln Journal regarding Reed's visit to Lincoln, the World-Herald discussed the assertion that joining the League would mean surrender of national sovereignty. Reed had further attempted to create disrespect for Wilson abroad by picturing him traveling throughout the country and living abroad in luxury at public expense, the paper added. Declaring that "it was not the president's skin or pocketbook that were in danger," Senator Reed had also ridiculed Wilson's willingness to fight for the welfare of mankind.⁷⁰

With the return of Hiram Johnson to Washington in mid-October after winding up his tour with a stop in Salt Lake City and a statement that his trip had been a "Triumph for Americanism,"⁷¹ the Senatorial tours diminished.

⁶⁹Ibid., October 3, 1919.

⁷⁰Ibid., October 6, 1919.

⁷¹The Omaha Daily Bee, October 13, 1919.

CHAPTER V

OTHER PERSONALITIES INVOLVED IN THE DISPUTE

ARTICLE TEN AND THE MONROE DOCTRINE

The papers devoted a great deal of space to covering personalities involved in the Treaty issue. They discussed in detail the work of Senator Hitchcock particularly, who became the voice for President Wilson in the Senate during the Chief Executive's illness.

There were reports at one time of a "falling out" between the two. On June 9, the Evening World-Herald reported that a copy of the Treaty had been brought to the United States by a newspaper correspondent and that the President had sent a cable to Hitchcock asking for a full inquiry. Three days later, after Wilson's return from France, the Bee announced that he had not communicated with Senator Hitchcock since his return, that the Senator felt ignored, and was provoked by the neglect. The Senator had left for a summer resort, it added. The Daily News also reported a rebuff. In describing the meeting between members of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and the President upon his arrival from France, the Daily News declared that "The President . . . treated Hitchcock about as unenthusiastically as he did Borah, who is fighting the league of nations, tooth and nail."¹ Hitchcock was not one of the members chosen to confer with the

¹The Omaha Daily News, July 12, 1919.

President, that paper continued, and predicted that Senator Claude A. Swanson of Virginia would be the man directing the Treaty in its journey through the Senate.

The report was branded false by Press Secretary Tumulty according to both the Daily News and World-Herald, but the Daily News remained unconvinced.² It told that during the War he had often opposed the Administration on important points of war policy and that the Allies had distrusted him. "When they were bearing the brunt of the German onslaught he was looked upon as one of their chief antagonists in this country,"³ it concluded.

That story seemed to be the last, at least in the newspapers, of a rift, for the Bee subsequently announced that Wilson had called upon Hitchcock.⁴ On September 3, the World-Herald announced that Wilson had conferred with Hitchcock before leaving on his pro-League trip across the country, and Nebraska's Lieutenant Governor, Barrows, called him "next to Wilson, [in importance] at [the] Capital."⁵

The Senator evidently did not have strong support from all of his constituency, however. In a report announcing that Hitchcock planned to retire, which proved to be false, the Bee sneeringly declared

²Ibid., July 12, 1919; Morning World-Herald, July 13, 1919.

³The Omaha Daily News, July 18, 1919.

⁴The Omaha Daily Bee, July 19, 1919.

⁵Evening World-Herald, September 23, 1919.

that his retirement could be easily facilitated by the voters. It added

As a matter of fact, his presence in the senate is due to a combination he never may hope to encounter again. Supported by a wet and pro-German element of Nebraska, whose gratitude he had earned by aiding the Kaiser's cause in every way possible, he was finally rescued from defeat by the tremendous Wilson wave. In fact, he has the unique distinction of being the only man ever elected to office in this state who ran 30,000 votes behind the head of his ticket.⁶

The first Senate vote on an amended Treaty was taken on November 19, 1919. The Bee interpreted the outcome of that first test vote as proof that Hitchcock led only a minority in his fight.⁷ Later on he conferred with Taft and other members of the Senate who favored mild reservations as well as with Democratic members. Those conferences, however, were held in October, after the President had become ill, and by that time Hitchcock was clearly the President's man "carrying the ball" at the front of the fight.⁸

The Senator attempted to work as closely with the President as possible, in spite of Wilson's incapacity, by conferring with the Chief Executive. After one such talk in November to discuss proposed reservations, the Senator announced he had a program for action⁹ and toward the end of the month issued a statement reemphasizing his belief that ratification could still be accomplished.¹⁰ The difficulty of the

⁶The Omaha Daily Bee, August 9, 1919.

⁷Ibid., September 25, 1919.

⁸Evening World-Herald, October 3, 6, 1919.

⁹Ibid., November 5, 6, 7, 1919.

¹⁰The Omaha Daily Bee, November 23, 1919.

situation was, he explained, due to having an "invalid in [the] White House and Stubborn Men in [the] Senate."¹¹ Still, in January, speaking at the Jackson Day dinner, he challenged his enemies to a "finish fight" on the League and declared that if the test should come, his forces would win.¹²

In March, with the victory still not won, opposition Senator James A. Reed derisively invited Hitchcock to leave America. Referring to a statement in which the Nebraska Senator had called the British government more responsible to the people than the American one, Reed taunted that those who favored a "Monarchist System Might Get Into the Peerage."¹³

As already mentioned, a group of seven Republican Senators prepared a list of reservations which they wished to see included in the Treaty. In addition, various other Senators also had their own suggestions. Opposing the Treaty in any form whatsoever was Senator Philander C. Knox who suggested that the United States sign a separate treaty with Germany. On opposing the Knox Resolution the Daily News stated:

Did America fight with all its power . . . only to best Germany? It did not. When Senator Knox states that the fulfillment of the ends for which we ENTERED the war will satisfy the desires with which the American people ENDED the war he libels the nation.

¹¹Ibid., November 27, 1919.

¹²Ibid., January 9, 1920.

¹³The Omaha Daily News, March 4, 1920.

The treaty is not a perfect treaty. But it is a good treaty vastly better than any ever before written by a group of world powers.¹⁴

Of the group of Senators branded "irreconcilables," in contrast with the "mild reservationists," Senator Henry Cabot Lodge, chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee, was probably the most vocal. The Lodge Resolution, reported in December, 1919, proposed that the Treaty should not be ratified until the reservations adopted by the Senate had been accepted by three of the four principal Allies and Associates consisting of Great Britain, France, Italy, and Japan. This resolution was, however, rejected.¹⁵ Criticizing Lodge's actions, the World-Herald called "The antagonism against the League of Nations . . . merely a pretext and shrewd political maneuver to throw sand in the eyes of the American people and to conceal the sinister motive and unholy game of politics to be staged for the campaign of 1920."¹⁶

The fight continued. Hiram Johnson, blaming any support for the League to hysteria,¹⁷ claimed that the people did not understand the Treaty.¹⁸ Senator Borah, who soon after the Pact was first made public, reportedly threatened to leave his party if it supported the Treaty,¹⁹

¹⁴Ibid., June 18, 1919. The Knox Resolution was adopted in 1921 when a separate Treaty was signed with Germany.

¹⁵The Omaha Daily Bee, December 14, 1919.

¹⁶Evening World-Herald, June 19, 1919.

¹⁷Ibid., June 5, 1919.

¹⁸The Omaha Daily News, September 12, 1919.

¹⁹Sunday World-Herald, June 22, 1919.

worked long and hard to line up Republicans against it. The League to Enforce Peace called him to account for saying that big businessmen and international bankers were the League's main supporters and offered a list of other adherents asking that they be read into the

Congressional Record. Directly confronted, the Senator backed down.²⁰
Congressionalburying the actions of James A. Reed and calling his doctrine Prussianistic, the World-Herald likened him to "the good lady who told the Omaha city council that 'ninety-nine per cent of the crimes are committed by foreigners.'²¹

The idea of a League was delaying the reign of Christ, said Senator Albert Fall of New Mexico. He proposed an amendment separating it from the Treaty but his idea was rejected.

When Senator Norris refused to meet with the President for the purpose of discussing the proposed Treaty the World-Herald scathingly called him "borrhish and uncouth . . ." and added that even Paris newspapers were surprised at his disdain for the Treaty.²² In an article entitled "O Ichabod," the same paper also blasted the ideas of Senator Porter J. McCumber from North Dakota who had offered reservations resembling those of Lodge.²³

²⁰Morning World-Herald, July 10, 1919.

²¹Ibid., March 5, 1920.

²²Ibid., July 23, 1919.

²³Evening World-Herald, October 24, 1919.

Another on the opposition side was Senator Oscar W. Underwood of Alabama. Explaining his commitment to isolationism, he said he had been slow in yielding "to the doctrine of our fathers" but saw it as the only means for protection in face of new dangers resulting from human progress.²⁴ To work out a solution to the Treaty deadlock, he proposed appointing a ten-member committee to seek a compromise,²⁵ but nothing came of his idea. Secretary of State Robert Lansing who resigned during the controversy also favored the opposition.²⁶

On the positive side of the issue were a number of outstanding personalities. Herbert Hoover and Bernard Baruch, strong supporters of the Treaty, stood with ex-President William Howard Taft. Taft, who at first opposed any amendments to the Treaty, saying they would only delay peace-making,²⁷ later proposed certain mild ones of his own. First mentioned in a letter which he had not intended to make public,²⁸ he suggested that

1. the immigration question to be left up to each country
2. the United States to be left free to leave the league after a two years' notice without consent from other members
3. the Monroe Doctrine to be specifically protected
4. Article Ten be advisory but not mandatory.²⁹

²⁴The Omaha Daily News, July 15, 1919.

²⁵The Omaha Daily Bee, December 21, 1919.

²⁶The Omaha Daily News, September 12, 1919.

²⁷Ibid., June 1, 1919.

²⁸Ibid., July 28, 1919.

²⁹The Omaha Daily Bee, July 25, 1919.

Article Ten was the section most objectionable,³⁰ it stated that members of the League would be responsible for protecting the territories of any other member against aggression. Agreeing that it was the most violently opposed Article, the World-Herald explained that those who opposed it felt it could involve the United States in petty international squabbles, while others felt it might prevent giving aid to those depressed areas fighting for independence. Nevertheless that paper defended it as "the indispensable article--the keystone of the arch."³¹

Disagreeing with that viewpoint, the Bee listed reservations which the Senate Foreign Relations Committee proposed for clarifying the disputed Article and for protecting the Monroe Doctrine:

1. The right of withdrawal from the league would be unconditional for the United States.
2. The country should not be responsible for protecting another's safety and should assume a mandate or declare war only with Congress' assent.
3. Domestic questions should be left entirely to the United States.
4. The country should be permitted to keep its own interpretation of the Monroe Doctrine.³²

The reservations would not kill the Peace Treaty as some thought, declared the Bee, but would simply give "the United States a distinct and definite protection in the management of its own business and not leave all to the decision of a court beyond the control of the people."³³

³⁰Hoover, The Ordeal of Woodrow Wilson, p. 266.

³¹Evening World-Herald, June 6, 1919.

³²The Omaha Daily Bee, September 6, 1919.

³³Ibid., July 20, 1919.

Why worry about the Monroe Doctrine? asked the World-Herald, because the Covenant already provided for it. Then accusing those who were afraid of world responsibilities, the paper charged them with a "Let George Do It" attitude.³⁴ Actually, those who were decrying Article Ten had found very little fault with it. Quoting a New York World story written by a judge in Delaware, that organ pointed out, "It will be observed that only criticism he [opposing Senator Elihu Root] has of Article Ten is the performance of its obligations, and the only suggestion of amendment is that any member of the league should have the right to withdraw after a period of six years."³⁵ In order to satisfy opponent complaints, the Article really needed very little revision, concluded the World-Herald, for any reservations necessarily must not " . . . amount to a withdrawal of the United States from the fundamental work the league is to undertake."³⁶

In December, 1919 the Daily News announced that Wilson had agreed to a reservation which would allow Congress to determine if and when the army and navy should be used to defend any nation's territorial rights.³⁷ But the conflict over Article Ten and the Monroe Doctrine was not settled. Answering the criticisms of William Jennings Bryan, and others, the World-Herald assured its readers that

³⁴Evening World-Herald, September 18, 1919.

³⁵Quoted by the World-Herald, October 25, 1919.

³⁶Evening World-Herald, October 25, 1919.

³⁷The Omaha Daily News, December 23, 1919.

the "operations and obligations of Article Ten would be limited and controlled by the restricted constitutional powers of each of the nations entering into it [the League]."³⁸ It pointed out that in the United States, Congress alone could declare war; no other nation could assume that prerogative. Then in an argument for membership in the League as protection for the Monroe Doctrine, the World-Herald issued a sharp editorial:

. . . membership in the league of nations is a relationship which these same neighbor states of ours have voluntarily assumed. . . . Would we relish the spectacle of South and Central America, by membership in the league, drawn closer and closer into political, commercial and economic relationship with the nations of Asia and Europe, their friendship cultivated, while we, outlanders, remained beyond the pale, forced to witness our own interests neglected, our own interests slipping and dwindling, the Monroe Doctrine itself becoming only a shell of its former greatness and power?

What is the United States to do? Build a Chinese wall and organize inside it a world of its own? Or shall it take its rightful place in the great family of nations, and in doing so safeguard the Monroe Doctrine and all its other tremendous interests as well?³⁹

The same paper reiterated its support for the League "not as a Democratic newspaper but as a paper concerned in the welfare of this country of ours and of the whole tortured earth."⁴⁰

³⁸Morning World-Herald, January 10, 1920.

³⁹Ibid., January 14, 1920.

⁴⁰Ibid., February 18, 1920.

CHAPTER VI

SUCCESSIVE EVENTS IN THE DEBATE OVER RATIFICATION:

JULY 10, 1919 - MARCH 20, 1920

The battle in the United States Senate over ratification of the Versailles Treaty presents a dark chapter in American diplomatic history. Beginning even before the Treaty was formally presented to the Upper House, the controversy raged for more than a year--until March, 1920 and the last page was not turned until adoption of the Knox Resolution in 1921.

President Wilson formally introduced the Peace Treaty to the Senate on July 10, 1919.¹ Describing the event, the Daily News story told that the President "carrying the peace treaty under his arm as he entered the senate chamber, escorted by the senate welcoming committee . . ." was applauded for five minutes. The room was crowded with members packed ten deep around the walls as he told them that people of the country wanted a League of Nations and would not be denied. After his message a second round of cheering broke out. "If the senators mistrust the accuracy of the president's declaration on this point, let them go home and listen to what the people are saying, but let the senatorial ears listen honestly,"² ordered the editor. The

¹David Lawrence, True Story of Woodrow Wilson (New York: George H. Doren Company, 1924), p. 367.

²The Omaha Daily News, July 13, 1919.

Bee added a positive note declaring "The United States can not return to its former isolation, and therefore will go ahead with the other nations of the world in any reasonable experiment to secure permanently the blessings of peace."³

Democratic Senator Swanson delivered the keynote speech which officially began action on the Document. Complaining about his speech in a negative tone, the Bee called it unclear and excused those who might want to make certain revisions in the Treaty, adding that Americans "are not in a mood to accept a treaty the terms of which they do not fully understand, just because it is presented to them with the assurance that it will bring peace."⁴ The World-Herald scorned those who opposed the Treaty and placed the Bee in a minority category among periodicals, asserting, "Not only the magazine writers, but practically the people of the whole world, if we are to judge by the writings in the daily papers, hold in contempt that republican clique in the senate fighting the approval of the treaty."⁵

Optimistically, the World-Herald reported on July 19 that early agreement might be reached in the Senate, but the Bee subsequently charged the President with holding back certain details of the Paris Conference, echoing back to the old cry for free publicity heard during Versailles proceedings.

³The Omaha Daily Bee, July 2, 1919.

⁴Ibid., July 15, 1919.

⁵Morning World-Herald, July 18, 1919.

Hitchcock predicted toward the latter part of July that the Senate would not amend the Treaty, but the Bee asked in August,

Is public sentiment toward the Versailles treaty changing? The answer seems to be in the affirmative. On sober reflection, and after due deliberation, the people of the United States are coming to think that the League of Nations covenant requires modification before it is proper for our subscription.⁶

Backing up the affirmation, it referred to appearances by both the President and Senator Lodge in which the latter had received the more enthusiastic applause.⁷ Still Hitchcock stood firm, declaring that if amendments were recommended, the Senate would reject them, and added that the country desired ratification.⁸

At the same time the Bee reported that Wilson was planning a final drive for Treaty acceptance. If he failed, supposedly any further responsibility for securing ratification would be turned over to Hitchcock. The President felt, the story continued, that if the Senate made textual amendments, Germany would use it as an excuse for securing more lenient peace terms, making it necessary for the United States to "go hat in hand to Berlin, to beg for peace."⁹ To date, only two textual amendments, those concerning Japan and Shantung, had been proposed. Furthermore, Germany's chance of securing concessions seemed very remote because England, France, and Japan would also be

⁶The Omaha Daily Bee, August 14, 1919.

⁷Ibid.

⁸Ibid., August 18, 1919.

⁹Ibid.

involved in any major Treaty changes. The President was displaying impatience rather than good judgment, it concluded.¹⁰

Insisting still that the general public sought immediate ratification, the Evening World-Herald of August 19 complained that "the delay has gone to the point of positive hurt and damage in America and further petty casuistry in opposition to it will make us ridiculous or despised by other nations." Asking for a national referendum, the Daily News pointed out that the League issue affected every person and such a vote could clear the way for working on pressing domestic issues. It explained that "the league controversy, as far as the senate is concerned, remains the paramount political issue. This [is] at a time when serious domestic problems, notably the food and railroad situations, demand the undivided attention of all branches of our government, the senate included."¹¹

A conference between the Foreign Relations Committee and President Wilson had brought ratification closer, affirmed the Bee on August 21, for the Chief Executive objected only to reservations which would mean returning the Treaty to conference deliberations with other nations. He had agreed that such points as withdrawal from the League, protection against external aggression, and control over domestic affairs were only within the domain of national affairs. It reported also the suggestion from administration quarters, that if the Senate would

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹The Omaha Daily News, August 20, 1919.

adopt interpretive reservations, they should be kept apart from actual ratification of the Treaty.¹²

Discussing moral obligations involved in ratification, the Bee agreed they existed but added that lawyers, students of international affairs, and jurists disagreed with the President upon implications of the Treaty. "All unite on the view that we may be morally bound much faster than by legal process, and for these reasons reservations are suggested and agreed upon."¹³ As if in reply, in an article entitled "Some Moral Obligations" the subsequent Daily News asserted, "It is a shameful thing that representatives of this great nation should question the binding force of a moral obligation."¹⁴

If the President should refuse to accept an amended Treaty, he could simply fail to deposit a notice of ratification at Paris and the Senate would then either have to ratify the Treaty without qualifications or cause a deadlock by taking no further action, the Daily News of August 25 explained. Action on amendments was, though, reported the next day as the Foreign Relations Committee proposed limiting American membership on League commissions.

Samuel Gompers made a strong case for adopting the Covenant, declaring it to be the only world pact for labor's uplift. The World-Herald portrayed the situation shown in the cartoon on page 76. The Daily News

¹²The Omaha Daily Bee, August 21, 1919.

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴The Omaha Daily News, August 22, 1919.



Taken from the Evening World-Herald,
November 11, 1919.

added a plea for immediate action:

There has been much talk of a "peace by peoples." If these words were sincere, let us apply them. Let us have a peace of our own people, not a peace of politicians! Let us advance across this war-to-peace twilight zone as a united nation, not as scattered bands, leaderless and without direction! Let us, as Americans vote our sentiments direct to the senate, our servants, for immediate action.¹⁵

A majority of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee actually wanted a League, the World-Herald declared, but did not want its enforcement. Instead they favored letting other nations bear world responsibilities, allowing the United States to sit back and hide. If those men should have their way, it continued, the war had been fought in vain.¹⁶

The Foreign Relations Committee submitted the Treaty to the Upper House accompanied by a six-page report containing "sharp and bitter phrases directed at President Wilson . . ." according to the Daily News.¹⁷ Rebuking the Senators for political trifling, the World-Herald charged that they were endangering not just President Wilson's political future, for "no man's political fortune counts for anything at this time. They are trifling with the fate of the world, with the blood of 7,000,000 men whose lives were sacrificed that peace might be established, and with \$200,000,000,000 in human labor that was swallowed up. . . ."¹⁸

Pointing out that another war would be inevitable if world relationships

¹⁵Sunday World-Herald, August 31, 1919; Daily News, September 3, 1919.

¹⁶Evening World-Herald, September 6, 1919.

¹⁷The Omaha Daily News, September 10, 1919.

¹⁸Ibid., September 12, 1919.

continued as they had been before August 1, 1914, the Daily News reported earnest debate on the Treaty in the Senate and compared the situation to ratification of the United States Constitution.¹⁹ The Bee, on the other hand, insisted that joining a League of Nations would mean refuting the principles of the Declaration of Independence.²⁰

The Bee also mocked its opponent, the World-Herald, for having admitted by September 15 that the Treaty might be ratified only with reservations. Quoting an earlier statement by its competitor saying that amendments would be unnecessary, the Bee scoffed,

After many days of delirious shouting for the treaty just as it came from Versailles, the Omaha organ of the administration now points the way to the inevitable. The treaty will be ratified, but with amendments, and reservations. . . . We congratulate our contemporary on having at last reached firm holding ground for its dragging anchor. No matter what happens, it is at last in position to say "I told you so," for it has fairly boxed the compass on this question.²¹

In an attempt to acquaint people with the Document, the World-Herald during the latter part of September offered free copies of the League Covenant, obtainable at its office.²² The Bee in sharp protest to the Covenant, pled for a return to isolationism asking, "Is it possible or desirable to unite all the various peoples of the world, with their different systems of culture, their inequalities in development, widely separated ideals of civilization and ways of life?"²³

¹⁹The Omaha Daily News, September 14, 15, 18, 1919.

²⁰The Omaha Daily Bee, September 20, 1919.

²¹Ibid., September 13, 1919.

²²Evening World-Herald, September 22, 1919.

²³The Omaha Daily Bee, September 27, 1919.

Calling the League a supernation, it insisted that joining would remove the United States from her superior position in the world. "If we now abandon that place, and instead of holding aloof from the affairs of Europe become a responsible party to them, if we entangle ourselves . . . how will it advantage the lesser nations or aid us in realizing our destiny?"²⁴ The counter-argument of the World-Herald was, "Whether we like it or not, the time has come when we must either become citizens of the world, or see the whole of civilization perish."²⁵ The Daily News urged, "Let us Have Peace," pointing to Italy's upheavals and ordered, "Sign, gentlemen of the United States senate. . . ."²⁶ Again suggesting a national referendum as the solution, the same paper insisted Wilson's personality was not the issue in the contest; the real question was, "Would the league be a good thing for America, or a bad thing?"²⁷ It listed three definite advantages of joining. First it would provide for a cooling off period before nations could begin fighting; secondly, it provided for a police force to enforce decisions; thirdly, public opinion, not just the scheming of diplomats and politicians, would decide for or against war. Hitchcock was quoted as saying that only Reds opposed the Pact,²⁸ but the World-Herald declared

²⁴Ibid., September 27, 1919.

²⁵Evening World-Herald, October 22, 1919, quoting philosopher Anatole France.

²⁶The Omaha Daily News, October 5, 1919.

²⁷Ibid., October 7, 1919.

²⁸Ibid., October 7, 8, 1919.

that the Nebraska Senator had attributed opposition to both bolshevists and anarchists.²⁹

Describing Lodge's actions in his state's mass Republican convention, the World-Herald discussed the convention's prepared statement about the League. The statement asked for "prompt ratification of the treaty of peace without amendment although with reservations." Telling that Lodge's supporters had said the Senator could have had enough votes to eliminate the statement's words, "without amendment," the World-Herald asked, "Why, if he had the votes, didn't he use them?" Calling the convention statement a "back-handed rebuke" to Lodge, it explained that he had permitted the rebuke, fearing his party might otherwise lose votes in the upcoming elections. Insisting that he knew the majority of the public supported the Treaty and League, the paper asked, "How long will he and other republican senators dare follow a course in Washington which they fear to have their party conventions endorse at home."³⁰

The Bee reported a victory for Pact supporters on October 18. The Fall Amendment, proposing separation of the Treaty and League Covenant, had been defeated and the Senate was reportedly to begin work on drafting the ratification resolution soon. But two days later it used a not-so-optimistic tone in an editorial entitled "What if the Treaty Fails." As far as advantages to be accrued from the Treaty,

²⁹Evening World-Herald, October 7, 1919.

³⁰Ibid., October 17, 1919.

they were negligible because "we went to Paris looking for nothing, and got exactly what we went after,"³¹ it declared. Either the President would have to accept reservations or see the Treaty defeated. Yet the same paper declared the Pact fight nearing its end with hope of clearing away all amendments during the forthcoming week. The Daily News also predicted a compromise.³²

Reporting on October 23 that ten reservations to the Treaty had been adopted, the Bee placed the blame for delay in ratification "on the 'swallow-it-whole' followers of the president," and added that Wilson would most likely accept reasonable reservations so the fight could soon end "with patriotism prevailing."³³ It added the hope that presidential supporters would not persuade "a stubborn executive to exercise a pocket veto on the work."³⁴

November 6 was set as the date for a Senate vote on the Treaty and for a brief time the end seemed in sight.³⁵ But with administration supporters' requests for a vote without reservations, the windup miscarried³⁶ and the work on Treaty changes continued.

A businessman of Chicago, as quoted in the World-Herald, made a strong plea following that let-down. He said,

³¹The Omaha Daily Bee, October 20, 1919.

³²The Omaha Daily News, October 22, 1919.

³³The Omaha Daily Bee, October 23, 1919.

³⁴Ibid., October 25, 1919.

³⁵The Omaha Daily News, November 3, 1919.

³⁶The Omaha Daily Bee, November 6, 1919.

Businessmen know that delay . . . is preventing stabilization of European government and trade; that such delay, by preventing the laboring classes from getting to work, is aiding the forces of extreme radicalism everywhere, and that prolonged delay will depress all lines of American business.

.....
 The time has come for ninety-six senators to get together, act, get the treaty out of the way at this session, and then concentrate on the solution of vital domestic problems.³⁷

Paul Warburg, a noted banker, student, and economist, who had served as vice-president of the Federal Reserve System during the War, echoed the same sentiments following a three-month trip to Europe. Stating that Europeans felt United States Senators did not fully realize the gravity of the situation, he declared that abroad even the Germans felt the Treaty must go into effect. The power to destroy or rebuild Germany lay in the reparations commission created by the Treaty, he pointed out, and added, "The United States cannot shirk the duty of co-operating in reaching a wise conclusion, upon which will depend the fate of not only that country, but also that of her main creditors--who, in turn, are our debtors."³⁸ Prophetically he re-emphasized the threat of economic difficulty by showing that Europe's future could directly affect America's future prosperity.³⁹

Scoffingly, the Bee retorted that if the welfare of the United States were so intertwined with that of Europe, the country certainly was in a perilous condition, but added "Sober thought does not lead

³⁷Evening World-Herald, November 8, 1919, quoting John V. Farwell of the Farwell Company.

³⁸Ibid., November 8, 1919.

³⁹Ibid., quoting Mr. Paul Warburg.

to the conclusion so handily attained by the World-Herald in its zeal for the league covenant without a dot on an 'i' or a cross on a 't' other than as put there by the president.⁴⁰ Europe without question faced a "red winter," the Bee concluded, and added, "but in this resides no argument that our own land should forfeit its stability because none exists in Europe."⁴¹

A few days later the papers announced that a reservation giving the United States the right to withdraw from the League, if it should join, had been passed.⁴² Prospects for ratification were not too bright during those days in November for many speculated upon whether the President would accept the reservation or wash his hands of the entire proceedings.⁴³ Senator Hitchcock was finally successful in securing passage of the cloture rule for speeding the discussions along in the Senate and on November 15, ten reservations were passed with the rule in effect.⁴⁴ Hitchcock then visited the White House to confer with Wilson and there found the President still vehemently opposed to the amendments. Refusing to accept ratification of the Pact with those revisions included, he directed Hitchcock and all other Democratic

⁴⁰The Omaha Daily Bee, November 14, 1919.

⁴¹Ibid.

⁴²Ibid., November 9, 1919; The Omaha Daily News, November 9, 1919.

⁴³The Omaha Daily News, November 14, 1919.

⁴⁴Evening World-Herald, November 15, 1919; The Omaha Daily News, November 16, 1919.

Senators to vote against it and threatened to use a pocket vote if necessary.⁴⁵

In a lengthy editorial discussing the upcoming Treaty vote, the Bee derided the Administration plan to vote against the Treaty with its proposed modifications. Questioning whether all Democratic Senators would follow the President's direction, it pointed out that perhaps all of them did not fear his threat--that if Article Ten were at all modified, he would not approve ratification. Terming that plan an "effort of the tail to wag the dog, . . ." the editorial accused the Democrats of attempting to overrule majority sentiment.⁴⁶ The Bee further declared that Wilson still meant to have his own way at home even though he had not abroad. Accusing him of having yielded to the wishes of leaders in Paris while drawing up the Treaty, it called him autocratic at home. He asked that "the United States Senate abandon its constitutional duty and become a rubber stamp," it insisted.⁴⁷

The Daily News of November 18 reported that the President, again in direct charge of the fight, would continue working for the Treaty until its acceptance. "That the treaty eventually will be ratified--either in the present or the next session--is now regarded as certain, for the struggle is expected to end in a compromise,"⁴⁸ it

⁴⁵The Omaha Daily News, November 17, 1919; Evening World-Herald, November 17, 1919.

⁴⁶The Omaha Daily Bee, November 17, 1919.

⁴⁷Ibid., November 18, 1919.

⁴⁸The Omaha Daily News, November 18, 1919.

predicted. The expected compromise did not materialize, however, in the first of two Senate votes on the amended Treaty. On November 19 it was rejected by a vote of 51-41.⁴⁹

Commenting upon the result, the Daily News called Wilson a man far ahead of his times and added, "it was for this reason the politicians, headed by Lodge, had the temerity to fight and defeat confirmation of the treaty of peace, their chief weapon being the objections to the league of nations."⁵⁰ Wilson, it continued,

. . . is slowed up by the politicians. The politicians are wrong. They are going on the theory that our idealism was to endure only for the period of the war. But it still lives, and as President Wilson has said, it is the hope of the world. Which is why, ultimately, the president, though possibly not in his lifetime, will win.⁵¹

Following the Senate vote, an announcement came from Europe of intentions to put the Pact into effect without United States participation.⁵² Other messages poured in, such as, "Don't Blast Hopes of World," "Great Britain and France Prepare to Put Pact Into Effect," and "Pichon Says Put Treaty in Force By December."⁵³ "For the present," lamented the World-Herald, "all that the United States, under its senate leadership has to offer a bewildered and distracted humanity, is a peace of surrender."⁵⁴ Calling aroused national feeling the only

⁴⁹Ibid., November 20, 1919.

⁵⁰Ibid.

⁵¹Ibid.

⁵²The Omaha Daily Bee, November 19, 1919.

⁵³Ibid., November 20, 1919; Evening World-Herald, November 20, 1919.

⁵⁴Evening World-Herald, November 21, 1919.

ingredient necessary to "breathe into it [the treaty] the breath of life," the paper added, ". . . it will remain not for a president, not for a senate, but for the American people to say."⁵⁵ The Bee, on the other hand, insisted that though public support had once been behind the League, "the sober reflection of the public has left it lukewarm if not actually hostile to the league."⁵⁶ It placed the blame for delay upon the President's shoulders because he had refused to compromise.⁵⁷ But the Daily News predicted that the President would provide real leadership for a later consideration of the Pact because his health had improved. The World-Herald also looked toward the upcoming session of Congress,⁵⁸ and the Bee agreed that the Treaty would have another chance.⁵⁹

The treaty was increasingly discussed as an issue for the forthcoming Presidential election year. Senator Lodge suggested again what had often been mentioned--a vote by the people. Expressing confidence in popular opinion, the World-Herald declared that the people cared less about the future of each majority party than they did about the welfare of their country and the world.⁶⁰ Condemning Lodge,

⁵⁵Ibid.

⁵⁶The Omaha Daily Bee, November 21, 1919.

⁵⁷Ibid., November 22, 1919.

⁵⁸The Omaha Daily News, November 20, 1919; Evening World-Herald, November 21, 1919.

⁵⁹The Omaha Daily Bee, November 20, 1919.

⁶⁰Evening World-Herald, November 22, 1919.

it accused him of planning to exploit the "German," "Irish," and "Italian" jingo votes along with those of people who had opposed entering the War or "whose toes were trampled on" during the War. But it predicted that

It may not be easy to induce a republican national convention to declare in favor of recognition of the Irish republic, or to get it to cater to pro-Germanism by a platform declaration acceptable to Berlin, or to please the Italian irredentists by allowing D'Annunzio to write the Dalmatian plank.⁶¹

In doing so, he just might find himself driving away, rather than gaining, votes, it added, and asked what he planned to do about the "plain genuine American vote. . . ." "The eyes of sensible, matter-of-fact farmers, merchants, laboring men, manufacturers, will be opening to the fact that if we want to prosper and progress we cannot choose to live in a little world of our own making."⁶² The World-Herald also pointed out that women of the country supported the League and in the coming elections they would have a greater voice than ever before.⁶³ All of the people are at least opposed to further delay, stated the Daily News, and repeated the old suggestion of using a national referendum.⁶⁴

Yet a further delay seemed certain with Wilson's announcement on December 6 that he would not withdraw the Treaty from the Senate, and

⁶¹ Ibid., November 24, 1919.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ The Omaha Daily News, November 24, 1919.

yet had no intention of resubmitting it.⁶⁵ Though he had promised to air his no intention the Treaty in his annual message,⁶⁶ following its presentation the Bee pointed out that the speech had hardly mentioned the Pact and explained the reason in the following manner:

In reading the message one must keep in mind that it comes from a sick man, who has been prevented by illness from giving that close personal attention to details that has characterized the course of the president.⁶⁷

With the later White House statement declaring Wilson would accept "No Compromise or Concession of any Kind in Mind," Senators working on reservations raised a storm of disapproval and the Bee castigated his position with a front-page cartoon and accompanying jingle:

There was a man named Wilson
Who "Kept Us Out of War"
He went before the people
And won upon that score.

And now this very self-same, man,--
Will wonders never cease,
No longer keeps us out of war,
He keeps us out of peace.⁶⁸

The allies were reportedly willing to accept "to as great an extent as possible, some of the reservations . . ." in hope of breaking the Senate stalemate,⁶⁹ but the President's reply was "No compromise."⁷⁰

Still, work on the reservations continued. "If we isolate ourselves at Washington, and pull down the blinds, we shall know nothing

⁶⁵Ibid., December 6, 1919.

⁶⁶Evening World-Herald, November 22, 1919.

⁶⁷The Omaha Daily Bee, December 6, 1919.

⁶⁸Ibid., December 15, 1919, January 27, 1920.

⁶⁹Ibid., December 14, 1919.

⁷⁰The Omaha Daily News, December 15, 1919.

about the next war until it is upon us,"⁷¹ warned the Daily News, and papers ~~through the~~ part of December bore hopes of possible compromise.⁷² Reiterating⁷³ his stand against such a course, however, the President, speaking at the annual Jackson Day dinner in January, 1920, promised to give the voters a chance to express their feelings in the November elections. He disagreed violently with Bryan who opposed making the question an election issue and from that time on a split in the Democratic Party became evident with many party adherents following the "mild reservationist" position.⁷⁵

Asking that the issue not be thrown into the elections, the editor of the Daily News also disagreed with the President. The editor pointed out that the election was still many months away; that, even a new president might not guarantee a solution; and finally, "The worst thing that could happen to this country would be to have the next president elected solely on the question of a foreign treaty."⁷⁴ The paper refuted claims of those who said that a national referendum would only involve further delay. Twenty-one states already had referendum machinery, it pointed out, and other legislatures then in session, could take the necessary steps for setting it up in their states.⁷⁵

⁷¹ Ibid., December 16, 1919.

⁷² Ibid., January 3, 1920.

⁷³ Morning World-Herald, January 9, 10, 11, 1920; The Omaha Daily Bee, January 10, 1920.

⁷⁴ The Omaha Daily News, January 21, 1920.

⁷⁵ Ibid., January 25, 1920.

The results of an inter-collegiate peace treaty referendum in January were interpreted as a real blow to Lodge's stand, by the World-Herald. Out of 375 colleges and universities participating, the total votes cast numbered 92,466. Of the results, 32,691 students and 3,612 professors and teachers voted in favor of compromises on the Treaty, while 25,896 students and 3,046 faculty members voted for ratification without any amendments. Voting for complete rejection of the Treaty were only 9,566, while 17,322 favored ratification with the Lodge Reservations.⁷⁶ The World-Herald described Lodge as "more than disconcerted over it, as his nervous scampering about the capitol today indicated."⁷⁷ Calling it support for Hitchcock's argument on early compromise, it continued,

The colleges of today are training the leaders of American thought and action of tomorrow. They are training the successors of those who now hold seats of power in the congress of the United States. They are the seats of the best United States idealism, the sanctuaries and guardians of American traditions. And that, in the vote they have cast on this issue, they are representative of the wishes of the American people there is every reason to believe.

.....
 Not even the senate . . . torn by partisan storms, tormented by personal animosities can be expected long to resist the rising tide of non-partisan and patriotic public sentiment.⁷⁸

The Bee, giving its report a few days after that of the World-Herald, when more of the votes had been tabulated, interpreted the

⁷⁶Totaling the votes does not give the figure of 92,466. Evidently some votes were not reported.

⁷⁷Morning World-Herald, January 15, 1920.

⁷⁸Ibid., January 17, 1920.

results somewhat differently. "Instead of ratification without reservations having the big bulk of the student vote, the group favoring ratification with compromise reservations led by more than 1,400," it reported. Still, conceding it to be a victory for Wilson's plan over the one proposed by Lodge, it conjectured about what the results might have been without offering the alternative for compromise on the issue.⁷⁹

During February, 1920, the papers gave reports of near dissolution, deadlock, and renewed debates in the Senate. Blaming what it called "The Senate Fifteen" for holding up ratification the World-Herald accused Republicans of lining up with the opinions of Lord Grey, British ambassador, who had indicated support for Lodge's reservations. Asking whether a personage from abroad or the President should carry more weight in their decisions, it facetiously congratulated Republicans for showing "a revived interest, even though under English inspiration. . . ."⁸⁰

Reiterating his views in a letter to Hitchcock, the President expressed few objections to amendments other than those dealing with Article Ten and the Monroe Doctrine, but upon those he remained firm. Though interpretations of his letter varied, Democratic members of the Upper House decided after conferring, to co-operate in parliamentary action necessary for reopening ratification attempts on the Senate

⁷⁹The Omaha Daily Bee, January 19, 1920. Out of 139,788 votes cast, it reported 49,653 in favor of some compromise reservations and 27,970 favoring Lodge's plan. Those who voted for ratification without any reservations numbered 48,232, while 15,933 entirely opposed ratification.

⁸⁰Morning World-Herald, February 2, 7, 1920.

floor.⁸¹ Laying before the Senate his suggested modifications for Article Ten, Hitchcock presented much softer-toned amendments in contrast to those of Lodge--ones which reportedly the President might accept in spite of his earlier statement regarding Article Ten. "It now appears," reported the Bee, "that an understanding may be reached on the treaty, since the president has come to comprehend that the failure of his personal plan will not break the heart of the world."⁸²

Hitchcock secured twenty-eight signatures on his modified draft, and insisting that ratification could not come without compromise, accused Republican Treaty foes of demanding a complete Democratic surrender.⁸³ Following his presentation, newspaper reports were alternately hopeful and pessimistic. Reporting a "blind wall" in the debate and balking on every compromise effort, the Bee then reversed the picture with a caption: "Peace Coming Nearer."⁸⁴ It also predicted a settlement about the middle of March, but with substantially the same reservations as those proposed by Lodge rather than Hitchcock. "The senate of the United States may have tried the patience of some of the enthusiasts, but its statesmanship is proving constructive instead of destructive, and out of it is coming not only safety, but good for all the world," it blindly defended.⁸⁵ Referring to the expected

⁸¹The Omaha Daily Bee, February 8, 1920.

⁸²Ibid., February 9, 1920.

⁸³Morning World-Herald, February 17, 1920.

⁸⁴The Omaha Daily Bee, February 18, 21, 23, 1920.

⁸⁵Ibid., February 23, 1920.

showdown, the Bee questioned whether it might not mean a complete cleavage in the Democratic Party with many members rejecting the President's leadership.⁸⁶ At the same time, the World-Herald reported Lodge disgusted with many members of his own party.⁸⁷ Accusing the Republicans of attempting to inject the League issue into the presidential campaign, the World-Herald insisted that those who favored the Treaty did not fear the verdict of the people, and only wanted to keep it out of the campaign. Because the Republicans had lately realized they were responsible for forcing it into the campaign, it charged, they were in a frenzy attempting to ratify "any kind" of a Treaty. Questioning their motives, it concluded, "It may be that this ratification is sought as they say, because they believe Europe's future is dependent upon it. It is more likely, however, that it is the future of the G.O.P. that concerns these gentlemen most just now."⁸⁸

As earlier predicted, Lodge's reservations rather than Hitchcock's were accepted in the Senate by the middle of March. Succeeding their acceptance, a second and final vote on Treaty ratification was taken on March 19. Coming after Wilson had again reiterated his stand against the amended Pact, the Senate for the final time rejected the Treaty by a vote of 49-35. Sent by that body to the President with a

⁸⁶Ibid., March 1, 1920.

⁸⁷Morning World-Herald, March 4, 1920.

⁸⁸Ibid., March 6, 1920.

note that it had finally "refused to advise and consent to its ratification,"⁸⁹ the Treaty was finally killed.

Meanwhile a paradoxical situation existed. The United States was still technically at war with Germany.⁹⁰

⁸⁹Ibid., March 20, 1920.

⁹⁰The Omaha Daily News, March 20, 1920.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

Published as a Democratic newspaper, the World-Herald staunchly defended the Treaty throughout the many long months of debate. The paper unwaveringly defended Hitchcock as he became the President's spokesman in the Senate during the Chief Executive's illness and faithfully answered the railings of its opponent, the Bee, against various sections of the Treaty.

Though lending early support for the Treaty, the Bee quickly pointed out weaknesses and particularly expressed concern about the League of Nations Covenant. As a Republican paper, it appealed to all administration critics and unceasingly performed its opposition role.

The Daily News as an independent paper politically, generally expressed idealism and concern for the Treaty's acceptance. Often concurring with the editorial opinion of the World-Herald, it suggested many times that the most effective way to secure Treaty ratification would be through holding a national referendum.

The Treaty, however, was not ratified by the United States and the country did not join the League of Nations. America also ignored the warning of British Statesman Winston Churchill who declared that a League would be necessary for the future welfare of the world and

simply "Building a Rampart along [the] Rhine Would Not Secure Safety."¹

The wrangling in the United States Senate and between opposition Senators on the one hand and President Wilson on the other did not stop long enough so that pleas from nations facing chaos and disorder could be distinctly heard. "We now have the choice of either becoming pawns of some one of the big nations or turning with outstretched arms to bolshevism,"² explained one Czech-Slovak official. A Yugo-Slav official echoed this sentiment: "Left in the lurch by the allies, we almost wish Germany had won. At least the Germans would have given us law and order."³ A Polish leader accusingly said, "You Americans are great promisers. Thanks for the goods you sent us, thanks for the advice you showered upon us; but where or [sic] where is the massed unity of action, supporting the ideals you announced and which crystallized our hope for a safer world to live in."⁴ Even in the United States there were those who sensed the hazards involved with delay in putting the League into motion; unrest in the world was emanating from Bolshevik Russia.⁵

¹The Omaha Daily News, November 24, 1919, quoting a United States Press Staff correspondent.

²Evening World-Herald, December 1, 1919, quoting a correspondent of the Philadelphia Ledger.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Evening World-Herald, October 2, 1919.

By August, 1919 the French had supposedly given up hope for prompt action by the United States Senate.⁶ In November the World-Herald announced the plan of Frenchmen Poincare and Fichon to meet with British authorities for the purpose of discussing "What to Do Without the United States."⁷ A short time later, a comment supposedly reflecting the sentiments of the Prime Minister, David Lloyd George, was quoted from the London Chronicle which stated, "Unless the League is to fail altogether, other nations must go ahead for some years without America's participation and we hope they will promptly decide to do so."⁸ The December 14 headlines of the World-Herald announced, "G.O.P. Opens Treaty Discussion in United States Senate on Reports Entente Anxious for Settlement."⁸

The Allies finally decided not to wait for the United States to make up its mind; in January they made arrangements to exchange with Germany ratifications of the Treaty.⁹ On January 10, the Daily News announced, "World War Formally Ends Today," and continued, "Germans and Allies Sign, but United States Has No Part in Ceremony." The editor was of the opinion that "The disposition of the United States to refrain from participation in European affairs . . . [would] do much to kill the new born democracy and revive the old monarchistic spirit."¹⁰

⁶Ibid., August 29, 1919.

⁷Ibid., November 10, 1919.

⁸Quoted by the Evening World-Herald, November 18, 1919.

⁹The Omaha Daily Bee, January 3, 1920.

¹⁰The Omaha Daily News, November 11, 1919.

Arrangements for the first League of Nations meeting were also made, again without United States participation. There were early suggestions that Wilson might not even be invited to issue the first call of assemblage; Clemenceau was mentioned for the job.¹¹ The President was, however, finally asked to perform the duty and he did so on January 12, 1920.¹²

Nine nations met at that first meeting and Leon Bourgeois of France was elected chairman at the first session--an honor which, it was said, should have gone to Wilson.¹³ Alluding to the absence of any United States participation, either formally or informally, Lord Balfour of Great Britain and Chairman Bourgeois blamed America for ". . . marring the symmetry of the original league plan."¹⁴ In reply the Bee stated that the country ". . . may yet take a place in the Council. When it does, it will be on the basis of absolute security for our independence as to home affairs."¹⁵ Going on to minimize the League's importance and blaming European powers for not bringing all major problems to it, the editor suggested that perhaps the alliance between the Entente Powers could temporarily prove more effective, and asserted, "This sentiment naturally has its reflex in America, where the failure of

¹¹The Omaha Daily Bee, December 31, 1919; Evening World-Herald, January 3, 1920.

¹²Hoover, The Ordeal of Woodrow Wilson, p. 289.

¹³The Omaha Daily Bee, January 17, 1920.

¹⁴Morning World-Herald, February 12, 1920.

¹⁵The Omaha Daily Bee, January 17, 1920.

the covenant as prepared at Paris has been foreshadowed from the beginning."¹⁶

Using another approach, the Daily News advised Europe to go ahead with recovery, asking her not to wait for America but instead showing the way. It suggested though, that if Europe did not improve and continued to do as poor a job as she had started, America might after all have to assert its leadership. "If Europe cannot keep the world spinning," it added, "America must try her hand. Otherwise, we may all slide off together."¹⁷

Contrary to predictions, America never did join the League or become " . . . a party to the Peace Treaty."¹⁸ Certainly the failure to join cannot be attributed to apathy throughout the country, however. An examination of the Omaha papers did not bear out the supposed isolationist sentiment generally attributed to the heartland of America. Devoting by far the greatest amount of space in their columns to discussions of the Treaty for many months, the city editors certainly indicated that the public was vitally concerned with what was going on in Paris.

Above everything else, however, political considerations seemed to be the motivating factor behind the Omaha editors. The Bee editor, Victor Rosewater, followed an answering Republican journalistic course.

¹⁶Ibid., January 27, 1920.

¹⁷The Omaha Daily News, February 19, 1920.

¹⁸Ibid.

Because of its political independence, the Daily News was probably the most accurate reflection of public opinion, taking a stand not quite so close to that of the administration as did the World-Herald, perhaps the most powerful Democratic organ in the state. Even the Bee though, expressed interest in membership for the United States in the League of Nations providing her security and freedom of action could be protected.

Instead of seeking membership, the United States refused to sign the Versailles Treaty and negotiated her own settlement with Germany in the Knox Resolution of 1921--after the Treaty and League membership had become hopelessly enmeshed in the racial prejudices and domestic issues of the 1920 elections.¹⁹

¹⁹Hoover, The Ordeal of Woodrow Wilson, p. 283.

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