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FACULTE DES LETTRES

T H E S E

PRESENTEE

A L'ECOLE DES GRADUES

DE L'UNIVERSITE LAVAL

POUR OBTENIR

LA MAITRISE ES ARTS EN HISTOIRE

PAR

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THE REACTION OF THE QUEBEC PRESS  
TO THE AMERICAN DEBATE ON THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS

FEVRIER 1972

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## Avant-Propos

Although the press has enjoyed a wide prestige in Quebec society, it has only recently been used by the historian to study the movements and trends which have shaped Quebec history. Given the rich, and largely untapped, resources available in Quebec City, I believed a press study would be useful in determining French-Canadian attitudes prevalent at a given time and more especially in relation to the growth and development of French-Canadian nationalism. The post World War I period particularly intrigued me standing as it did between the disruptive racial debates which surrounded the conscription crisis and the fight for French language rights in Ontario during World War I and the more aggressive nationalism which marked the 1920's and 1930's. The Quebec press reaction to the American Senate's refusal to join the League of Nations was important since the American debate raised the question of nationalistic priorities as opposed to internationalism. The press, of course, cannot be totally identified with public opinion, but it is hoped through this analysis that some understanding of the attitudes which shaped Quebec thought in the immediate postwar period will be gained.

In conclusion, I would like to thank my thesis director M. Yves Roby for his many suggestions and kind assistance in the preparation of this thesis and also M. Richard Jones for his attention and useful comments. Lastly, I would like to extend my gratitude to the staff of the Bibliothèque de l'Université Laval and of the Bibliothèque de la Législature de la province de Québec for the newspapers placed at my disposal.

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## INTRODUCTION

On March 19, 1920 the American Senate after a bitter debate refused to ratify the Treaty of Versailles drawn up by the Allied Powers in Paris the year before. At the heart of its refusal was the controversial League of Nations the covenant of which Wilson had skilfully included within the peace treaty itself. The American refusal reverberated throughout the world; it had struck a sharp, if not fatal, blow at the new international organization master-minded by its own president, Woodrow Wilson. In the political turmoil and uncertainty which followed the war's end, the American bickering over the League's clauses could not help but have world repercussions. By the summer of 1919 when the Senate began its study of the peace treaty, the peace amnesty signed in November, 1918 seemed less and less secure, and any further delay in the ratification of the Treaty of Versailles only served to endanger the precarious peace of Europe. It is hardly surprising then that the Senate debate assumed a certain world significance. Would the isolationist forces succeed in turning American foreign policy back to its ante-bellum status of nonentanglement in foreign alliances? Or would the United States assume the "moral leadership" so actively sought by Wilson and join the League of Nations?

This thesis will attempt to show that the reaction of the Quebec press to the refusal of the American Senate to ratify the peace treaty and to the events which led up to it in the United States reflected the isolationist mood which had developed in Quebec during the war. The press did not

strongly criticize the United States senators responsible for the treaty's defeat; a fact which attests both to a shared hostility to the League and the international obligations inherent in it and to a certain indifference towards American affairs related to this isolationism. Moreover, an attempt will be made to examine each paper individually and to show that its reaction to the League dispute was determined in large part by its own political views and by that segment of society which it represented or to which it directed its appeal.

Until recently the historian has largely ignored the press or left its study to the quantitative methods of the sociologists. Nevertheless, as an important element of that vast and nebulous domain known as public opinion, the press provides an important tool for the historian in his delineation of the dominant political and social values of a given society at a given time in history. By its very nature, the press reflects the moods, attitudes and aspirations of the society in which it functions, because, if successful, it must be flexible and it must respond to the changing pattern of daily events. It thus gives the historian an important means of measuring how a particular society reacted to the major issues of its day.

Nonetheless, a press study of any kind has obvious limitations. A quantitative approach is an extremely arduous task with dubious results for the historian since it is basically incapable of determining representative values for expressed opinions. In other words, it frequently fails to consider these opinions in their total context, i.e. in relation to the newspaper's style, format and in relation to the political and social framework of the society. It, therefore, can fail to differentiate between the singular or exceptional and the ordinary and general. At the particular time of

this study, newspapers were undergoing a change of style and orientation with The Montreal Star and La Presse moving towards the large American style daily while the other papers retained an essentially nineteenth century format. Devising a purely quantitative means of evaluating such widely divergent styles would be extremely difficult and possibly inaccurate. It is for these reasons that we have basically followed the more traditional qualitative approach although, where possible, quantitative methods have been used as an additional guide in our assessment of press opinion.

Allowing a margin for human error in interpretation, an assessment of the editorial content and of the attention and space given to the American Senate debate in each paper has been considered the best means of determining newspaper opinion. In general, the editorials give an ample indication of each paper's views, and the coverage of the Senate's deliberations elsewhere in the paper serves as an additional means of evaluating the importance attached to the debate. Although no attempt has been made to determine the "mise en valeur" of these articles, the news featured has served to gauge the kind of treatment given to the Senate's debates in each paper.

By studying the question of the American refusal to join the League of Nations in the Quebec press it is hoped that some information will be added to an understanding of Quebec history in the interval immediately after World War I. It is a period essential to an understanding of the attitudes which have shaped subsequent Quebec thinking, but unfortunately often neglected by the historian. Much attention has been given to Quebec's actions during the war, to the conscription crisis and to the ensuing racial division of Canada, but its reaction to the peace settlement has largely been ignored. Did Quebec continue to feel apart from the mainstream of North American life and

European events? Did its antipathy for Great Britain, its affection for France and its somewhat indifferent attitude towards the United States manifest themselves in 1919? The disruptive debates of the previous 25 years concerning Canada's role in imperialist affairs - the Boer War, the Naval question, conscription; and French-Canadian cultural rights within Canada - the Manitoba School Question, Regulation 17 and the Ontario School Question had left Quebec shaken but not beaten. But they had fostered a weariness and a distrust of external affairs and a return to the more narrow and nationalistic interests of Quebec. Elizabeth Armstrong has spoken of the "passive sense of nationality" which characterized French Canadians during the war. Quebec had been thrown on the defensive and was more than ever determined to preserve and safeguard its own way of life. Despite a wave of relief and conciliation at the end of the war, this spirit remained afterwards during the negotiations for peace and during the discussions surrounding the League of Nations.

In our analysis we will first discuss the newspapers selected and attempt to situate them in the general context of Quebec society; secondly, we will examine their reaction to the League of Nations and to Wilson's foreign policy as brought out in the league controversy in the United States and thirdly, their attitude to the Senate's debates and the decision which followed. The period under discussion runs roughly from the beginning of the Paris Peace Conference in January, 1919 to the final Senate rejection of the Treaty of Versailles on March 19, 1920. The treaty itself was not formally presented to the Senate by President Wilson until July 10, 1919; but in reality debate on the League had been growing since late in 1918. For the purposes of this study, the opening of the Peace Conference, January 12, 1919,

when the Allied Powers actually sat down and began laying the general outline of the League and the United States Senators saw their worst fears becoming a reality, can be used as a convenient starting point. It was then that the Quebec press really became aware of the dissension the proposed League of Nations was causing in the United States.

Five newspapers have been chosen for this study: four French-language dailies, La Presse and Le Devoir in Montreal and L'Action Catholique and L'Événement in Quebec, and an English-language daily The Montreal Star. La Presse, with the largest circulation of any Quebec paper at the time, represented the large, mass-oriented daily of the period; Le Devoir, under the influential direction of Henri Bourassa, spokesman for the Nationalistes, was probably the leading and most controversial newspaper of opinion; L'Action Catholique, the official organ of the upper clergy, represented the ultramontane position; L'Événement, an organ of the Conservative Party, was an important representative of a party paper; and lastly, The Montreal Star, one of the leading English-language dailies in Quebec and an advocate of British imperialism, provided a sharp contrast to the French-language press. In our first section, we elaborate more closely on the reasons for our choice of papers and the limitations that choice imposes, on the background of each paper taking into account its readership, political affiliations, format, and editorial orientation, and on the influence wielded by each paper in Quebec in 1919.

In the second part, we show that the French-language press, with the exception of La Presse, had little enthusiasm for the League of Nations. Reflecting a growing isolationism, it feared that Article X of the League's covenant could serve as a pretext for engaging Canada in future foreign wars,

and it distrusted the lofty idealism of Wilson and the Anglo-Saxon jingoism of "making the world safe for democracy" as well as democracy itself. Even La Presse which had greeted the League warmly in January, 1919 saw its enthusiasm wane as the debates over ratification wore on and as the reestablishment of world peace became more remote. Wilson's policies did not inspire much more confidence. He was an impractical idealist whose utopian dreams were destined to fail. Although Le Devoir was his strongest critic, both L'Événement and L'Action Catholique found his arrogance and presumption to be the moral conscience of the world distasteful. For Catholic papers like Le Devoir and L'Action Catholique, this self-assumed role as "pape laïque" was particularly hard to accept. La Presse had initially embraced Wilson as a world saviour, but its admiration fell once he was no longer leading negotiations in Paris and had become a sick, tragic figure in the United States. In contrast, The Montreal Star whole-heartedly acclaimed the president and backed his efforts for the League's adoption both in Paris and in the United States.

We analyze these attitudes first by determining how each paper felt towards the League - its principle aims, likelihood of success, and international obligations; and secondly, by examining their views towards Wilson as a world leader in Paris negotiating for his League and as an American president fighting for its acceptance in his own country. Finally, we relate each paper's views on these issues to its overall editorial policies and political orientation, and draw from these individual divergencies certain common elements and conclusions.

In our final section, we show that the French-language press did not view the Senate controversy and its ultimate rejection of the League with great alarm. The press focused on the partisan aspect of the battle, it was

an internal struggle between the senators and President Wilson which would probably not be settled until the next presidential election in November, 1920. Le Devoir went so far as to speak out in favour of the Senate's action which it considered a legitimate defense of the national priorities of the United States. Other French-language papers, although impatient with the Senate's delays, were not altogether hostile to the Senate's dislike of the League. Although the first rejection in November, 1919 was unanimously considered a blow to world peace, by the time of the second rejection in March, 1920, after the protocol to the Treaty of Versailles had officially become effective, the American decision incited little interest. Only The Montreal Star sincerely deplored the triumph of isolationist forces in the United States.

Our study of the senate controversy first determines how each paper viewed the major issues and principle causes of the conflict; secondly, the importance each attached to the debates, and lastly, what each considered were the international and national consequences of the decision. In conclusion, we attempt to relate this reaction to each paper individually and to the general context of Quebec society. Hopefully, we will be able to draw some conclusions concerning Quebec in the months immediately after the peace settlement and, in particular, concerning a strengthening of isolationism.

CHAPTER I

THE NEWSPAPERS

In any press study, the character and policy of each newspaper must be understood before proceeding to a more detailed account of its reaction to a given question. Rémond has spoken of a newspaper as "un être vivant" whose personality and temperament gradually emerge and take shape over a period of time. In this section we will attempt first to determine the individual character of each paper studied - the type of information it featured, its policy and objectives; and secondly, to place it in the general context of Quebec society in 1919 - what influence did it enjoy, who read it and to what segment of society was it directed. For practical purposes, we have decided to proceed from the more generally oriented papers to the more specific and limited. We will first discuss The Montreal Star, then La Presse, L'Événement, L'Action Catholique and Le Devoir. Finally we will attempt to draw some conclusions concerning the nature of each paper and the effect this will have on its coverage of the league debate. (1)

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1. See Appendix A for more data on each newspaper.



The Montreal Star had adopted the twentieth century format of large daily editions filled with innumerable short articles of local, national and international significance displayed to the reader in no particular order although the front page was usually devoted exclusively to international and important national stories. It did not rely as heavily on pictures nor did it favour quite so extensively the sensational headlines carried in La Presse.

Editorially-speaking, The Montreal Star's hardline imperialist views were reflected throughout the paper and led it to give national and international news a greater priority than local news. The Star's editorials were often strongly-opinionated and strongly-worded but focused on international and national events which were frequently discussed in detail. During the debate on Canada's role in imperial affairs, it firmly adhered to the imperialist position and never questioned Canada's duties towards Great Britain: because of her close racial and political ties, Canada should do everything in her power to aid Great Britain in her hour of need. In the midst of the Boer crisis in 1899, Hugh Graham, the editor of The Star, had demanded a parliamentary resolution of unity with Great Britain in time of military crises. Later during the German naval scare in 1909 and during the ensuing debate over Canada's naval contributions, The Star played up the German threat and favoured a centralist plan of one common navy. Throughout the war, The Star remained firmly committed to the war effort, approved conscription; in short, urged Canadians to do all possible to save the British Empire from defeat at the hands of Germany. In this, it gave full sway to the war propaganda and jingoism of defeating the Hun.

Although it was less oriented to Quebec affairs, by its location in Montreal, The Star was more aware of French-Canadian opinion than many other

English-Canadian dailies. In the furor over French language rights in Ontario, The Star encouraged harmony and conciliation; indeed, it stated that if Ontario had been more sympathetic to French-Canadian cultural rights, much of the enlistment problems in Quebec would have been avoided.

Because it was an English-language paper, The Star evidently had a more limited Quebec audience than its French-language counterparts; its readers were essentially drawn from the conservative, English-speaking milieu of Montreal. It, however, in many respects represented the dominant national English-Canadian mentality of the period which strongly supported the war and the British flag. Since it spoke for this group, The Star then wielded an important influence in the Quebec press of 1919.

La Presse, in format and style, followed similar lines to The Star. It had abandoned the nineteenth century format of interpretative, signed articles and adopted the new American, mass-oriented style. Its huge daily editions, often as large as 40 pages were crammed with photographs, sensational headlines and short articles on crime, public affairs and international events. The importance of content gave way to the demands of scoops and flash bulletins. The large editions necessitated a lot of daily copy and allowed the paper to carry many articles of international, national and local scope neglected by much of the Quebec press, but they also gave rise to a certain lack of discrimination in the selection of news stories. This inevitably led to a crammed, unregulated effect in news content.

La Presse's editorials, usually carried on page four, were divided into two kinds; first, a series of short items, sometimes only one sentence long, which gave capsule opinions on local, national and international events; and secondly, several longer pieces of a more analytical nature. Politically,

the paper tended towards a liberal philosophy; it favourably regarded Laurier and supported liberal reforms particularly in the field of trade unionism. After the outbreak of World War I, La Presse enthusiastically pushed French-Canadian recruitment and in August, 1915 began a daily column of recruitment news entitled, "The Role of Our Country". (2) To La Presse, it was the Christian duty of Canadian youth to enlist and to fight alongside the Allies to defeat the barbarious Huns. La Presse ardently supported the Allies and was the only French-Canadian newspaper studied which fully espoused Allied propaganda and jingoism. But its war fervour lessened during the conscription crisis. La Presse opposed conscription, recommended a referendum on the question, and backed the opposition under Wilfrid Laurier in the December, 1917 national election.

Although La Presse firmly defended French-Canadian rights during the battle over Regulation 17 in Ontario, it did not champion the cause to the same extent as Le Devoir. The fight there, it believed, did not mean French Canadians should neglect their duty to the Allies overseas. It was, in other words, not a valid reason to oppose recruitment.

La Presse then was essentially a newspaper of popular, liberal tastes which stressed a broad, general base. It appealed to the man on the street, to the city worker through its emphasis on trade unionism, and not to the intellectual, professional elite. It made no attempt to give its readers researched, interpretative journalism; but rather to discover the popular interest, the popular mood, to play on it, adopt it and hopefully sell more papers. In 1900, La Presse had the largest circulation of any Canadian

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2. Elizabeth Armstrong, The Crisis of Quebec, 1914-1918, New York, Morningside Heights, Columbia University Press, 1937, p. 68.

daily; (3) in 1917, at the height of the conscription crisis it, according to Rumilly, gained through its opposition many readers lost by La Patrie which had backed conscription. (4) If there was a certain opportunism and sensationalism about La Presse, it is equally true that through its large circulation it enjoyed an enormous influence among the average French-Canadian readers of the day. It was widely read and by its effort to please public tastes strongly reflected them.

L'Événement followed a more traditional, conservative style of news presentation. Its small editions, habitually eight pages, presented the news soberly and succinctly. There were no pictures and no splashing, sensational headlines, and it made no pretense of reflecting popular tastes. Due to its size, it necessarily had to pick and choose its stories with far more care than La Presse or The Montreal Star. And in this, local and national news almost invariably gained precedent over international news.

Editorially, L'Événement was an organ of the Conservative Party; a factor which increased its likelihood of emphasizing local and national issues. This conservative slant was apparent throughout the war period. L'Événement enthusiastically supported the war effort and shared La Presse's desire to conquer the ruthless Hun and to save France, the ancient homeland. L'Événement, in particular, supported the interests of the French; a factor which will reappear during our discussion of the League of Nations. It pushed French-Canadian recruitment, urged French Canadians to comply with conscription after it was introduced by the Conservative government of

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3. W.H. Kesterton, A History of Canadian Journalism, Toronto, McClelland and Stewart, Ltd., 1967, p. 91.

4. Robert Rumilly, Histoire de la Province de Québec, Montréal, Montréal-Éditions, s.d., vol. XXII, p. 102.

Prime Minister Robert L. Borden, and backed the government in the December, 1917 election, the only French-Canadian paper to do so. (5) Evidently, its adherence to conscription resulted chiefly from its party affiliations; however, it is worth noting that only L'Événement and La Patrie of the French-language press supported conscription. Nevertheless, it gave this support reluctantly and by April, 1918 was urging exemptions for farmers' sons. (6)

As a Conservative Party paper, the influence of L'Événement was limited to a small group of readers. Yet although the Conservatives had dwindled in strength in the province from the unpopularity of conscription and from the rise of the Nationalistes, they were still an influential, powerful group. L'Événement made no attempt to appeal to a wide section of the Quebec population; nevertheless, it remained an important journal of opinion and one that was read for these opinions.

L'Action Catholique was similar to L'Événement in structure. Its daily edition ran to eight pages and presented the news soberly and conservatively, avoiding sensational headlines and carrying no pictures. Because of its limited size, L'Action Catholique evidently had to choose its news items more carefully than either La Presse or The Montreal Star and tended to favour local and national news. As the official organ of the archdiocese of Quebec, religious undertones pervaded almost all information carried and evidently influenced the selection of articles.

Before December 1, 1919, the editorials were generally carried on page one and were both the traditional style of long analytical pieces and short

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5. Mason Wade, The French Canadians 1760-1967, Toronto, MacMillan of Canada, 1968, vol. II, p. 751.

6. Rumilly, op. cit., vol. XXIII, p. 83.

items grouped under the headline, "Information", similar to the short editorials of La Presse and to "Bloc-Notes" in Le Devoir. After this date, the editorials moved to page three although "Information" remained on page one and "en passant", more short paragraphs of opinion, was added to page three.

These editorials, due to the religious nature of the paper, generally reflected the views of the upper clergy which during the war had continued to follow its traditional policy of conciliating loyalty to Great Britain with the national survival of French Canada. Because of this loyalty and solidarity with Great Britain, Canadians had a moral obligation to go to the aid of Britain and her allies. As the threat of conscription loomed near, L'Action Catholique urged French Canadians to enlist in large numbers to ward off conscription and warned the clergy, particularly the lower clergy, that they would fail in their Christian duty if they gave any encouragement to those questioning their loyalty to Great Britain. (7) In this respect, the paper repeatedly sought to counteract the influence of Bourassa and the Nationalistes whose propaganda had been having some effect among the lower clergy. Nevertheless, the hierarchy opposed conscription when it eventually became law, and L'Action Catholique joined wholeheartedly in condemning the measure. It, however, recommended compliance since it was the law of the land. (8)

Towards the Ontario school crisis, L'Action Catholique while advocating the full protection of French-Canadian cultural and linguistic rights refused to link the battle there with the battle overseas as Bourassa had done.

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7. Wade, op. cit., p. 677.

8. Rumilly, op. cit., vol. XXIII, p. 82.

French Canadians could defend their rights in Ontario without denying their loyalty to Great Britain and without accusing English Canadians of being Prussians or "Boches". It was not, the paper reiterated, justification for refusing to shoulder one's responsibilities and duties towards the British.

"Si nous sommes fiers d'être français et sujets britanniques, et nous avons amplement raison de l'être malgré les fautes commises contre notre race, il ne suffit pas d'acclamer la France et l'Angleterre; il nous faut, dans les proportions du juste et de l'équitable, marcher avec elles et ne pas leur refuser le témoignage de notre attachement." (9)

L'Action Catholique, like Le Devoir and L'Événement, had a relatively small readership; it did not aim its articles at the general reader but at the clergy and a smaller intellectual elite. It sought to present sober, well-planned articles on the key issues of the day, interpreted from the viewpoint of the Church. The fact that it represented the official policy of the Church lent a certain weight to the paper's opinions and gave it a fairly favourable position in Quebec at this time. Thus although it represented but one segment of the population, the ecclesiastical hierarchy; L'Action Catholique because of this enjoyed a certain prestige and influence which allowed it, to a degree, to direct rather than reflect public opinion.

Le Devoir also followed a more traditional format of news presentation. Each edition was fairly compact, running from about 12 to 16 pages, contained little advertising, few pictures and conservative headlines. It did not present the news in the American fashion of The Star or La Presse but rather

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9. L'Action Catholique, June 5, 1916, cited in Rumilly, Histoire de la Province de Québec, vol. XXI, pp. 145-146.

10. Le 50<sup>e</sup> Anniversaire du Devoir, Journal de la Province de Québec, du 14 janvier 1915, Montréal, Imprimerie de la Province de Québec.

stressed long, frequently signed, interpretative articles. And although it carried a selection of international news, its emphasis was on issues of local and national interest. The editorials, generally run on page one, consisted of both long, analytical pieces and short statements of opinion usually carried under the headline, "Bloc-Notes".

Although an independent newspaper, Le Devoir under the guidance of its editor and director, Henri Bourassa, became the leading organ for the Nationalistes. More than any other paper of the time, Le Devoir was closely identified with its editor; it was essentially Bourassa's paper and essentially Bourassa's ideas which it expounded. "Engagé", opinionated, Le Devoir attempted to develop a political nationalism generally pan-Canadian. It recommended complete autonomy for Canada, loyalty to Great Britain as Canada's historic ruler, provincial autonomy, minority rights throughout Canada, and bilingual public services and laws. Beneath these goals, it steadfastly adhered to the protection and to the development of a French-Canadian nationalism and attempted to teach to the French-Canadian people "un patriotisme raisonné et agissant qui lui fasse connaître, aimer et pratiquer ses devoirs nationaux". (10) Vital to this nationalism was the conservation of the French-Canadian language and religion. In respect to religion, Le Devoir took a liberal, ultramontane position, it was a Catholic paper and never neglected its role of teaching and defining its Catholic views.

In the years preceding the war, Bourassa had led the fight against British imperialism which he feared through schemes of imperial defense would nullify Canada's independence and lead to an imperial federation with

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10. Le 5e Anniversaire du Devoir, Compte Rendu de la grande manifestation du 14 janvier 1915, Montréal, Imprimé au Devoir, 1915, p. 1.



Great Britain. After the outbreak of the war, Bourassa continued to push for Canadian autonomy in imperial affairs. Because of her Anglo-French heritage, Canada should contribute to the war but only according to a realistic evaluation of her means; Canada should first and foremost act for Canadian ends. Since Britain had entered the war for her own profit, Canada should do the same. But Bourassa's initial support for Canadian participation soon waned and he began to discredit the war effort. He spoke out against the blatant jingoism of the age and warned that conscription would inevitably be invoked. French Canadians, he said, were ready to defend their homeland, but not to go overseas to fight and die for Great Britain.

As the war progressed, the preservation of French-Canadian linguistic rights in Ontario became the overriding issue for Le Devoir. Bourassa repeatedly linked persecution in Ontario with the question of war participation; if French Canadians could not be guaranteed their basic cultural rights in Canada, why should they, he asked, fight overseas for the very power that was denying these rights at home. By the end of the war, however, Le Devoir had shifted from its fiery anti-imperialism of the war period to a more insular French-Canadian nationalism. (11) The ultramontane character of the paper became increasingly evident as Bourassa turned to religious questions and stressed the ultimate authority of the Pope, elaborated in his work, Le Pape, arbitre de la paix, which appeared in 1918. An isolationist mood had very definitely set in for Le Devoir.

The impact wielded by Le Devoir during the war period is almost impossible to determine. It was without a doubt the most controversial newspaper

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11. Casey, Murrow, Henri Bourassa and French Canadian Nationalism, Opposition to Empire, Montreal, Harvest House, 1968, pp. 104-105.

of the period; English Canadians regarded Bourassa as a traitor, and even in Quebec he was frequently attacked and criticized for his opposition to recruitment. Nevertheless, the enactment of conscription long predicted by Bourassa gave the paper a certain prestige. The extent to which he fostered Quebec's open hostility to conscription can only be guessed, but he must have given it a certain impetus. Le Devoir made no attempt to appeal to a wide, diverse readership. It was an intellectual, elitist paper of opinion, not a mass-oriented daily like La Presse. It was more likely to form rather than reflect public opinion, but even its influence in this respect, as mentioned above, is difficult to define.

The style of each paper had definite implications in its coverage of the American league debate. Both La Presse and The Montreal Star due to their large editions could, and did, carry more articles pertaining to the Senate's debates. They also both tended to favour international news more than the other three newspapers studied; a factor which increased their readiness to run news on the league debate. The smaller papers, Le Devoir, L'Événement and L'Action Catholique, had less free space to fill and were, therefore, much more limited in their selection of news stories. They also preferred local and national news to international affairs. Consequently, all three papers were inclined to devote less attention to the American league controversy.

alike." (1)

## CHAPTER II

### THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS

Before proceeding to a more detailed analysis of press reaction to the Senate's rejection of the Treaty of Versailles, an understanding of the League of Nations, which lay at the centre of the controversy, and of the attitude of the press towards that organization must first be determined. In this chapter then we will first outline the origin and basic principles of the League of Nations and secondly analyse the reaction of the Quebec press towards it.

Prior to the war, pacifist groups in both North America and Europe had been urging the creation of some kind of world society where international grievances could be aired and negotiated. On January 8, 1918 President Wilson gave this idea official recognition by including it in his Fourteen Points for world peace presented to the Congress of the United States. The fourteenth point stated: "A general association of nations must be formed under specific covenants for the purpose of affording mutual guarantees of political independence and territorial integrity to great and small states

1. Thomas A. Bailey, *Woodrow Wilson and the League of Nations*, Quadrangle Books, 1944, p. 134.

2. *Ibid.*, pp. 23-24.



alike." (1)

The proposed League of Nations envisioned the replacement of the old balance of power based on opposing national ambitions and rivalries with an international organization which would provide for the peaceful settlement of all disputes arising between member nations. It represented a radical departure from the current power struggle between European nations and in its most optimistic form presaged a world without war. Wilson who championed the league concept more than any other political leader gradually began to regard the League as a necessary foundation to any peace settlement that would be drawn up at the end of the war. It would not only prevent a similar conflict from arising, but it would also guarantee the other peace aims which he had outlined in his Fourteen Points and in subsequent speeches. These included open diplomacy, freedom of the seas, the reduction of armament, the adjustment of colonial claims and self-determination of peoples, based on the doctrine of popular sovereignty. (2) The League, then, had by the war's end become identified with the principles laid out in the Fourteen Points.

It was under the banner of the Fourteen Points that the Paris Peace Conference opened on January 12, 1919. In its pre-Armistice contract made with the Allies, Germany had agreed to make peace on the basis of the Fourteen Points. The Allied leaders, accordingly, gathered in Paris to negotiate the terms of the Treaty of Versailles and to draw up the covenant of the League of Nations. These negotiations centred around the Council of Four - Georges Clemenceau, premier of France; David Lloyd George, prime minister of

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1. Thomas A. Bailey, Woodrow Wilson and the Lost Peace, Chicago, Quadrangle Books, 1944, p. 334.

2. Ibid., pp. 23-24.

Great Britain; Vittorio Emanuele Orlando, premier of Italy; and President Wilson. That the Great War had not brought the downfall of the old political system grew more evident as the negotiations progressed. Clemenceau, a political realist of the old school who had little faith in Wilson's League, in particular, sought harsh terms which would sufficiently cripple Germany and prevent her renaissance. For Clemenceau, the security of France was the overriding issue and could best be served by creating a strong military alliance capable of subduing any future German threat. Nevertheless, as a skilful diplomat, Clemenceau was willing to accept the League in exchange for certain guarantees of French security interests. Lloyd George, a master opportunist and compromiser, followed a moderate line which would ensure Britain a major share of the reparations and colonial spoils. He had no major objection to the League and was willing to accept it in principle. Orlando, although a weak leader and the least powerful of the four, was perhaps the most active supporter of the league concept besides Wilson.

Wilson, nevertheless, successfully gained their support for the league project; and by the end of January, a plenary session of the conference had unanimously approved the inclusion of the League's charter within the final peace treaty. On April 28, 1919 a hastily drafted covenant was formally approved and with the signing of the Treaty of Versailles June 28, 1919, the League of Nations was officially born. Nevertheless, it should be remembered that the protocol of the Treaty of Versailles did not officially become effective until nearly a full six months later on January 6, 1920; an important factor in the subsequent league controversy.

The nations which signed the treaty became for all practical purposes members of the League with the exception of both the United States and Canada which required the consent of their respective legislative bodies before the

treaty could become official. In accordance with the treaty-making powers of the American Constitution, the United States Senate had to approve and ratify the treaty by a two-thirds majority vote before the president's signature could become valid. (3) It was this requirement which gave rise to the prolonged and bitter debate in the American Senate after the treaty was formally presented to that body for consideration and approval. In Canada, the approval of the Canadian Parliament was needed before the Canadian signature could become valid and before the treaty could be ratified and approved by the Crown. (4)

How then did the Quebec press view the League of Nations which was, after all, the core issue in the American Senate debate over the ratification of the Treaty of Versailles? Did they approve of it in principle and of the international obligations inherent in membership, and did they consider it a necessary organization for the future success of the peace treaty and for the future peace of the world? We will examine these attitudes by determining first how each paper regarded the League and its underlying principles, secondly whether they felt the League would be successful, thirdly how they regarded the international commitments especially in respect to Article X of the League's covenant, (5) and lastly, whether they urged the League's adoption. Again we will examine each paper separately and attempt at the end of

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3. Ibid., p. 103.

4. J.B. Brebner, Canada, A Modern History, Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press, 1960, p. 415.

5. Article X of the League's covenant stated: "The Members of the League undertake to respect and preserve as against external aggression the territorial integrity and existing political independence of all Members of the League. In case of any such aggression or in case of any threat or danger of such aggression the Council shall advise upon the means by which this obligation shall be fulfilled." Bailey, Woodrow Wilson and the Great Betrayal, Chicago, Quadrangle Books, 1945, p. 385.

our discussion to draw some conclusions concerning their overall reaction to the League of Nations in the period prior to the formal signing of the treaty on June 28, 1919.

The Montreal Star, among the newspapers studied, proved to be the most fervent supporter of the League of Nations and actively promoted the project throughout the postwar period. For The Star, the League was the crowning accomplishment of the war; the one result which would make all the years of sacrifice and suffering worthwhile. It appeared to believe sincerely that the war had been fought and won "to make the world safe for democracy" and to bring the triumph of those peace goals developed by Wilson and summarized in his Fourteen Points. The war had shown that people everywhere could work and die "for a dominant purpose and a masterful ideal held in common", i.e. for democracy. (6) And by the popular acclaim given to Wilson in Europe, the people had further demonstrated that they were now tired of war and wanted an alternative which would ensure world peace and stability. To The Star, that alternative was the League of Nations, an international society which would guarantee the principles of democracy and popular sovereignty for all peoples. "Only the triumph of Democracy has made the idea practical, but that triumph also has made the organization necessary," since only a "super-national authority" could successfully organize a world, democratic system after the conclusion of the Peace Conference. (7)

The League heralded the dawn of a new age, an internationalist age, centred around the broad principles outlined by Wilson and based on peace and international understanding. The old era of competitive nation-states vying

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6. The Montreal Star, January 2, 1919, "Fellow-Citizens," editorial, p. 10.

7. Ibid., January 4, 1919, "After Versailles," editorial, p. 10.

with one another for political power and hegemony was past. Certain reactionary and isolationist elements might still linger on in some countries, but they could not long hold out against the tide of internationalism which had swept through the world and which had found its embodiment in the league concept. The League was, The Star uncritically observed, "one of the most momentous events in the history of humanity". (8)

The Star never doubted the League's eventual success; its just principles could not help but bring international harmony once it had been completely developed and organized. In fact, as far as The Star was concerned, only the League of Nations could ensure the successful implementation of the peace terms of the Treaty of Versailles. Without the League, the treaty would for all practical purposes be useless since the Allies could hardly expect to guarantee a permanent peace by themselves. "It is by means of the proposed League of Free Nations that, in effect, a continuing peace conference may be carried on, adjusting today's general terms to the detailed developments of tomorrow." (9)

In this respect, The Star shared Wilson's belief that the League was the life-giving force behind the peace treaty and the most valuable document to come out of the Peace Conference. Any disagreement arising over the treaty's terms could be remedied by the League and any future conflict between nations could be negotiated and settled peacefully within it. The Star did not say that the League would eliminate war, but it did imply that it would go a long

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8. Ibid., January 27, 1919, "The League is Born," editorial, p. 10.

9. Ibid., January 4, 1919, "After Versailles," editorial, p. 10.

10. Ibid., June 10, 1919, "The League of Nations," editorial, p. 10.

11. Ibid.



way towards reducing its occurrence and that if the League did not function, there could be no assurance of peace, "and where there is no peace there is war or menacing threat of war." (10) To this end, it sincerely regretted Germany's exclusion from the League. A League without Germany, it noted, was a League against Germany and would only force her to become an "active agent of trouble" in the future. (11)

It is hardly surprising then, given The Star's unqualified faith in the League, that it fully acquiesced to the commitments implicit in membership. The old era of nationalistic rivalry was past; the world, it insisted, had entered an internationalist age and every nation had to assume its role. No nation could continue to hold itself apart from the mainstream of world affairs. What happened in Europe now concerned Canada, and the United States just as much as it did the European nations directly involved. It, accordingly, considered Article X of the League's covenant as the heart of the League. If it was not respected by all nations concerned, the League would prove ineffectual and useless. No one, it declared, could turn the clocks backwards; it was the responsibility of every nation to accept its share of the burden of maintaining and safeguarding peace and harmony in the world.

The Star, therefore, actively urged the immediate adoption of the League of Nations by all concerned as a necessary instrument for international peace. The League's ability to secure peace and to bring about a new era of world harmony and understanding was never seriously questioned by the paper. As a result, it sincerely hoped that the "progressive" and internationalist forces in the United States would be successful in gaining American acceptance of the

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10. Ibid., June 10, 1919, "Germany and the League," editorial, p. 10.

11. Ibid.

League. Throughout the League debate there, its faith in the League never faltered or died. It was the saving grace for mankind and it alone could ensure the reign of justice and peace for all peoples.

La Presse alone of the French-language press greeted the league proposal with unveiled enthusiasm and gave its unqualified support to an organization which it regarded as "l'un des documents internationaux les plus importants de l'Histoire". (12) All of the idealistic hopes for world peace which were placed on the fulfillment of the league project by President Wilson were reiterated by La Presse in January and February 1919. Even before the Peace Conference opened, La Presse enthusiastically regarded the League as an auspicious project for serving the interests of mankind and for bringing peace to a troubled world. "Est-il besoin de dire que l'humanité entière fait des vœux pour que ce noble effort soit couronné de succès." (13) It was nothing less than the liberation of the world from the shackles of the old power structure and the inauguration of a new order based on peace and universal harmony which would guarantee the rights and liberties of all individuals and nations. In this respect, the doctrines of popular sovereignty and national self-determination, so often articulated by Wilson, were wholeheartedly endorsed by the paper and the League regarded as an essential instrument in their accomplishment. "Il fallait former une organisation de la paix faisant respecter les droits de tous et de chacun par le pouvoir combiné des nations libres; en un mot, fonder la Ligue des Nations." (14)

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12. La Presse, February 17, 1919, "La Ligue des Nations," editorial, p. 4.

13. Ibid., January 7, 1919, editorial, p. 4.

14. Ibid., July 9, 1919, "Le Président Wilson," editorial, p. 4.

Nevertheless, the paper never really engaged in any lengthy analysis of the League or its basic tenets, but rather appeared to merely reflect the general fervour in liberal and popular circles for the league project.

After the League's covenant had been drawn up in February 1919, La Presse confidently predicted that despite its imperfections, unavoidable in any human institution, it would serve as an excellent base for the more complete League of tomorrow. (15) Although certain difficulties would inevitably be encountered during the initial phase of its existence, the paper felt these difficulties would eventually be ironed out and the League would prove to be an effective society for maintaining peace and reducing the number of armed conflicts in the future.

"En somme, l'oeuvre dont le président Wilson s'est constitué le champion a beaucoup de bon. Si elle n'est pas assez forte pour empêcher toutes les guerres à l'avenir, elle le sera assez, probablement, pour en empêcher beaucoup et pour améliorer à plus d'un point de vue le sort de l'humanité." (16)

By the time the league project had gained the official approval of the Peace Conference in April, La Presse's earlier unqualified enthusiasm for the League had been replaced by a more sober appraisal of its future effectiveness. The League's covenant it noted had two serious handicaps, the unanimity clause and the terms concerning withdrawal. The former it feared would seriously reduce the efficiency of the League and the latter by its leniency laid the League prone to dissolution should things go poorly or a crisis arise. (17)

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15. Ibid., February 17, 1919, "La Ligue des Nations," editorial, p. 4.

16. Ibid., April 30, 1919, "La Ligue des Nations," editorial, p. 4.

17. Ibid., April 19, 1919, "La Ligue des Nations," editorial, p. 4.

It was far too easy for a dissatisfied member to pull out if he did<sup>not</sup> like the turn of affairs. "La Ligue des Nations est un palais somptueux, dont la porte d'entrée est un peu trop étroite et la porte de sortie, un peu trop large, et qui, pour cette raison, est exposé à devenir vide à un certain moment." (18)

Despite these objections, La Presse never questioned the international obligations which Canada or other member nations would be forced to assume once inside the League. Indeed, as just mentioned, it feared that too many nations would opt out of the League at the first sign of any conflict or disagreement and that they would be unwilling to share their part of the bargain. In this respect, La Presse had a definite internationalist outlook not encountered in the other French-language newspapers studied. Article X which aroused such a violent outcry of protest in the United States Senate and which provoked isolationist fears in the Canadian Parliament did not cause any noticeable dismay to La Presse. It appeared to accept these obligations as a necessary element to the full functioning and effectiveness of the League.

La Presse sincerely believed the League would do much for ensuring world harmony if each member respected its obligations and, therefore, urged its adoption by all concerned. Nevertheless, as the deliberations in the United States Senate bogged down and as the hope of American ratification became dimmer, the paper's enthusiasm for the League noticeably waned. As early as March, 1919 when the American Senate had more or less forced Wilson to negotiate amendments to the League's covenant which would safeguard American

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18. Ibid., April 21, 1919, editorial, p. 4.

19. Ibid., March 26, 1919, editor:

interests such as the Monroe Doctrine, La Presse had lamentably asked: "Pourquoi pas la Paix avant la Ligue?" (19) It was a theme to which the paper would repeatedly return throughout the debates in the American Senate. Although it favoured the League, the establishment of peace was in the long run of greater priority.

Thus a certain contradiction in La Presse's final attitude towards the League of Nations can begin to be detected during the first major controversy over its terms in the spring of 1919. On the one hand, it felt that the League could make great strides in achieving world harmony and should be an integral part of the peace treaty; and on the other hand, the more practical exigencies of the current international situation forced it to call for the enactment of a final peace settlement as quickly as possible, with or without the League of Nations. It is this latter view which La Presse seemed to prefer in the final analysis. The League of Nations was an admirable and noble project, but if its organization meant an interminable delay in the establishment of immediate peace which a war-weary world so anxiously sought, then it was far better to postpone its birth until after the peace treaty had become fully in <sup>to</sup> force.

L'Événement regarded the League of Nations in a far different light than either La Presse or The Montreal Star. The paper considered itself too realistic and too practical to believe the League would usher in a new age of peace and brotherhood, and it repeatedly criticized all of the idealistic platitudes surrounding the league project as naive and utopian. No one, it stated, could really hope to see war eliminated and an era of peace begun. To believe this was to succumb to a vain, pretentious hope that mankind was

19. Ibid., March 26, 1919, editorial, p. 4.

capable of creating a perfect society. Unfortunately, there would always be ambitious, power-hungry rulers and nations to cause friction and war. After the signing of the peace treaty in June, L'Événement did not share the general enthusiasm and optimism surrounding the peace settlement:

"Autrement dit, l'âge d'or du désarmement universel est-il, au moment de commencer pour un monde épuisé et malheureux? Hélas! non, et la guerre restera l'un des fleaux de Dieu pour châtier l'humanité de vices dont elle ne veut pas se corriger." (20)

Indeed, L'Événement placed a greater trust in the power of Christianity for bringing international harmony than in the League of Nations. If Christian nations could only work together to create a society founded on the tenets of Christianity, there would be no need for the League since such a society would be able to govern justly the actions of all men. Only through the respect of a higher authority than man could any society ever hope to attain any measure of stability and harmony:

"Si les nations chrétiennes pouvaient seulement commencer par faire entre elles une société viable et solide! Elles professent la foi du Christ et acceptent sa loi. Quelle base d'entente solide, large, pleinement suffisante. Si les groupes chrétiens d'une même nation comme le Canada, pouvaient eux aussi s'entendre dans la foi et l'obéissance du Christ." (21)

It seemed to L'Événement then that the basic premise underlying the League's foundation was at fault. No international society created by man could bring about the triumph of peace and justice; any human endeavour would necessarily be imperfect and incomplete and to believe otherwise was

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20. L'Événement, June 30, 1919, "Si Vis Pacem," editorial, p. 4.

21. Ibid., January 2, 1919, "Pour la Paix," editorial, p. 4.

24. Ibid., January 7, 1919, "Théorie de la Paix," editorial, p. 4.

25. Ibid., February 15, 1919, "La Paix," editorial, p. 4.

to fall victim to a "péché d'orgueil" of which the paper accused the League's advocates. (22) Moreover, L'Événement had little faith in the principles of popular sovereignty and national self-determination which the League was presupposed to guarantee. The war had not been fought to make the world safe for democracy but to chastize Germany for having violated the code of honour among nations and to "sauver l'humanité de la pire des tyrannies". (23) It, therefore, could not really accept the League's founding principles and goals or its "raison d'être".

Furthermore, L'Événement saw little likelihood of the League accomplishing its goals. Only a strong military alliance grouping France, Great Britain and the United States could possibly foresee and prevent any future European conflict. In this respect, it adhered solidly to the position taken by the French in Paris that only a strong military alliance could preserve peace. Wilson, it conceded, might be theoretically right; but Clemenceau was right in practice. (24) A military league would be the best means of guaranteeing the peace settlement and would provide the best base for any future league of nations by instilling a taste for peace among all peoples and nations. It was also a far more reliable way of dealing with any future outbreak of war.

"Le plan de cette ligue des nations nous paraît toujours plus brillant que solide. Nous préférons la politique due maréchal Foch qui connaît bien les conditions de l'Europe, aux utopies humanitaires du premier citoyen des Etats-Unis, qui n'a jamais étudié la Bochie et la guerre que dans les livres." (25)

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22. Ibid., January 7, 1919, "Théorie et Pratique," editorial, p. 4.

23. Ibid., May 8, 1919, "La Rançon," editorial, p. 4.

24. Ibid., January 7, 1919, "Théorie et Pratique," editorial, p. 4.

25. Ibid., February 15, 1919, "Le Pacte," editorial, p. 6.

In fact, L'Événement didn't really feel the League would ever be more than an alliance of the major powers. This was the only practical way of ensuring a certain protection against a recurrence of the tragic events of the past war.

L'Événement's scepticism of the League's ability to work extended as well to Article X of its covenant. Article X, it felt, was not really worth worrying about since it never could be enforced. Wilson's emphasis on the moral rather than the legal nature of the military obligations imposed on its members essentially negated any binding power the League might have over its members. Any member could refuse to recognize its moral obligation to aid another member unjustly attacked. And this lack of legal force not only "Pourrait bien faire crouler tout ce savant échafaudage au premier choc qu'il subira," but also underscored the inability of the League to prevent even the most unjust war. (26) It, therefore, dismissed any opposition to Article X as basically misguided since it could not be made legally binding on the League's adherents. But L'Événement's attitude was somewhat contradictory for it criticized opponents of Article X for forgetting that the object of the League was to reduce the number of armed conflicts in the future thereby making the incidence of military obligations less and less likely. (27) This comment made during the ratification debate in the Canadian Parliament appeared to stem from L'Événement's position as a Conservative paper and its support of the government's stand for the League's ratification.

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26. Ibid., September 13, 1919, "Sénat contre Président," editorial, p. 6.

27. Ibid., September 12, 1919, "Dans Quel But?" editorial, p. 6.

28. Ibid.

29. L'Action Catholique, Jan. 1920, p. 1.



Thus, although L'Événement remained sceptical of the League's eventual success and sincerely doubted many of its basic tenets, it nevertheless supported its ratification as a means of bringing a final peace settlement. Peace, after all, was the most vital consideration in the year immediately following the armistice, and any delay in its establishment could only hurt the interests of all concerned. Since the League had been included within the Treaty of Versailles, it should be adopted if this was the only means of bringing about ratification of the peace treaty.

"Encore une fois, la Ligue des Nations peut être d'une utilité assez problématique; mais si l'adoption de ce projet est nécessaire à la paix du monde, en tant qu'il est inséparable du traité, qu'on l'adopte et qu'on nous donne la paix." (28)

Thus, in the long run, L'Événement was willing to take a chance with the League of Nations if by so doing world peace could finally be established.

Of all the papers studied, L'Action Catholique appeared to be the least interested in the league project and its discussions on this subject were extremely limited. Although the paper did not engage in any strong polemics against the League, it evidently could not at the same time find much enthusiasm for it. As a Catholic newspaper, L'Action Catholique essentially could not accept the basic principles behind the League. It condemned popular sovereignty as a false doctrine and as a "mère féconde de révolutions sans fin" and opposed those who believed that by bringing democracy to the world international peace and justice would be established. (29) "Affirmer que démocratie, selon la formule algébrique, égale paix, c'est se rendre coupable

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28. Ibid.

29. L'Action Catholique, March 26, 1919, "Cette équivoque," editorial, p. 1.

d'un inconcevable aveuglement." (30) On the contrary, this democracy could only lead to more wars and more strife between peoples. The paper was then completely at odds with the founding principles of the League and with many of the goals it hoped to accomplish.

Not surprisingly, its ultramontane position led L'Action Catholique to regard Catholicism as the best means for erecting an international society capable of maintaining peace among nations since it provided a universal bond for uniting mankind. Why look further for some new tie when one already existed that would be so easy to employ?, it asked. (31) On several occasions, L'Action Catholique regretted the exclusion of the Pope from the Peace Conference. As an ultramontane organ, it believed that only the Pope had any real authority for judging and for governing the action of men and nations and that the final peace should be based on his dictates. The peace proposals presented by Pope Benedict XV during the war had been espoused by L'Action Catholique, and during the peace the paper continued to support his platform. Consequently, it saw little need for creating a League of Nations.

L'Action Catholique made few comments concerning the eventual success of the League. After its charter had first been drawn up in February, 1919, the paper stressed the need for further study of the League's articles and the probability that changes would be made. The League, it seemed to feel, would have to undergo many modifications before becoming a viable organization. The formula "demeure pour un certain temps, ouvert à l'étude et à la discussion de tous les pouvoirs intéressés et de l'opinion publique mondiale.

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30. Ibid. February 15, 1919, *op. cit.*

31. Ibid., January 9, 1919, "La Société des Nations, en passant," p. 3.

On y reviendra ultérieurement pour adoption finale, après exécution des retouches qui auront été démontrées nécessaires ou utiles." (32)

The implications to Canada of membership in the League, however, provoked a certain uneasiness. L'Action Catholique distrusted the international commitments which Canada might be forced to bear in the future and the wars in which she might be forced to participate. Up to the present, Canada had participated in Great Britain's wars only with the consent of the Canadian Parliament, but under Article X of the League's covenant, L'Action Catholique feared Canada would lose its parliamentary autonomy and would be automatically subject to participation in any future engagement regardless of her desires. It was more the threat of becoming involved in overseas conflicts which did not directly concern Canada than the loss of Canadian independence that distressed the paper most and which it felt lay inherent in Article X. "Voilà qui nous jette en plein dans le tourbillon mondial dont nous étions restés éloignés jusqu'ici (. . .) nous y jette de manière à prévenir toute récrimination ou toute protestation future." (33) The effect of Article X would have serious repercussions for Canada and for Canadian interests. These interests L'Action Catholique believed could best be served independently of international affairs.

It was this isolationist outlook which led the paper to recommend the utmost caution and consideration before accepting membership in the League. "Il faut envisager ce fait dans tout sa netteté, et avec toutes ses conséquences (. . .) un pas plus important que tous ceux (. . .) qui ont été faits

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32. Ibid., February 15, 1919, under l'Information, p. 1.

33. Ibid., September 9, 1919, "La question du moment," editorial, p. 1.

depuis cinq ans." (34) Although the paper never officially came out against the League of Nations, in the final analysis, it had strong reservations against the project. Apart from its religious difference with the League and its obvious preference for a universal organization based on Catholicism and under the tutelage of the Pope, L'Action Catholique seriously feared the consequences of the international obligations Canada would be forced to assume once inside the League. Even the urgency of peace could not override this fundamental objection to the League. The League would not really serve the interests of Canada and in all likelihood would prove damaging to them. It was for this reason that the paper did not really endorse its ratification.

Le Devoir remained perhaps the most outspoken critic of the League. It went into a much more lengthy analysis of its tenets than the other papers and never underestimated the importance of the league project to international affairs. Le Devoir regarded the League's organization as probably the most important work undertaken by the Peace Conference. (35) It, nevertheless, did not believe the League put the world on the threshold of a new era of international understanding and sceptically regarded its founding principles and objectives. "Il est clair que l'événement ne suscite ni grands enthousiasmes, ni fervents espoirs." (36) Le Devoir, like L'Événement and L'Action Catholique, did not believe the war had been fought for the triumph of democracy and could not accept the peace goals so loudly proclaimed by Wilson and his followers.

Its anti-imperialism of the war years and its tendency to adhere to the

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34. Ibid.

35. Le Devoir, January 20, 1919, "La Conférence de la Paix," editorial, p. 1.

36. Ibid., April 29, 1919, "La Ligue," under Bloc-Notes, p. 1.

papal peace platform made the League suspect in its eyes. It would invariably be dominated by the Five Powers - France, Great Britain, United States, Japan and Italy, and ruled according to their interests with little respect for smaller nations such as Canada. Moreover, Le Devoir could not sanction many of its underlying principles. The principles of the Pope, it felt, provided a much more solid basis for peace and harmony in the world and had more validity than the famous Fourteen Points of Wilson. The former were based on the justice and charity of Christianity, the latter on human justice and popular democracy. "Les prescriptions se ressemblaient, mais la sanction différait de toute la distance qui sépare la puissance de Dieu de l'impuissance de l'homme." (37) In this respect, Le Devoir reflected L'Événement's view that mankind could not expect to create a just and peaceful society and any human undertaking towards such an end would invariably be imperfect and inadequate.

Accordingly, it had little confidence in the eventual success of the League. The League conceivably through its arbitration powers could settle many international disputes and avoid many future conflicts, but its organization raised more questions than it solved. It left the big powers, through their domination of the executive council, the absolute mastery of the League's affairs and any perspective of common collaboration by all members seemed rather remote. (38) Moreover, the League's constitution neglected to consider any situation involving a member nation and a non-member or a situation in which the belligerents refused to recognize the jurisdiction of the League especially since the League lacked any military power to enforce its

37. Ibid., December 6, 1919, "Banqueroute de la Papauté Laïque et de la Démocratie Triomphante," editorial, p. 1.

38. Ibid., April 29, 1919, "La Ligue," p. 1.

decisions. It also failed satisfactorily to settle the territorial aspirations and reclamations of the Allies in respect to the national self-determination of its members which the League professed to guarantee. (39) In other words, there were too many issues left unsettled by the League's charter for Le Devoir to believe it really could become a viable organization.

But Le Devoir's biggest objection to the League centred around Article X which it felt not only damaged Canada's independence by taking the question of her war-making powers out of the hands of her Parliament and placing them under the jurisdiction of the League, which for all practical purposes meant the five major powers, but also presupposed Canada's participation in future wars regardless of whether her own interests were at stake. Following its anti-imperialist policy of the war years, Le Devoir saw this as nothing less than a ploy by British imperialists to gain the concurrence of Canada to fight in their future wars by permitting Canada to sign the Treaty of Versailles.

"La vraie raison pour laquelle les impérialistes anglais tiennent à notre signature et à la ratification par notre parlement, c'est que nous nous engageons ainsi formellement (à l'article X de la ligue des nations) et donc, en tout premier lieu, de l'Empire britannique." (40)

It was the abdication of Canadian autonomy. Canada, henceforth, would no longer be free to decide for herself in which conflicts she would participate; she would become for all practical purposes a mere pawn of the British.

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39. Ibid., February 15, 1919, "La Ligue des Nations," editorial, p. 1.

40. Ibid., August 29, 1919, "Le Canada, les Etats-Unis et La Ligue des Nations," editorial, p. 1.

"Il ne faut pas beaucoup d'imagination pour deviner ou cela peut nous mener, quel fardeau nous assumons ainsi. C'est plutôt le maintien de l'Empire britannique que nos associés de Londres veulent nous lier." (41)

Thus Le Devoir always jealous of Canadian rights and prerogatives particularly in regards to the British Empire deeply feared the consequences of Article X on Canada's independent status in foreign affairs. It could only be detrimental to Canadian interests which after all should be the determining factor in the formation of Canadian foreign policy.

Le Devoir then remained essentially hostile to the League of Nations and could not recommend its adoption. It disagreed with the League's founding principles on the basis of its own ultramontane beliefs. Participation in the League would only drag Canada into innumerable conflicts fought in the interests of either Great Britain or the United States. This latter consideration formed the basis of Le Devoir's dissent and reflected a continuing tradition of opposition to imperialism and to any attempt to reduce Canadian autonomy. Canada should act for her own interests, and Le Devoir could see little gain for Canada in belonging to the League of Nations. Nationalism, not internationalism, was the soundest basis for formulating foreign policy, and Canada should mind her own affairs first before interfering in those which did not involve her. The strength of its ultramontane distaste for the League should also not be underestimated. Le Devoir seriously felt the papal authority and the principles of Christianity formed a far better guarantee of world peace than any society erected by man.

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41. Ibid., August 18, 1919, "Le Traité de Paix," editorial, p. 1.

Only two papers, La Presse and The Montreal Star, adhered to the founding principles of the League of Nations and sincerely believed it heralded the beginning of a new era of international peace and understanding. L'Événement, L'Action Catholique and Le Devoir, for their part, could not accept the basic tenets of the League nor the idealism and optimism which surrounded its creation. It was vain and pretentious of man to believe he could build an ideal society; such an endeavour consequently appeared destined to fail. Moreover, both Le Devoir and L'Action Catholique, reflecting a strong isolationism, deeply distrusted the international commitments imposed on Canada through league membership and because of this distrust could not endorse the ratification of the peace treaty. The other three papers were willing to accept these obligations, but only The Montreal Star, and to a lesser degree La Presse, espoused the internationalist concept of the League. L'Événement had no great faith in the League and therefore saw little reason to worry about the consequences of Article X which it felt could not be enforced anyway. It agreed with La Presse that peace was a more important consideration than the League; but while La Presse was willing to forego the League in the interests of world peace, L'Événement was willing to take a chance with the League if it was the only means of securing the ratification of the peace treaty. In the final analysis only the English-language Montreal Star placed the League above the peace treaty and regarded it as a necessary and essential instrument to the establishment of an effective peace.



the hope of a war-free world and the freedom of the seas for all peoples; he was a just, a liberal, a peace-loving man who sought justice to a troubled world. When the first year of the war had passed, Wilson was warmly hailed

### CHAPTER III

at the Peace Conference, and followed by the hope that the rights of the people would not be sacrificed to expediency and a just peace reflecting these rights would be made.

#### WOODROW WILSON AS A WORLD LEADER

The League followed towards the League of Nations. With a view to the

The League's principle protagonist was the president of the United States, Woodrow Wilson, whose name became irrevocably interwoven with the league project. For Wilson its creation alone was sufficient justification for American intervention in the war, and he strove relentlessly both in Europe and in the United States to make it a reality. The reaction of the press towards Wilson's league policy will be examined first in relation to his actions on the international scene, and more specifically at the Paris Peace Conference; and secondly in relation to his fight for the League's acceptance in the United States.

Wilson, as mentioned in the preceding chapter, had become during the war and during the months immediately following the Armistice the leading advocate of a peace without victory based on his Fourteen Points. And he had gone to the peace talks fully confident of the eventual triumph of a peace settlement centred around these points and having for its crowning achievement the League of Nations. A pacifist at heart, Wilson sincerely believed in the League as an instrument for achieving international harmony and for fulfilling his most cherished ideals concerning world peace. To many, he brought

the hope of a war-free world and the promise of national self-determination for all peoples; he was a messiah, a "pape laïque", who would bring peace and justice to a troubled world. When he first arrived in Europe in December, 1918, Wilson was warmly acclaimed by the popular masses everywhere. By his presence at the Peace Conference, many believed he would ensure that the rights of the people would not be pushed aside by the Allied leaders and that a just peace reflecting these rights would be made.

The Quebec press reaction to Wilson's international role resembled closely the lines followed towards the League of Nations. Wilson was, after all, intimately connected to the league project; consequently those papers favourable to the League were those most favourable to Wilson while those unfavourable viewed him critically. In our analysis, we will first examine how each paper stood in relation to Wilson's international leadership; and secondly, whether they approved or disapproved of his policy for the League's creation at the Paris Peace Conference.

The Montreal Star highly regarded President Wilson who, it believed, through his tremendous vision and idealism had given people renewed hope and had brought the world to the threshold of an international epoch. Since The Star had an unbounded faith in the League, it could not help but have the greatest admiration for its leading promoter. Wilson was the precursor, respected by the people, the masses, but not quite acceptable to their rulers. The Star often remarked that Wilson appeared to be ahead of his time and that in many quarters his views were too progressive to be adopted by those elements which represented the old political power system in Europe. Wilson incarnated the new internationalism and by so doing embodied a certain nobility and wisdom not found among the other leaders gathered in Paris. He stood above

petty intrigue for personal or national gain; he was the impartial, just leader whose dictates could be respected and accepted by all people.

Accordingly, The Star gave its wholehearted approval to Wilson's actions in Paris and had the utmost confidence in his league policy. This policy, it felt, formed "a rallying point for the nations" especially since the United States lacked the historic grievances of the other nations involved and therefore wore "a distinct badge of impartiality". (1) These nations would do well to follow his advice and leadership in the formation of the peace treaty and the League's covenant. And The Star remained confident that only a peace based on the principles outlined in the Fourteen Points could be effective.

La Presse which had been a strong advocate of the League of Nations freely accepted Wilson's preeminence in international affairs and closely identified him not only with the league project but also with its successful creation at the Peace Conference. He more than any other figure had made certain that a just peace was written in Paris and that the peace goals on which the war had been fought were respected. Although La Presse's initial enthusiasm for Wilson subsided somewhat during the long negotiations in Paris, he was still the political leader who had done the most to save humanity and to lay the foundations for a new era of understanding. Just after the close of the Peace Conference, the paper stated unequivocally, "Sans vanité, le président Wilson peut être heureux du rôle qu'il vient de jouer pour la libération de l'univers." (2) Through his actions for world peace,

Ibid., January 27, 1919, editorial.

1. The Montreal Star, January 4, 1919, "After Versailles," editorial, p. 4.

2. La Presse, July 9, 1919, "Le Président Wilson," editorial, p. 4.

3. Ibid., January 27, 1919, editorial.

4. Ibid., May 3, 1919, editorial.

the president would henceforth be ranked among the great peace-makers of the world. (3) It refuted those who claimed Wilson was an impractical idealist and dreamer and repeatedly stressed the remarkable courage and steadfastness he showed in his pursuit of the League's creation despite bitter criticism both in America and abroad. On March 7, 1919 La Presse ran an editorial entitled, "Fidèle à son Idéal", in which it underlined the president's faith and determination as well as the enormous work he had accomplished in Paris. (4) And a few days earlier it had noted, "(il) n'est pas de la catégorie des hommes d'Etat qui se laissent émouvoir plus qu'il ne faut par la critique. De l'idéal qu'il s'est formé personne ne réussira à lui faire détourner les yeux." (5)

Consequently, La Presse widely endorsed Wilson's policies at the Peace Conference and regarded the acceptance of the league principle as a major, diplomatic success for him. (6) Indeed, it considered any delay the League's creation had caused in the peace negotiations necessary to meet his wishes. (7) Through its strong position for the League, La Presse could not really criticize Wilson's league policies in Paris which it considered vital to the League's triumph. It thus was primarily because of this relation with the League that La Presse regarded Wilson as a world figure of high renown. He was credited with ensuring the victory of the League and of all those principles for peace and justice associated with it. By championing the league

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3. Ibid., January 27, 1919, editorial, p. 4.

4. Ibid., March 7, 1919, "Fidèle à son Idéal," editorial, p.4.

5. Ibid., March 4, 1919, editorial, p. 4.

6. Ibid., January 27, 1919, editorial, p. 4.

7. Ibid., May 3, 1919, editorial, p. 4.

project, Wilson had made certain that a new world order had been born and through his Fourteen Points had laid down the guiding principles upon which it would be based.

L'Événement, contrary to The Montreal Star and La Presse, had little admiration for the American president who it considered not only distastefully pompous and overbearing, but also naively idealistic. It preferred bold leaders, unencumbered by high platitudes of unattainable utopias, such as Clemenceau and Theodore Roosevelt, who it warmly praised as "l'une des figures (. . .) les plus énergiques et les plus originales de l'Amérique." (8) Wilson, on the contrary, was an impractical man of letters rather than a perceptive, political realist and consequently his views should not be taken too seriously. Indeed, the paper coolly noted, "Les quatorze points de Wilson ne valent pas la pointe de l'épée du dompteur des Boches"; Foch could ensure a just peace much more capably than Wilson. (9) L'Événement's scepticism of the League then inevitably extended to its leading promoter, President Wilson. That Wilson remained sincerely confident of the future success of the League was sufficient indication to the paper of his lack of political astuteness and leadership capabilities.

Throughout the negotiations in Paris, L'Événement decidedly favoured the French position to the American. If Wilson's utopian proposals were followed, no secure or just peace could be established. Shortly before his brief visit to the United States in February, 1919, L'Événement emphasized his ineptitude:

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8. L'Événement, January 8, 1919, "C'était un homme," editorial, p. 4.

9. Ibid., May 15, 1919, "Foch est Là," editorial, p. 4.

"Retournez chez vous M. Wilson, et soyez sûr que M. Baker fera mieux que vous au Congrès. Son nom nous est garant qu'il ne gâtera pas la pâte." (10)

Wilson, in other words, had already become more of a handicap than a help in Paris.

But it was the moral arrogance of Wilson and his partisans which most irritated the paper. His determination to force the Peace Conference to adopt his policy or else withdraw without any regard to the consequences of such an action indicated, in the paper's judgment, a moral transgression, a "péché d'orgueil", which it found unacceptable. (11) Before telling the rest of the world its responsibilities and how to run its affairs, Wilson would do far better to mind his own house and to gain the concord of the American people for this great internationalist crusade.

"Qu'il entraîne plutôt le peuple américain, sorti de l'épreuve dernière avec beaucoup de gloire sans avoir encouru de véritables périls, à entreprendre la croisade civilisatrice qui, par persuasion ou autrement, pourra convaincre les pays révolutionnaires et les peuples à demi civilisés de la nécessité d'une réconciliation générale sincère et parfaite." (12)

It was an interesting and uncanny request coming as it did at the beginning of January, 1919 before the long fight over American ratification of the League had begun and reflected an attitude of L'Événement which would reappear during the league debate in the United States. The United States, it felt, had not made any great sacrifice in the war which it had entered belatedly; if

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10. Ibid., February 8, 1919, "Trop Parler Nuit," editorial, p. 6.

11. Ibid., January 7, 1919, "Théorie et Pratique," editorial, p. 4.

12. Ibid. Journal Catholique, February 1919.

14. Ibid.

anything, it had derived substantial financial profit at the expense of Europe. L'Événement, therefore, resented Wilson's presumption that he could reorganize the world along his lines and inaugurate an era of peace when he had no first-hand or practical experience with international affairs or with war. He would do best to stay at home and leave the peace settlement to the more competent and practical judgment of European politicians and diplomats.

L'Action Catholique's reaction to Wilson followed in many respects the same lines noted earlier in regard to the League of Nations, reflecting at once both a dislike for Wilson and for his international role and an indifference to it. The paper made few comments concerning the president during his sejour in Europe and limited its reports to a fairly succinct, impartial coverage of the Peace Conference. But through its very omission of praise and warm acclaim for him and through its opposition to the League, it became clear that L'Action Catholique did not regard Wilson as an inspiring world figure. Like L'Événement, it distrusted the open admiration given to him and could not share in the general optimistic aura which surrounded him. And as a Catholic newspaper, it was outraged by the insult and "mépris" shown to the Pope and to his peace program before the honours and acclaim showered on Wilson and his Fourteen Points. "Le monde s'est pâmé d'admiration," it noted. (13) It seemed somewhat irreverent and disparaging to bestow so much consideration and attention on a political leader who was after all only the elected representative of his people. For L'Action Catholique, it was a "pénible signe des temps" that a politician could inspire so much esteem and admiration and the Pope so little. (14)

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13. L'Action Catholique, February 12, 1919, under L'Information, p. 1.

14. Ibid., voir, page 26, 1919.

It, consequently, did not have a very high regard for the policies pursued by Wilson in Europe although on this question it said remarkably little. The paper had made known its disagreement with the Fourteen Points and with the League of Nations and did not apparently feel compelled to enter into any lengthy discussion of Wilson's international policy since it disapproved of its basic tenets and aims. In this respect, L'Action Catholique showed a definite indifference to international affairs which probably stemmed from its ultramontane orientation.

It was Le Devoir which provided the strongest criticism of Wilson's actions abroad. The paper, partly through its hostility to the League of Nations and partly through its distaste for the moral leadership assumed by Wilson, could find little sympathy for the president. His arrogance and his assumption of possessing a certain moral superiority over other political leaders led the paper to grant him the title of lay pope, "pape laïque". Le Devoir frequently delighted in pointing out the contradictions in this position for despite his lofty platitudes and vain promises of peace, justice and democracy, Wilson often fell victim to his own pretensions and ideals. In one satirical article, it referred to Wilson as "le pontife de la démocratie, le créateur de l'inafaillibilité libertaire" and to his Fourteen Points as "ses quatorze commandements irréfragables à l'univers." (15) But it also seriously condemned the haughty posture of the president which resembled suspiciously the old British imperialism of the pre-war years. Wilson seemed little better than his counterparts in Canada and Great Britain in his belief that American values should prevail amongst all peoples and nations regardless of their cultural heritage. This to Le Devoir was just another example of Anglo-Saxon

15. Le Devoir, June 26, 1919, "Projets de Sceaux," under Billet du Soir, p. 1.



arrogance and <sup>a</sup>bid at cultural and political domination throughout the world. Wilson's letter to Poincaré in July, 1919 commemorating the French Revolution it considered arrogant and petty, an extraordinary insult to France's past from the leader of a nation "qui doit au gouvernement de Louis XVI une si large part de sa liberté (. . .) Avec toute sa littérature et sa grandiloquence le président fait ici, hélas! figure de politicien de village." (16)

Not surprisingly, then, Le Devoir found little to recommend in the policy pursued by Wilson in Paris. Although the paper retained a certain scepticism towards the political manoeuvrings in Paris as a whole, it did tend to favour the more practical, military peace advocated by the French to the utopian program of Wilson. In an editorial entitled, "Le Défi de M. Wilson", March 5, 1919, Le Devoir commented more extensively on Wilson's actions abroad. After the triumphal acclamations throughout Europe, Wilson and his policies had undergone strong criticism particularly in France which because it was the most threatened militarily were probably the most valid. Wilson had responded with tenacity and determination, but it observed in this revolutionary time the words of the president of the United States had tragic perspectives. His policies would undoubtedly find wide support in the desire for universal peace, but they were "gros de lourdes conséquences". (17) For his promises of liberty and national self-determination could only bring more revolutions and bloodshed. He was encouraging strife rather than promoting peace. "Le jour ne doit pas être loin où il regrettera son manque d'énergie à la table de la conférence de la paix, où il se lavera vainement les mains, se déclarant innocent du sang

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16. Ibid., July 17, 1919, "M. Wilson," under Bloc-Notes, p. 1.

17. Ibid., March 5, 1919, "Le Défi de M. Wilson," editorial, p. 1.

qu'il aura fait couler." (18) Le Devoir could not accept the underlying principles behind Wilson's policy which it feared did not augur well for the future prospects of international harmony, nor could it tolerate the uncompromising, self-righteous attitude assumed by Wilson at the Peace Conference. In this, it stressed the disruptive, rather than impractical, nature of his policies in world affairs. There lurked a dangerous element for humanity in the president's peace program for it gave rise to hopes which could not possibly be fulfilled.

Through this discussion it becomes clear that only two of the newspapers studied regarded Wilson favourably and accepted his peace goals pursued in Paris, La Presse and The Montreal Star. They had been the two papers which most responded to the resounding idealism and high optimism generated by the president's peace program and by the creation of the League of Nations. Through his courage and determination Wilson had given the nations a vision of a better world based on international understanding and governed by the just precepts of his Fourteen Points. They believed in the noble mission undertaken by Wilson for the benefit of humanity and discredited any opposition he encountered at the Peace Conference in the pursuit of his goals. Only the triumph of his peace policy could guarantee an effective and just peace settlement.

The other papers, however, looked coldly at Wilson who had so arrogantly presumed to be the moral conscience of the world and at his peace program whose underlying tenets they could not accept. For them, Wilson was no messiah and his policies no magic key to a new pacifistic age. His overbearing

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18. Ibid., July 19, 1919, "Au Pays des 14 Points," p. 1.

superiority transgressed the proper limits of human behaviour; no political leader could pretend to impose his views and his leadership on the world. To the ultramontane L'Action Catholique only the pope could command universal respect and authority. To L'Événement which stressed a practical, realistic approach to international affairs, Wilson's idealism was too simplistic and too naive to merit any serious consideration. And to the anti-imperialist, Catholic Le Devoir, Wilson's actions posed a new imperialistic threat to the security of all peoples through its imposition of Anglo-Saxon and American political institutions, i.e. democracy and national self-determination, which could only have disastrous consequences to future international equilibrium and peace. It was but another example of militant Anglo-Saxon imperialism, this time carried out under the banner of the United States.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE AMERICAN DEBATE: WILSON'S POSITION

Given this reaction to Wilson's policies for the League at the Paris Peace Conference, how then did the Quebec press regard his fight for the League's acceptance in the United States? Would the same papers which had backed him abroad remain behind him throughout the long debates in the American Senate and would his critics continue to disapprove of his methods to gain the League's ratification in the United States? Before proceeding to a more detailed analysis of this reaction, we should first briefly examine the president's strategy and actions vis-a-vis the opposition in the United States Senate. Then we can undertake a discussion of the press reaction to his policies and their consequences on the treaty's fate in the United States.

Wilson had successfully gained the concord of the European peacemakers for his league project, but he had yet to win over the American Senate. And it was precisely there that the real test for the League of Nations lay. The Senate could refuse to ratify the Treaty of Versailles thereby killing the League of Nations and Wilson's most cherished dream for world peace and the ultimate achievement of his political career. Wilson was determined to prevent this by forcing the Senate into unqualified acceptance of the peace treaty.

It was the will of the American people, of the world that the League be formed, and Wilson refused to consider the possibility that a handful of legislators could block such a noble enterprise. He at first rejected any modification of the League's covenant by the Senate, but as the Senate's hostility hardened he was forced to grant limited concessions. In the spring of 1919 after his brief voyage to the United States to placate his critics, Wilson obtained changes in the League's charter, particularly concerning the Monroe Doctrine, in deference to them. Later in the summer, he agreed to certain interpretative reservations especially concerning the controversial Article X.

But here the president's willingness to compromise stopped. Wilson had always regarded the Senate with a certain degree of scorn and his preference for the British parliamentary system was well-known. If the senators did not submit to his demands for the treaty's ratification, he would pocket the treaty and go over their heads to the people. Accordingly, in September he set out on an exhaustive cross-country tour to win popular support for the League and bring pressure on the Senate for its speedy ratification. Whether or not he would have been successful in this endeavour can never be known. His tragic breakdown in Pueblo, Colorado at the end of September radically changed the complexion of the league fight. As a sick invalid in the White House, Wilson was incapable of providing the leadership of which the Democrats in the Senate were sorely in need. And his opposition to the Senate had become that much more dogmatic. In his Jackson Day speech, January 9, 1920 Wilson called for "a great and solemn referendum" to determine the League's fate in the forthcoming presidential election in November. In other words, he would not be bound by a negative response in the Senate: the people could be trusted to pass the final judgment and they would not fail him or fail the League.

Throughout the senate debates then, Wilson remained doggedly resolved to bring about the League's ratification. Although he met several times with his senate adversaries, notably in March and August; Wilson remained aloof and inflexible. Obstinate and strong-willed, he strove relentlessly to drive the Senate into submission and appeared singularly unable to negotiate a compromise. This rigidity had been noted by Keynes at the Peace Conference:

"A moment often arrives when substantial victory is yours if by some slight appearance of a concession you can save the face of the opposition or conciliate them by a re-statement of your proposal helpful to them and not injurious to anything essential to yourself. The President was not equipped with this simple and useful artfulness." (1)

In his fight with the Senate, Wilson was not able to allay its isolationist fears by conceding a strong reservation on Article X or accept its desire to Americanize the treaty by allowing certain modifications which would have fulfilled this aim. For Wilson, it was a question of the total and immediate ratification of the League with several acceptably mild, interpretative reservations. Any stronger reservations, notably the so-called Lodge reservations, amounted to the negation or nullification of the treaty, and he would not accept this even to bring about the treaty's ratification. To his partisans it was a justifiable position, it was up to the Senate to comply with the president's wishes. To many proponents of the League, however, Wilson should acquiesce to a compromise solution to gain the treaty's acceptance. The fight over the League had become a bitter duel between President Wilson and the United States Senate.

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1. John Maynard Keynes, The Economic Consequences of the Peace, New York, Harcourt, Brace and Howe, 1920, pp. 43-44.

2. The Montreal Star, July 7, 1919. The Montreal Star, July 7, 1919.

In our analysis of press reaction to Wilson's fight for the League's ratification in the United States, we must first determine in what terms each paper viewed the struggle confronting him and its importance both nationally and internationally. Secondly, we will show how each paper regarded the position taken by Wilson toward his critics and toward their ratification proposals and whether they felt this position was justified. Thirdly, we will determine the manner in which his strategy was defined and what implications it held for the success or failure of his campaign.

The Montreal Star, the strongest partisan of Wilson and of the League of Nations among the newspapers studied, aligned itself fervently behind him in his fight for the League's ratification in the United States. In keeping with its belief that the League heralded a new age in human relations, The Star considered Wilson's battle with the Senate as the decisive contest between the old system and the new. Wilson, the great precursor of world peace, had to strike at the very heart of American traditions and prejudices and persuade his countrymen and their elected representatives not only that their old isolationism was no longer feasible in the twentieth century, but also that their destiny was bound inextricably with the League of Nations. If Wilson could not gain American acceptance of the League, his famous creation would suffer a rude, if not fatal, blow, and the pacifistic hopes of the world would be crushed in their infancy. The outcome of the struggle then lay beyond the borders of the United States. "No political fight, in the history of the nation since that which resulted in the election of Abraham Lincoln, has had more depending on it than this which is about to begin." (2)

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2. The Montreal Star, July 9, 1919, "Mr. Wilson Returns," editorial, p. 10.

The Star never underestimated the magnitude of the "great task" which lay before Wilson for he was clearly ahead of the people who still cherished their isolationism (3) and of the Congress which still harbored strong reactionary elements. (4) Nevertheless, it had firm confidence in his fierce determination and indomitable spirit. Wilson could be counted on to fight relentlessly for the acceptance of the league pact in its entirety and without qualification. Not only had he retained his enthusiasm and high idealism, but he had also remained the practical master of political affairs. Clearly, given his character and the pre-eminence of the league issue, Wilson held the advantage over his opponents. As The Star observed on the eve of Wilson's opening speech before the Senate, it would be "a straight fight (. . .) for the leadership of the public opinion of the American people" with the League as the stake. (5)

In the early summer, The Star confidently predicted an early victory for Wilson, "Wilson Making Headway Against Foes of League", ran one July headline. (6) In the debates over the reservations, he had forcefully demolished the arguments of his opponents and in his meeting with the Foreign Relations Committee in August, he had demonstrated the weakness of their views and left them little on which to stand. (7) Occasionally, however, during the summer, the paper voiced concern as it became increasingly evident that the Senate might succeed in adding reservations to the Treaty. "The proponents of the treaty

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3. Ibid., February 15, 1919, "America's Responsibility," editorial, p. 10.

4. Ibid., February 27, 1919, "A New Era for the United States," editorial, p. 10.

5. Ibid., July 9, 1919, "Mr. Wilson Returns," p. 10.

6. Ibid., July 19, 1919, p. 1.

7. Ibid., August 20, 1919, "Mr. Wilson Lets in the Light," editorial, p. 10.



are slipping. Unless the President takes hold, the skid may be disastrous," it observed in early August. (8) As an election year, the opposition was likely to continue unabated in spite of Wilson's magnificent efforts to the contrary. For this reason The Star felt Wilson sorely needed the weight of a popular mandate to force through the League's ratification.

By undertaking a national tour, Wilson would once again reassert his mastery of the country and overcome the league opposition. By the frankness and logic of his arguments, the paper felt he materially advanced the League's hopes during the tour and even its abrupt cancellation did not dampen this optimism. "Wilson's return will not hurt fight for treaty", read its headline September 27. (9) Only after it had become obvious that Wilson was seriously incapacitated, did The Star become uneasy. His active leadership was vital to his partisans in the Senate, for they could not formulate their policy on the reservations until he had made clear his own views. For The Star, only Wilson was capable of judging the merits of the proposed reservations, and it seemed willing to abide by whatever decision he made. Thus on the eve of the November vote after Wilson had stated his opposition to Lodge's reservations, The Star felt he had again taken "active control of the treaty fight" and confidently predicted the defeat of Lodge's reservations (10) and the triumph of Wilson's League. And despite the setback suffered by the League's defeat, Wilson still stood out in front since he could always put the issue before the people if the Senate would not cooperate.

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8. Ibid., August 8, 1919, p. 1.

9. Ibid., September 27, 1919, p. 16.

10. Ibid., November 17, 1919, p. 1.

Central to its unbounded confidence in Wilson's success was The Star's faith in his ultimate ability to gain the concurrence of the American people. This it considered the core of his strategy before which no legislative manoeuvre, no matter how clever, could succeed. At the beginning of the league battle in July, The Star noted that Wilson had rightly judged that no argument, however eloquent or persuasive, could deter his Senate opponents; and that instead of fighting them with the legislative weapons at his disposal, he proposed to appeal directly to the people. He had hitherto always gauged the views of his countrymen accurately; if he could bring the irresistible pressure of public opinion to bear on his critics, "the irreconcilables will disappear as men disappear before an avalanche". (11) The cross-country tour in September was the conclusive evidence to The Star of the president's masterful strategy. "Recalling his popular triumphs of the past, the most determined enemy of world order cannot fail to fear the verdict upon this new appeal." (12) A popular outcry in favour of the League would be a powerful weapon against his detractors in the Senate. And even should public opinion turn against the League, all would not be lost. "He cannot altogether fail. The verdict of history will be that he went down fighting gallantly for a great cause. Failure such as that is not without glory." (13)

The Star, like La Presse, adhered to Wilson's belief that the people in the long run represented a higher court than their elected representatives. If the Senate refused to ratify the League, Wilson could put the issue before the people in the next election. And would it not, asked The Star, be far

11. Ibid., July 9, 1919, "Mr. Wilson Returns," p. 10.

12. Ibid., September 4, 1919, "Wilson Appeals the Case," editorial, p. 10.

13. Ibid., September 3, 1919, p. 1.

better to have the unqualified endorsement or rejection of the League by the American people than its half-hearted acceptance by an antagonistic Senate. (14) The Star thoroughly believed the people stood behind Wilson and their decision, made in a national referendum as suggested by Wilson in his Jackson Day speech, would be the easiest and only way of gaining American approval of the League. "At present the factor of public opinion is lacking, and that lack enables a stiff opposition to be maintained by an element in the Senate." (15)

By refusing to give ground on the reservations, Wilson had shown the depth of his idealism and his determination to gain the total acceptance or rejection of the League. The Star concurred with him that any serious modification in the League's pact, i.e., the Lodge reservations, essentially nullified its spirit. Unfortunately, given the division of powers under the United States Constitution, he alone could do nothing to prevent the Senate from acting as it did. Thus, The Star felt Wilson had been victimized by an anomaly in the American government from which his only recourse was a direct appeal to the people over the heads of their entrenched legislators. His collapse at Pueblo had cut short his efforts in September, it remained for the decision of a national plebescite to redeem Wilson's league hopes.

In keeping with its solid support of Wilson's league project in Paris, La Presse regarded his ratification campaign in the United States as the necessary complement and conclusion of the work begun at the Peace Conference. Because of this, the paper tended to view the issue in America in much the same perspective as it had in Europe. Wilson, the great statesman, represented the

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14. Ibid., January 9, 1920, "Wilson Accepts the Challenge," editorial, p. 10.

15. Ibid., February 21, 1920, "To Clear the Air," editorial, p. 10.

dearest hopes of humanity; his detractors, the survival of the old, tainted political system. It was an undertaking of "un grand politique" upon which the fortunes of the world rested. Its success would bring fruitful results both to the United States and to the world; its failure could only have disastrous consequences on the future peace of humanity. "Que ces espérances soient déçues, et c'est le chaos de l'ancien état de choses; au lieu de la justice permanente et de la paix universelle et inviolable. (16)

Through its espousal of Wilson's goal - the ratification of the League - La Presse tended to regard his position vis-a-vis his critics more sympathetically and more optimistically than those papers unfavourable to the League. As a world leader, Wilson had a greater grasp of international realities and of the higher issues at stake than his Senate opponents. The image which emerges in La Presse during the long league battle is one of Wilson, the determined, lonely leader, courageously pursuing the League's ratification despite the malicious denunciations of his critics. Not surprisingly, then, La Presse agreed with Wilson that the Senate must respect the commitments he had made to the Allies under the terms of the Treaty of Versailles and ratify the peace treaty without delay and without any qualifying reservations. In this, it reflected Wilson's frequently repeated statements that he had been acting with a popular mandate and that the modification or rejection of the treaty was an affront and betrayal of the Allies.

At the beginning of the contest, Wilson appeared to hold the strongest position and La Presse did not doubt his eventual triumph. Even if the

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16. La Presse, February 25, 1919, "M. Wilson à Boston," editorial, p. 4.

opposition had not greatly diminished after Wilson's winter visit to the United States, the modifications which he had introduced in the League's charter after his return to Paris would help silence these critics. In the weeks immediately after the presentation of the peace treaty to the Senate, La Presse did not foresee any serious obstacle in the president's path. His speech before the Senate had been enthusiastically received and once the issues had been clarified the opposition would melt away. It was not until the end of the summer, after Wilson's decision to embark on a cross-country tour that La Presse became aware of the difficulties facing him. But even in this instance, it was the Senate's hardening opposition rather than any inflexibility on the president's part which necessitated an appeal to the people. Nevertheless, La Presse realized that Wilson's position had weakened, and it could no longer confidently predict victory for him.

"De cette lutte engagée entre le Sénat et le président, nous verrons qui sortira victorieux. Il est certain toutefois, que les chances de M. Wilson diminueront si son propre parti se trouvait divisé par le passage du secrétaire d'Etat Lansing à l'ennemi.

"Quoi qu'il arrive, il se passera d'ici quelque temps, de très graves événements à Washington. (17)

The outcome of the league fight hinged greatly on this tour. Should Wilson be successful he would not only have a strong weapon to level against his opponents, but he would also be assured of leading his party again in the 1920 election.

Initially, La Presse felt Wilson's tour materially advanced his position.

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17. Ibid., September 15, 1919, "Le Sénat Américain et le Traité de Paix," editorial, p. 4.

Everywhere, he received "un accueil enthousiaste et cordial" (18) and through his forthright and perceptive defense of the League, he sharply undercut the arguments of his opponents. "M. Wilson sait dire sa pensée", ran one headline covering a tour speech. (19) Even his sudden collapse did not at first dampen this optimistic attitude. It should be remembered, however, that La Presse, like the rest of the press at this time, was kept in the dark concerning the seriousness of the president's illness; and consequently, although it wished him a speedy recovery, the paper did not really realize the injurious effects his collapse would have on the League's ratification. During the next few months, however, La Presse's confidence in Wilson slipped and an element of doubt crept into its editorials. The defeat of Lodge's amendments in early October had been labelled "une belle victoire" for Wilson (20) and had led La Presse to consider his tour successful. The people had demonstrated their eagerness for immediate ratification of the peace treaty and their disgust with the Senate's delay and party politics. (21) But it was a short-lived optimism. Several days later, La Presse observed that in spite of his splendid optimism, the fight was not going well for Wilson. The attacks against him in the Senate had become more vicious and violent "parfois jusqu'aux injures", and he could no longer be assured of the support of the country. (22) It had become

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18. Ibid., September 9, 1919, editorial, p.4.

19. Ibid., September 17, 1919, p. 1.

20. Ibid., October 3, 1919, editorial, p. 4.

21. Ibid., October 10, 1919, "Le Traité de Paix," editorial, p. 4.

22. Ibid., October 13, 1919, p. 5.

23. Ibid., February 23, 1919, "M. Wilson's

evident to the paper that despite Wilson's extraordinary efforts and despite popular support for the League, its fate rested with a handful of men in the American Senate.

At no time did the paper seriously question Wilson's methods or find them inadequate. Throughout the league campaign, it shared Wilson's belief that the people rather than the legislature should be the final judge of American participation in the League of Nations. In the last analysis, they represented a higher court than their elected representatives. By appealing to them, Wilson could supersede his critics and win the acceptance of the League. Indeed, to La Presse, only by gaining the concurrence of the American people could Wilson ever hope to see the fulfillment of his league dream.

"Si, avec la conviction qu'il a d'avoir 'sentir (sic) palpiter le coeur de l'Amérique,' le président Wilson retournait en Europe avec l'assurance que son projet de Ligue est accepté par toute la nation dont il est le chef, quelle force n'aurait-il pas à la Conférence, pour mener à bonne fin l'oeuvre qu'il a entreprise et qu'il estime par-dessus tout! Et ne pourrait-il pas raisonnablement espérer que le verdict de la nation américaine, 'l'amie de la Liberté et de l'Humanité' pourrait être accepté et sanctionné par tous les autres peuples qui ont mis leur espoir en Amérique." (23)

In February, 1919 Wilson had returned to the United States to dispel popular misconceptions and suspicions that his critics were fabricating and to gain popular support for his league project in the belief that without the people's support he would have little chance against his adversaries. To La Presse, it was a masterful decision and one rewarded with a fair amount of success. Again in September, the paper applauded Wilson's decision to rest

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23. Ibid., February 25, 1919, "M. Wilson à Boston," p. 4.

his case with the people and sincerely believed that a popular outcry in favour of the League would coerce the Senate into compliance. People wanted peace, it was an urgent necessity and such a desire could only play into the hands of Wilson. "Il n'y a rien comme la perspective d'un conflit armé pour effrayer l'opinion publique dans un pays quelconque." (24) But as the debates dragged on over the reservations in the fall of 1919, and later in the winter of 1920, it became clear to La Presse that even the weight of public opinion could not help Wilson's league efforts. His only hope would be to convince the senators of the harmful consequences of their actions and of the urgent necessity for reestablishing world peace. But it was a strategy in which even La Presse did not have much confidence.

After the Senate's first rejection of the League in November, the paper appeared to consider Wilson's position extremely uncertain. There was little he could do to overcome its bitter and obstinate opposition. It was the duty of the Senate to meet him, not vice versa; for only Wilson fully appreciated the significance of the struggle at hand. If his wiser judgment did not prevail, it was through no fault of his own. Wilson had tried everything possible to bring about the treaty's ratification, that he failed was due rather to the intractable opposition of the American Senate than to any inadequacy in his own policy.

Given its general antipathy toward Wilson and toward the League, L'Événement understandably followed Wilson's ratification campaign far less passionately than either La Presse or The Star. Wilson, it admitted, was engaged in a decisive battle with the American Senate over the League, but

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24. Ibid., September 6, 1919, editorial, p. 4.



the paper rarely went into any detailed analysis of his actions or their results and limited its coverage to a fairly factual summary of his speeches and discussions with the Senate. L'Événement had seen little reason for the creation of the League in the first place and apparently saw no advantage to its acceptance in the United States. Thus where La Presse and The Star had considered the struggle as the final test between the old political system and the new pacifistic age proclaimed by Wilson, L'Événement regarded it chiefly as an internal political battle between the president and his senate opponents.

This attitude led L'Événement to regard Wilson's position far less optimistically or uncritically than his partisans. Despite the factual nature of its reports, occasionally its distrust of Wilson crept through this veil of impartiality. L'Événement never denied Wilson's enormous tenacity in pursuing the League's ratification but his stern, unyielding attitude resembled more a distasteful dogmatism than an admirable determination and courageousness. Throughout the debates it was his haughtiness and stubbornness which most struck the paper. "Wilson Revient Arrogant", read the seven-column headline announcing the president's return to the United States at the end of February. (25) The triumphal acclamations showered on Wilson in Europe had apparently gone to his head, and in America he maintained an overbearing, condescending attitude toward his critics.

At no time did L'Événement feel that Wilson held the stronger position nor that his League would inevitably meet with success. His opening speech to Congress July 10, it noted, had been greeted in silence, a contrast to

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25. L'Événement, February 25, 1919, p. 1.

the enthusiastic reception described in La Presse and The Star. (26) During the summer debates on the reservations, Wilson's position weakened, and he was forced more and more on the defensive. To L'Événement, it appeared inevitable that Wilson would be forced to concede certain reservations to the Senate if he wanted to ensure the League's ratification. His compromise attempt in August had failed with his adversaries aggressively forcing him to give all possible details on the treaty and on the Paris negotiations and refusing, at the same time, to agree to his interpretative reservations. (27) And his cross-country tour did little to bolster his sagging image. Like The Star and La Presse, L'Événement noted the determination and directness manifest in his speeches on the road, but it did not notice any great outpouring of popular sympathy for him. Events in Washington, particularly the Bullitt testimony described as "une bombe" by the paper, indicated an uphill fight still lay ahead. (28) It had even become doubtful whether or not Wilson could rally a 2/3 majority in the Senate. (29) During the fall and following winter, it had become clear to L'Événement that if Wilson really wanted the League's ratification, he would have to come to terms with his opponents on the proposed reservations. Neither his position nor his presidential authority were strong enough to coerce the Senate into the ratification of the treaty without reservations.

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26. Ibid., July 11, 1919, p. 1.

27. Ibid., August 21, 1919, p. 1.

28. William C. Bullitt, who had been attached to the American Peace Commission in a minor capacity, testified before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee that Lansing had told him he considered the League useless and if the American people really knew what it stood for they would defeat it. The testimony dealt a rude blow to the League's supporters. Bailey, The Great Betrayal, pp. 124-127.

29. L'Événement, September 26, 1919, "La Bataille Engagée," editorial, p. 4.

L'Événement then took a far more practical view of Wilson's efforts for the League's ratification. By resting his case with the people, he was being blind to the political exigencies of the situation which demanded the acquiescence of the United States Senate. Thus the paper dimly viewed his efforts to gain public approval for the League whether in February, 1919 during his brief visit to the United States, or during his cross-country tour in September, or in his proposed national referendum scheme. Although it agreed in each instance that Wilson primarily sought to bring the full weight of public opinion down on the Senate recalcitrants, it saw little practicality in this approach. It was in the Senate that the League's final fate would be decided, and it was there that Wilson should direct his efforts. In the long run, then, his strategy failed precisely because he refused to compromise with his opponents and blindly ruled out any proposition to this effect.

Despite the brevity of its coverage of Wilson's ratification campaign, it becomes clear that L'Événement did not from the onset put Wilson out in front of his adversaries as both La Presse and The Star had done. Whether this stemmed from a greater political realism or from its own personal animosity to the president and his League is difficult to determine. The fact that it could not really accept the end goal of Wilson's campaign, however, probably attributed to the paper's inability to justify the means employed by him to bring about the League's adoption. And its dislike of Wilson's arrogant temperament and moral superiority, noted early in our discussions, led it undoubtedly to consider his uncompromising attitude towards the Lodge reservations as a major factor in the League's defeat by the Senate. Wilson, in the end, had fallen victim not to his malicious opponents in the Senate, but to his own dogmatic obstinacy and blind arrogance.

Action Catwalk, July 10, 1919.  
Ibid., February 27, 1919, under "League"

L'Action Catholique, which had not been inspired by Wilson's league efforts in Paris, followed his ratification campaign in the United States with a similar disinterest. Although it had little regard for Wilson and little eagerness to see the League's successful creation, this distaste bordered more on indifference than on open hostility. In its articles, there is little trace of that sceptical distrust noted in L'Événement. Indeed, it is the paucity of news items touching Wilson's campaign which most strikes the reader. L'Action Catholique engaged in few editorials on the subject and limited its news coverage to a rather succinct explanation of the key events. It appeared to share L'Événement's view that the struggle in which the president was engaged was purely of an internal nature and did not concern a wider international community. Nevertheless, it did not undermine the struggle's significance in American terms. It was unquestionably the greatest fight in Wilson's political career and one of the bitterest oratory contests ever fought in the United States. (30)

This attitude led L'Action Catholique to a more sober and neutral appraisal of Wilson's position during the ratification debate. It was neither greatly encouraged nor unduly pessimistic concerning the stand taken by Wilson towards his critics, and on the question of the reservations appeared to be mildly favourable to him. The president, it noted, was seeking the immediate ratification of the treaty without modification. In February, he had largely been unsuccessful in silencing his opponents; "Ces déclarations ne paraissent changer en rien la manière de voir des membres républicains du Congrès opposés à cette Ligue des Nations." (31) During the summer, however,

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30. L'Action Catholique, July 10, 1919, p. 10.

31. Ibid., February 27, 1919, under l'Information, p. 1.

the paper felt Wilson was trying to meet his opponents halfway by agreeing to certain interpretative reservations. And it was their reluctance to accept his offer rather than his obstinance which forced him to undertake a nationwide tour. The paper appeared to respect Wilson's determination, but it did not engage in any optimistic accounts of his tour, nor did it envision any resounding success for him. Clearly, Wilson had begun to lose control of the fight.

"La discussion (. . .) en arrive au point de crise à Washington. On avait d'abord espéré que les affirmations du Président Wilson relativement à la puissance des Etats-Unis égale à celle de la Grande Bretagne, dans les délibérations de la Ligue des Nations, suffiraient à désarmer l'opposition. Il paraît qu'il n'en est rien, et le conflit s'avère plus aîgu que jamais. (32)

Despite the defeat in October of most of the textual amendments proposed by the Senate, the paper foresaw little hope for the president's League. Although L'Action Catholique believed only a compromise on the reservations could save the treaty, it seemed to support Wilson's position rather than that of his adversaries. It was for the Senate, not Wilson, to compromise.

Nevertheless, the paper never delved in any profound analysis of Wilson's strategy or of the consequences of his actions. Like the other papers, L'Action Catholique stressed his determination and his aggressivity. "C'est avec la détermination de faire l'effort de sa vie, afin de créer un mouvement d'opinion capable de déterminer l'adoption immédiate, et sans amendement, du traité," that he had embarked on a cross-country tour. (33)

32. Ibid., September 20, 1919, under l'Information, p. 1.

33. Ibid., September 4, 1919, under l'Information, p. 1.

But it did not apparently share La Presse's or The Star's trust in a popular appeal or really consider it a vital weapon in his arsenal. After the renewal of deliberations in December, the paper noticed Wilson's stubbornness but did not relate it to the Senate's eventual rejection of the League. Indeed, it carried less and less news of his campaign. Thus his Jackson Day speech, the Grey letter and the resignation of Lansing, all of which had promoted some editorial comment in the other papers, were passed over lightly, and we are left with little on which to gauge the paper's views.

In the final analysis, it is very difficult to pinpoint the paper's attitude. It seemed at once to be both indifferent and neutral - its reports of Wilson's actions were probably the least coloured of any paper studied which lead to the supposition that L'Action Catholique had no preference concerning the final outcome. The obvious salient aspects of Wilson's fight - his determination and his stubbornness - were evident to even the most impartial observer; but his idealism and his faith in the common people never struck a sympathetic response in L'Action Catholique. It appeared, for the same reasons outlined earlier in respect to the League of Nations, to be essentially uninterested in the League's future, whether in Europe or the United States.

Le Devoir continued to view Wilson's ratification campaign in the United States with the same distrust and scepticism shown to his league efforts in Paris. To Le Devoir, Wilson was not a noble forerunner of international peace at battle with a group of reactionary legislators, but rather a determined, and often painfully obstinate, leader set upon the realization of his league dream in America. Having little confidence in the dream, Le Devoir was not likely to regard the actions undertaken for its fulfillment as a

noble and righteous crusade. It was an internal political struggle rather than a decisive contest of international dimensions; but as such, it would be the toughest fight of the president's career and "l'une des plus violentes batailles politiques qui se soient jamais engagées aux Etats-Unis." (34)

Perhaps because of its own antipathy toward the League and toward Wilson, Le Devoir did not look on Wilson's position with any great enthusiasm or optimism and like L'Evénement was more prone to emphasize the difficulties confronting him than his chances of success. It was from the onset an uphill fight. Wilson had not succeeded in changing the views of his opponents in the winter of 1919, nor had he made much headway against them in the summer. On the eve of his presentation of the peace treaty to Congress, the headline in Le Devoir underlined his problems: "Wilson aura fort à faire". (35) The next day it noted that he had the majority of the Republican senators against him as well as several members of his own party and the outcome looked "fort douteux". (36) Indeed, as early as July, the interminable debates surrounding the League led Le Devoir to predict that its ratification would become the chief election issue. (37) By deciding to take his case to the people, Wilson had underscored his weakening position and his growing impatience with the hardening opposition in the Senate. "Le traité aura assurément apporté au président la plus rude bataille de sa vie. Il semble visible qu'il commence

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34. Le Devoir, July 11, 1919, "Le commencement," under Bloc-notes, p. 1.

35. Ibid., July 10, 1919, p.2.

36. Ibid., July 11, 1919, "Le commencement," p. 1.

37. Ibid., July 21, 1919, "Politique Américaine," editorial, p. 1.

à en être un peu irrité." (38) He had not gained the unqualified acceptance of the League by the Senate which appeared clearly disposed to add reservations; and despite his efforts to influence public opinion, the people had not shown any overwhelming support for the League.

To Le Devoir, it was clearly Wilson's strategy and political philosophy which were at fault and which brought the eventual demise of the League in the United States. Wilson had believed that he could create a world utopia and inaugurate a great new pacificistic age in human relations. In Europe particularly he had been hailed as the Saviour, the Pacifier, the supreme Arbitrator, the lay pope whose credo, Democracy, had become the cherished religion of all and the Fourteen Points, its irrefutable doctrine. It had been a naive and pretentious endeavour. Inevitably the glorious but fragile edifice had crumbled, and he had become "le plus méprisé ou le plus détesté des chefs d'Etat du monde."

"Il n'y a pas même un an de cela, et voici le pape laïque découronné de sa tiare, ses propres cardinaux en pleine insubordination, la nouvelle Eglise déchirée par maints schismes, et les peuples, conviés à l'universelle fraternité démocratique, plus prêts que jamais à dépouiller et à dominer les faibles, les oligarchies majoritaires plus arrogantes et plus despotiques que les 'tyrans' d'autrefois." (39)

In an editorial a few days later entitled, "Banqueroute de la Papauté Laïque et de la démocratie Triomphante", Le Devoir further analysed the consequences of Wilson's policy in the United States. Wilson, the great

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38. Ibid., August 23, 1919, "Partie à trois," under Bloc-notes, p. 1.

39. Ibid., December 4, 1919, "M. Wilson, le Nouveau Congrès et le Traité de paix," editorial, p. 1.



champion of democracy, had callously ignored the very premises of that doctrine by signing a treaty whose terms were in many respects at odds with his war goals accepted by Congress in January and April 1917 and which ran contrary to the most fundamental and cherished American traditions. Had not Wilson been re-elected because 'he kept us out of war', asked the paper? Once engaged in the war, national pride dictated that the United States emerge victorious, but once the war had ended it seemed evident that the traditional interests of the United States would resurface. The American people had always jealously guarded their isolationism and were not interested in supporting Wilson's great crusade for world peace. By undertaking international commitments in Paris, Wilson had alienated the old stock of Yankees as well as the nationalist groups still unassimilated in the United States.

"Prêts à soutenir M. Wilson jusqu'à la victoire, ni les uns ni les autres n'étaient disposés à le suivre dans le dédale d'une politique d'intervention et d'enchevêtrements internationaux que les uns redoutent parce qu'elle viole la tradition américaine et les autres parce qu'elle les rejette dans les querelles de leurs anciennes patries d'Europe." (40)

This logical conclusion of events could have been easily predicted. Wilson had become a victim of his league vision and had lost sight not only of the real interests and temperament of the American people but also of the political demands of his government. It was in vain for him to appeal to the people who no longer shared his fervent idealism and equally blind to ignore the constitutional prerogatives of the United States Senate which, after all, had

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40. Ibid., December 6, 1919, "Banqueroute de la Papauté laïque et de la Démocratie Triomphante," editorial, p. 1.

a decisive role in the treaty-making policies of the government. Wilson's naiveté and arrogance, which had at first led him into his league venture, had inevitably brought his final demise in the United States. It had really been in Europe more than America in which an opinion "affolée et servile" had first raised him to the perilous pedestal of lay pope from which he was destined to be dethroned sooner or later. (41)

From this discussion, it becomes evident that only the two pro-league papers, La Presse and The Montreal Star, regarded Wilson's ratification campaign with any degree of enthusiasm and optimism. They both considered its success a necessary prelude to the formation of a new international society and consequently wholeheartedly endorsed his efforts to bring about the League's acceptance in the United States. L'Événement, L'Action Catholique and Le Devoir, <sup>none</sup> ~~neither~~ of which had eagerly embraced the League, regarded the struggle in the narrower perspective of American national politics and did not stress its international implications. They did not believe Wilson greatly outdistanced his rivals and took a more realistic view of his chances of success. La Presse and The Star, on the contrary, remained confident that Wilson, through the sheer force of his will and determination, would eventually win the league battle. His cause was right and could not succumb to the petty intrigue of his opponents. It was not until November that either paper really admitted the incertitude of Wilson's position and the serious obstacles confronting him. But even then, they still considered the Senate to blame for the ensuing stalemate on the reservations. Wilson could not alone overcome the obstacles put in his path by the Senate and by the machinery of the American government; and consequently, he would have to

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41. Ibid.

await the verdict of a national referendum.

It appeared to be this interpretation of the legality of the struggle which distinguished the pro-league papers from the anti-league ones. In essence, La Presse and The Montreal Star believed that Wilson had been hamstrung by an archaic peculiarity of the American Constitution which permitted the Senate to approve or veto a treaty duly signed by the president. If Wilson could not rely on its good faith in this matter, then he would have to appeal directly to the people. The anti-league papers, on the other hand, did not accept Wilson's principle that the people represented a higher authority than their elected representatives. Wilson, if he really wanted to achieve the League's ratification, would have to work out a compromise solution with the Senate. For this reason, they tended to view Wilson's league efforts in more politically realistic terms than either La Presse or The Star and were more critical of Wilson's refusal to compromise on the Lodge reservations.

No paper significantly altered its attitude toward Wilson during the league struggle. To La Presse and The Star, Wilson had courageously held to his principles despite the virulent attacks directed against him in the Senate. But for L'Événement, L'Action Catholique and Le Devoir, his stubborn perseverance vis-a-vis his critics was just another indication of his mental rigidity and haughty superiority so evident during the Paris negotiations. That his crusade failed came to no surprise to his critics given his temperament and his dismissal of American political exigencies. To his partisans, however, it signaled more the triumph of a reactionary political system than the personal failure of Wilson who alone could not offset this.

## CHAPTER V

### THE AMERICAN DEBATE: THE OPPOSITION

We have discussed the Quebec press in relation to the League of Nations and to the policies of President Wilson in both Europe and the United States. It remains for us then to analyse their reaction to the league critics in the American Senate. We will first briefly sketch the major elements of the league fight in the Senate - the leading antagonists, the basis of their opposition, their tactics and their objectives. Then we will turn to a more detailed analysis of press reaction to their struggle against the League.

While Wilson was trying to convince the leaders of the world of the necessity of making a peace based on the Fourteen Points and of creating the League of Nations to safeguard it, the American Senate was growing more restive and belligerent. During his wartime administration, Wilson had assumed many additional powers often at the expense of the Senate which felt less and less disposed to allow the process to continue unabated in peace. The president had further aggravated the senators in October, 1918 when he had made an unprecedented appeal to the American electorate calling for a complete vote of confidence, i.e. a Democratic majority, in the upcoming

November, 1918 congressional election. The senators were stung by this unexpected and untraditional interference in a national election. Moreover, by ignoring the Senate in the composition of the United States Peace Commission to the Paris Peace Conference, Wilson had ensured a certain hostility to any peace terms decided in Paris.

The senators then were not kindly disposed to Wilson when he first demanded their approval of the league project. Indeed, they were especially angered by the inclusion of the League's covenant within the peace treaty, thereby effectively preventing them from reserving judgment on the League and putting pressure on them to approve the League in order to obtain the treaty's ratification. If they could have no say in the determination of the League's terms, then they would at least add certain qualifications which would sufficiently "Americanize" the treaty and give the United States more freedom within the League. The senators then refused to give Wilson a carte blanche and to accept his League unequivocally; they would add reservations which would leave their imprint on the League's charter.

Central to the Senate's hostility to the League were both the traditional American policy of nonalignment in European affairs and the partisan spirit of a Republican Congress for a Democratic president. Wilson had been reasonably successful in maintaining American altruism and idealism during the war; but by the war's end, America's old isolationism and distrust of foreign alliances had resurfaced. Many senators, notably the so-called irreconcilables, sincerely feared the international commitments inherent in league membership. Furthermore, the Republicans, who had gained a majority of two in the Senate in November, 1918, were determined to prevent a Democratic victory in the 1920 presidential election. There was thus a very distinct element of political

rancor<sup>u</sup> in the bitter debates which surrounded the League in the Senate.

The contending elements in the Senate can be broken into four components - Lodge and his group of strong reservationists, the mild reservationists, the irreconcilables, and the Democrats loyal to President Wilson. Senator Henry Cabot Lodge from Massachusetts, majority leader in the Senate, led the struggle against the League and was Wilson's chief antagonist. A skilled parliamentarian, Lodge was set on imposing his group of 14 reservations on the treaty; and if that failed, killing it rather than letting it pass unaltered. With the support of about 20 strong reservationists and through a pact made with the irreconcilables, Lodge could command enough support in the Senate to force through his reservations. According to his strategy, in the final vote enough Democrats would bolt their party to ensure the passage of his modified treaty version rather than face the prospect of killing the treaty. Evidently, Lodge was motivated by a long-standing feud with Wilson and a desire to bring the Republican party back into power; yet he honestly appeared sceptical of the League and feared the restrictions it would place on the United States. He could generally rely on another 12 Republicans, known as the mild reservationists, who sincerely wanted the treaty approved but felt some changes were necessary to safeguard American independence. They were an important group strategically since they could have swung over to the League's supporters and offset Lodge's manoeuvres. As it was, despite several attempts at compromise with the Democrats, this group remained faithful to Lodge in the November and March votes.

The group most frequently blamed for the deadlock over the League were the irreconcilables who adamantly opposed any connection with the League. Numbering 14, of whom four were Democrats, they believed firmly in America's

traditional isolationism and actively worked to obstruct the League's passage through the Senate at whatever cost. Their names figure frequently in reports of the League's discussions; especially Senator William E. Borah of Idaho, Senator Hiram Johnson of California, Senator James A. Reed of Missouri. They agreed to vote for Lodge's reservations on the understanding that when the treaty came up for a final vote, they would, of course, vote against it. Their votes enabled Lodge to push through his reservations, but in the decisive treaty vote, they successfully prevented either side from achieving a 2/3 majority by voting with the Republicans against the treaty without reservations and with the Democrats against the treaty with the Lodge reservations.

The Democrats, for their part, remained loyal to Wilson and hoped to gain the treaty's unqualified ratification although they were willing to accept certain interpretative reservations approved by Wilson. Their leader, Senator Gilbert M. Hitchcock of Nebraska, unfortunately lacked the parliamentary skill of Lodge and proved to be essentially a weak leader during the debates. The only hope of the Democrats, many of whom were not adverse to some modifications, seemed to be a coalition with the mild reservationists. But despite numerous efforts in this direction, Wilson was able to successfully enforce party discipline and to prevent any straying from the fold.

The fight then essentially concerned what reservations would be acceptable for the League's ratification by both the Republicans and the Democrats, or more especially, by Lodge and Wilson. In March, 1919 the Round Robin, a letter circulated by Lodge and signed by 39 Republican senators or senators-elect stating their opposition to the league covenant, had forced Wilson to amend the charter slightly in Paris. But by the summer, these same Republicans were still unhappy with the league pact.

Their grievances centred around the Shantung settlement, Article X, and the number of votes held by the British Empire in the League. The Shantung agreement, which had given Japan jurisdiction over this area in China, provoked fears of a racial menace, a "yellow peril", and was a particularly volatile subject on the west coast where people quickly envisioned engulfment in an invasion of Asians. Apart from this racist spectre, the Republicans, with the strength of Lansing's testimony, (1) blamed Wilson for not securing a redressment of China's rights at the Peace Conference and for pretending to know nothing of the secret treaty between Japan and England. The Shantung settlement was thus a means of stoking racial fears and of embarrassing the president at the same time.

Article X, nonetheless, lay at the core of the dissension and proved to be the major stumbling block to American participation in the League. By obliging member nations to protect one another against external aggression, it completely undermined the traditional isolationist policy of the United States. Many feared it would automatically engage the United States in all overseas conflicts regardless of whether they in any way involved American interests. Despite Wilson's assertion that the obligation was moral rather than legal, which many felt made it that much stronger, he was unable to allay the qualms of many Americans and many senators.

The controversy over the number of votes Britain would hold in the League stemmed from an uncertainty concerning the independent status of Britain's

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1. Secretary of State Lansing testifying before the Senate's Foreign Relations Committee said Wilson could have secured justice for China without the alleged surrendering of Shantung to Japan. He also said until he arrived in Paris he knew nothing of the secret treaty between Japan and Britain for dividing Germany's Pacific islands. Bailey, The Great Betrayal, p. 83.

3. Ibid., pp. 267-270.



dominions, such as Canada, within the League and led American Anglophobes to demand six votes for the United States to equal those believed held by Great Britain. It was essentially a petty political manoeuvre, but it led to long debates within the senate halls.

Reservations concerning these three subjects were drawn up by the Republicans in the fall of 1919. The Foreign Relations Committee, chaired by Lodge and dominated by league opponents, had first studied the treaty in the summer and had finally presented the treaty to the Senate September 10 with a majority report recommending approval with 45 amendments and four reservations. By early November, all proposed amendments had been voted down by a combination of Democrats and mild reservationists. Lodge then proceeded to draw up fourteen reservations, the so-called Lodge reservations, in which the Republicans spelled out their primary objections to the treaty including the Shantung settlement, Article X and the Dominions vote. With the approval of these reservations, it became a question of the treaty's approval without reservations or its approval with Lodge's reservations. On November 19, 1919 the crucial test arrived. The treaty without reservations was defeated 38 to 53, Lodge's version lost 39 to 55. (2) The feared deadlock had occurred with the "bitter-enders" holding the trump cards. Only a compromise could save the treaty. During the debates in the winter of 1920, it became increasingly evident that neither side was willing to budge on the reservations. The final showdown came March 20, 1920 and again neither side could muster a 2/3 majority necessary to ratify the treaty and even Lodge's treaty modification lost by 49 to 35. (3)

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2. Ibid., pp. 190-191.

3. Ibid., pp. 267-270.

The senate fight which had dragged on interminably from July, 1919 to March, 1920 ended in a stalemate and in the United States remaining in a state of war with Germany. The United States had not only not become a member of the League of Nations, but it also had not ratified the peace terms drawn up by the Allies and by its president the previous year. Wilson's own handiwork had been marred irreparably in his own country. The United States would eventually make a separate peace with Germany and at a much later date join the League, but its outright rejection of the Treaty of Versailles dealt a rude blow to the infant internationalist organization, the League of Nations.

The American decision, having as it did very definite international repercussions, could not leave outsiders unaffected. The Quebec press, as noted, had followed the league discussions in the United States with varying degrees of intensity. In this chapter, their reaction to the senate fight will be examined first by determining what each paper considered were the primary motivations behind the Senate's opposition; secondly, the importance each attached to the struggle; and lastly, the consequences foreseen both internationally and nationally to the treaty's final rejection by the Senate.

Understandably, the papers most sympathetic to the League and to Wilson were the most critical of his adversaries in the Senate and most likely to attribute the baser motives of political partisanship and vindictiveness to their actions. The Montreal Star, the most ardent supporter of the League, considered its critics acted through a blatant and petty desire to humiliate Wilson and the Democrats politically and through a perverse and reactionary attachment to American isolationism. The Republicans did not so much object to the League as they did to the "enviable prestige" its success would give the Democrats and more especially to the national renown which would go to

Wilson. The paper repeatedly reminded its readers of the long-standing resentment Republicans held for Wilson.

"The very determined drive which is being made against the League of Nations in the Senate of the United States at present is hard to explain except on the ground of sheer politics. It is a most significant thing that the senators who are working hardest to discredit the League are almost without exception the same men who have fought the President most bitterly on nearly all other issues." (4)

If it was not an election year and if there were no Democratic president in the White House, opposition to the League would be much less. It was no coincidence, noted The Star, that the League's most vociferous critics, Borah, Johnson and Lodge, had been spoken of as serious presidential candidates. By adding reservations to the treaty, the Republicans hoped to gain the reputation of 'Americanizing' it evidently in the belief that this would seriously help their chances in the 1920 election. If Wilson were to pocket a modified treaty, then he would carry the responsibility for the treaty's defeat. This in essence lay at the heart of the Republican efforts to modify the treaty. "The game of reading amendments, reservations, interpretations and what not, into the Covenant of the League of Nations by politically ambitious senators at Washington is likely to get more and more popular as time goes by." (5) The Shantung question and the controversy over the Dominions' vote, in particular, illustrated the "narrow bitterness" and partisanship of the Republican senators and their desire to discredit Wilson. But playing politics with a document as important as the peace treaty angered The Star. "Not one redeeming feature lightens the responsibility and shame

4. The Montreal Star, June 14, 1919, "Playing Germany's Game," editorial, p. 10.

5. Ibid., July 31, 1919, "Politics and the League Covenant," editorial, p. 10.

of these men." (6) How could responsible men, it demanded, act with such disregard and contempt for the future destiny of the United States and for the future welfare of civilization.

To a lesser degree, The Star was willing to concede that certain opponents sincerely feared the international implications of Article X and tenaciously clung to American isolationism. Although The Star considered these apprehensions basically groundless, it found the objection to Article X "understandable". Nevertheless, it felt that a permanent peace necessitated certain sacrifices. The old, reactionary political system could not continue and Americans had to abandon their outdated isolationism. Opposition on such grounds was, therefore, unacceptable. In the final analysis, the paper had no sympathy with the league critics. They simply desired to make political capital through their long-winded study of the peace treaty and through their continued attacks on Wilson and on the peace settlement.

La Presse took a similar, although less categorical, view of the League's adversaries. It considered the fight more a political duel between the president and his Republican opponents than a legitimate disagreement over the League's terms and repeatedly underscored the personal and partisan nature of the attacks against Wilson. By discrediting the work he had accomplished in Paris, the senators hoped to advance their popularity with their local constituents and bring about a Republican victory in November, 1920. Although there was undoubtedly a degree "du raisonnement et de la sincérité" behind their actions, the debate was first and foremost a political contest;

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6. Ibid., September 24, 1919, "Eagle or Vulture?" editorial, p. 10.

and as such La Presse did not hesitate to indict the Democrats as well. "Il paraît assez clair que les deux grands partis politiques vont la traiter avec l'idée d'en tirer le plus grand bénéfice possible au point de vue de la popularité." (7) It was regrettable that party politics should interfere with a question of such wide international consequences. La Presse which ardently sought the creation of the League and the establishment of world peace strongly criticized the senators for their partisanship.

"Si, d'une façon générale, le peuple américain s'est montré pour lui (Wilson) accueillant et agréable, on ne saurait en dire autant d'un certain groupe du sénat, qui semble avoir pris plaisir à discréditer celui qui a posé les principes dont on se sert aujourd'hui pour établir une ligue des nations.

La poignée d'obstructionnistes, qui ont ridiculisé La Ligue des Nations et empêché l'adoption de certaines mesures (. . .) ont voulu sans doute faire de la politique avec des questions, qui intéressent tout un pays et même l'humanité tout entière. C'est une responsabilité considérable qu'ils ont prise. Mais ils n'ont pas l'air de la trouver lourde." (8)

La Presse, however, was more inclined than The Star to believe that some senators honestly disliked the League and saw grave dangers to the future security of the United States should the treaty be ratified without any reservations. Senator Borah it readily placed among these men. "Les leaders républicains sont très montés et il y a parmi eux des hommes de réelle valeur et de grand énergie. M. Borah est en tête de ceux-la." (9) Borah was acting from the deep conviction that the American people did not want to accept the

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7. La Presse, September 15, 1919, "Le Sénat Américain et le Traité de Paix," editorial, p. 4.

8. Ibid., March 7, 1919, "Fidèle à son Idéal," editorial, p. 4.

9. Ibid., October 13, 1919, p. 5.

responsibilities membership in the League imposed. (10) Even Lodge, the paper believed, held some genuine doubts concerning the protection of American rights within the League. But like The Star, La Presse considered these nationalistic ends secondary to the immediate concerns of party politics.

L'Événement did not indulge in any extended analysis of the Senate's motives. Only in September, in an editorial entitled "Sénat contre Président", did it give its readers some insight into the large issues involved. It was not simply a political feud between Wilson and the Senate, but a major dispute over the future external policy of the United States: "On aurait tort de regarder la lutte (. . .) comme un simple chicane de partisans (. . .) la cause principale du conflit est plus grave et plus profonde." (11) The adoption of the League would be, according to Lodge and the majority of Republicans, the abandonment of the traditional American policy of no entangling alliances laid down by President Washington. It was a serious argument and due to the nature of Article X, easily lent itself to misinterpretation.

Evidently, Wilson's arrogance and naive idealism had prompted much of the conflict. "Son dédain du parlement américain et toutes ces creuses rêveries humanitaires, s'est attiré un peu ces discussions et ces misères." (12) There was then a definite element of partisanship and a desire among the Republicans to humiliate Wilson, towards which L'Événement in its

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10. Ibid.

11. L'Événement, September 13, 1919, "Sénat contre Président," editorial, p. 6.

12. Ibid.

personal dislike of Wilson remained fairly sympathetic. However, it echoed La Presse and The Star in criticizing the senators for letting partisanship interfere with the more basic question of world peace. "Mais enfin, le plaisir de chercher noise au grand rêveur présidentiel ne vaut pas la paix du monde." But L'Événement appeared to feel that despite the very obvious role played by party politics in the debates, the protection of America's national interests and the uncertainty created by Article X in this respect figured more prominently in the league opposition. (13)

L'Action Catholique made few comments on the motivations behind the Senate's opposition to the League. But from the nature of its news articles, it appeared to consider the struggle basically a political one between Republicans and Democrats and hence gave more strength to a partisan interpretation of the Senate's actions. At the beginning of the senate fight in July in its description of the opposition, it hinted at this partisanship. "Parmi les membres opposés à la ligue des nations et à la conduite de Wilson à Paris, on remarque le président du sénat Lodge, les sénateurs Borah, Johnson et Fall, ce sont tous les républicains." (14) The Republicans, it noted on several occasions, were opposed to Wilson's policies in Paris as much as to the league pact. And the debates over the reservations were fought between Republicans and Democrats, rather than between isolationists and internationalists. Moreover, many senators, it observed, hoped to make the League's ratification one of the issues in the election campaign; an indication of the fight's partisan nature.

13. Ibid.

14. L'Action Catholique, July 10, 1919, p. 10.

But apart from this, the paper really left its readers guessing the reasons pushing the League's critics. It mentioned in passing fears raised by Article X, but more in respect to American public opinion than in regard to the senate opposition. Perhaps this stemmed from L'Action Catholique's basic neutrality in the league debate and from its few editorial comments on the controversy. At any rate, it did not seek to clarify the Senate's motives for its readers who could only assume that the Senate opposed the league pact on both partisan and isolationist grounds.

Le Devoir paid much less attention to the partisan aspect of the fight although it admitted that political ambitions entered into the Senate's opposition, and instead emphasized the nationalistic ends pursued by the League's critics. Given Le Devoir's dislike of Wilson and the League and its adherence to a political philosophy which considered nationalist goals the soundest foundation of foreign policy, this attitude is not hard to understand. The president's Republican opponents were merely seeking to conserve America's traditional policy of nonalignment in foreign affairs. The war was over and the Senate was no longer interested in blindly accepting the president's engagements made indiscriminately abroad. "Renforcée par les nouvelles recrues de novembre la majorité républicaine du Sénat est moins disposée que jamais à subordonner les intérêts nationaux aux exigences de l'imbroglie internationale créé par la pétardière de Versailles." (15)

American interests stood before international ones and the Republican senators evidently did not consider that the League adequately served them. After all, Le Devoir reminded its readers, the United States had entered the

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15. Le Devoir, December 4, 1919, "M. Wilson, le Nouveau Congrès et le Traité de Paix," p. 1.



war for nationalistic, rather than altruistic ends; it was therefore perfectly natural for her to continue to apply this same principle to her actions in peace.

"Indépendamment des finasseries de la haute diplomatie, tout le monde en Europe ou ailleurs, aurait dû savoir ou présumer que les Américains sont des hommes comme les autres, plus attachés à leur peau qu'à leur chemise, et qu'en dépit des kyrielles interminables de mots creux et faux, débités aux Etats-Unis comme en Europe, les Américains, comme les Anglais, comme les Français, comme les Allemands, comme les Italiens, comme les Japonais, comme tout le monde - sauf les Canadiens qui se sont battus sans savoir pourquoi - se sont battus pour eux-même d'abord et pour les autres ensuite. (16)

It was, therefore, the protection of American interests which lay behind the Senate's efforts to modify the treaty.

"Quand les Américains ont des intérêts personnels en jeu, ils savent aussi bien que les Européens s'extérioriser et se renseigner: à preuve, la question de Chantoung qui a fait à Washington, l'objet d'une étude autrement approfondie que tout ce qui s'est fait à ce sujet à Versailles et dans tous les parlements d'Europe. C'est que tout ce qui favorise l'expansion du Japon en Asie et son emprise sur le littoral du Pacifique intéresse les Etats-Unis au plus haut point. Pourquoi les Américains ne se préoccuperaient-ils pas avant tout de ce qui les intéresse, tout comme les Français, les Anglais ou les Italiens? Les Européens regardent à l'Est parce que c'est de l'Est que vient pour eux le danger: les Américains se tournent vers l'Ouest, parce que c'est là qu'est pour eux le péril." (17)

Moreover, Le Devoir felt the senators were motivated by a legitimate desire to protect their legislative prerogative which had been eroded by the chief executive during the war and at the Peace Conference. Under the

16. Ibid., December 5, 1919, "Inévitable Réaction," editorial, p. 1.

17. Ibid.

separation of powers established in the United States Constitution, they were performing their treaty-making role and asserting their power to check the actions of their president, particularly when these actions proved unacceptable.

"En supposant que M. Wilson, élu de la majorité eût le droit de déclarer la guerre et de signer le traité de paix, en quoi la majorité du sénat américain, également élue par les représentants de la majorité du peuple américain, serait-elle privée de son droit de modifier ou de rejeter le traité signé par M. Wilson? Quand l'on sait surtout que le pouvoir de faire les traités - the treaty-making power - est expressément réservé au sénat par la constitution, ce qui étonne, c'est que M. Wilson se soit risqué à signer un traité dont les dispositions concrètes s'éloignaient notablement des buts de guerre qu'il avait fait accepter par le Congrès en janvier et en avril 1917, et qu'il ait ajouté à ce traité un pacte international opposé aux traditions les plus solidement ancrées dans l'esprit du peuple américain." (18)

To Le Devoir then the senators in their opposition to the League of Nations were only conscientiously striving to preserve the fundamental interests of the United States, which they considered the league pact strongly threatened, and to carry out their legislative responsibility vis-a-vis a treaty signed by their president. It never denied the partisan nature of the conflict between them and Wilson, but considered this chiefly of secondary importance.

In conclusion, then, it appears that the stand taken by each paper toward the League and toward Wilson largely determined its analysis of the Senate's motives. The two pro-league papers, La Presse and The Star, played up the partisan angle of the dispute and merely passed over the nationalist doubts harboured by the opposition. The senators were jealous of the

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18. Ibid., December 5, 1919, "Banqueroute de la Papauté Laïque et de la Démocratie Triomphante," p. 1.

enormous prestige Wilson enjoyed abroad and at home and hoped, by raising doubts and prejudices concerning the league pact to discredit him and by so doing win a Republican victory in 1920. Le Devoir and L'Événement, on the other hand, neither of whom held Wilson or his League in much esteem, considered the desire to safeguard American interests, in keeping with the United States traditional isolationism, of greater importance than party ends in the formation of the Senate's actions. Indeed, both papers seemed to believe that Wilson merited much of the criticism he received. Le Devoir, which had long preached the virtues of nationalistic goals, understandably took the most sympathetic view of the Senate's actions. But L'Événement, as well, shared the senators' distrust of the international obligations of Article X. L'Action Catholique, despite its distrust of the League, adhered to a fairly neutral although basically superficial analysis of the Senate's motives and therefore stood somewhere in between the pro-league and anti-league papers. It should be noted also that only Le Devoir added a third motive to the Senate's actions - the protection of its legislative prerogative; an indication perhaps of this paper's more thorough analysis as well as its greater sympathy with the league opponents. Thus the papers which were themselves sceptical and critical of the League and of Wilson were more likely to impute legitimate motives to the senators than those papers most committed to Wilson's cause. They saw their fight as nothing less than a petty, vindictive attempt to humiliate Wilson. Whether the Republican opponents of the League were motivated by the demands of party politics or by a genuine distrust of the League, they obviously pursued a course of action designed to safeguard American interests in the League of Nations by the addition of strong reservations to the treaty. To league advocates the long discussions over seemingly obscure points in the proposed

22. Ibid., March 17, 1917, p. 20.

23. Ibid., June 30, 1917, p. 22.

reservations were merely delay tactics designed to prolong the debate and, in the long run, render the League ineffectual. To opponents, however, this was a necessary means of offsetting the dangerous clauses within the treaty.

In our study, the pro-league papers gave the most attention to the battle on the reservations and to the strategy employed by the opposition. The anti-league papers, on the whole, contented themselves with a more neutral, descriptive account of these debates. The Star and La Presse, which both covered the league debate more thoroughly than the other papers, appeared to be much more aware of the conflicting interests and jockeying that was taking place in Washington. The Star, as early as Wilson's visit in February, 1919, mentioned to its readers that a "little group of headstrong men" in the Senate were intent on "paralyzing at least temporarily the legislative arm of the Government" (19); but it considered their only hope lay in the rejection of the league covenant by the Peace Conference rather than in its rejection or modification in the United States. (20) This optimism did not falter until the middle of August when The Star realized the proponents of the League were slipping in their struggle to defeat the reservations proposed by the League's opponents. (21) But even before the summer debates had gotten underway, The Star had warned its readers that the Republicans held enough votes to defeat the treaty (22) and that a strong reservation on Article X was to be expected. (23) It had become clear to The Star by August that the opposition had succeeded, through its long-winded debates on the League, in arousing

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19. The Montreal Star, March 5, 1919, "Mr. Wilson's Warning," editorial, p. 10.

20. Ibid., February 22, 1919, p. 5.

21. Ibid., August 8, 1919, p. 1 and August 14, 1919, p. 1.

22. Ibid., March 17, 1919, p. 19.

23. Ibid., June 30, 1919, p. 22.

public fears and in rekindling America's old isolationism. It still clung to the hope, however, that the president would successfully gain public momentum for the treaty's ratification; but with his failure, The Star appeared to bow to the treaty's inevitable ratification with reservations.

The paper, nevertheless, firmly believed the reservations emasculated the treaty. It particularly disliked the reservation on Article X which, in its opinion, absolved the United States from any responsibility in the maintenance of the treaty and thereby killed the essential principle behind Article X. (24) Rather than the protection of American interests, the senate the senate opposition would essentially destroy or kill the treaty and with it the League of Nations. The Star, then, held true to its pro-league sympathies and to Wilson's position on ratification throughout the league battle. Perhaps because of its ardent desire to see the League ratified without any qualifying reservations, The Star gave more attention to the senate fight than any other Quebec papers studied. Linguistic and political ties appeared to make the league battle of supreme importance to The Star and led it to watch the developments more closely than its French-language counterparts.

The Star's steadfast opposition to the League's antagonists in the Senate reflected a dual belief in the League as a vital element in the establishment of a just and democratic society throughout the world and in American participation in the League as the essential ingredient for that organization's success. Given this view, it considered the outcome of the senate fight "of the most momentous consequence not only to the United States, but to

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24. Ibid., November 15, 1919, "Reservation or Assassination?", editorial, p. 10.

the whole world." (25) If the reactionary elements in the United States should triumph, it would be a serious rebuff to humanity and a victory for the old political system. The November rejection was "a gesture of repudiation aimed at the dearest hopes of humanity" (26); the great vision of Wilson had been crushed, and "the wonderful dream of a great federation of humanity for the establishment of world peace (. . .) must remain unfulfilled." (27) Without the United States, the League of Nations "would be an abortive thing condemned to futility from birth and a source of eternal irritation." (28) And even should the United States succeed in ratifying the treaty with reservations, the effect would be much the same. "American participation, which is so vitally necessary to the very principle of the League, will be a thing of shreds and patches, the result of political manipulation, not the spontaneous impulse of a great and generous-minded people." (29)

After the final decision had been made in Washington, then, The Star remained faithful to its earlier belief that the League took precedence over the peace treaty. It was not so much the repercussions on world peace which the American failure to ratify the Treaty of Versailles would cause, but the disastrous consequences on the League's future that the paper feared. All was not lost, however, and The Star urged the other signatories of the League to undertake the work begun by Wilson but shirked by the Senate.

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25. Ibid., July 11, 1919, "The Fight for the League," editorial, p. 10.

26. Ibid., November 25, 1919, "Moral Leadership," editorial, p. 10.

27. Ibid., November 20, 1919, "The Senate's Action," editorial, p. 10.

28. Ibid., June 14, 1919, "Playing Germany's Game," p. 10.

29. Ibid., February 9, 1920, "Trying Again at Washington," editorial, p. 10.

"There is nothing for the other nations of the world to do save to apportion among themselves the task which the United States should have done, and do it among them. (. . .)

The dream (of a better world order) found expression in America, and the war-worn nations looked to this side of the Atlantic for a world leadership that had seemingly departed from themselves." (30)

If the light had gone out in the United States, it would not be extinguished everywhere. "Thank God the vision of better things has not been wholly darkened everywhere. Humanity must still be served, no matter if the power which could most fitly and easily serve it turns its back upon the task."

(31) The Star, like Wilson, felt it had been betrayed. But it was a betrayal by petty politicians not by the great American people who, it confidently felt, would give the final and decisive verdict in the November election. "We cannot believe that the action of a handful of little politicians at Washington represents the last word of the great, warmhearted generous people of America. They will speak next November, and by their voice America will stand forever vindicated or condemned." (32) Thus even after the Senate's second rejection in March, The Star still could not accept the decision as final. It still hoped for a national outcry in favour of the League in the next election.

From the beginning of the controversy, La Presse as well gave a fairly high priority to the senate battle. The paper which had linked the League and more especially the peace treaty in Paris with the creation of world peace continued to view the league battle in Washington as a decisive contest

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30. Ibid., March 22, 1920, "Rejected," editorial, p. 10.

31. Ibid.

32. Ibid.

33. La Presse, December 1, 1919,

34. Ibid., August 20, 1919, editorial.

in the struggle to establish a final peace settlement. The Americans, it frequently observed, appeared reluctant to make peace. "L'Oncle Sam, qui au début de la guerre, se disait trop fier pour se battre, est maintenant dans l'obligation de se dire trop fier pour entrer dans la ligue de la paix. Il possède assurément un caractère difficile à définir." (33) Throughout the debates, it assailed the league opponents for their obstruction of peace. It was not right that a question of such international importance, i.e., the Treaty of Versailles, should be made the scapegoat for American internal chicaneries.

"En retardant la signature du Traité de Paix, les sénateurs américains nuisent à la reprise des affaires dans le monde entier, et ils empêchent les Allies de concourir d'une façon efficace à la pacification des nations encore en guerre. Est-il juste que des questions de politique locale interviennent en de telles circonstances, aux Etats-Unis (. . .) nuisent à des résultats que l'on a le droit d'attendre de quatre années de luttes et de sacrifices?" (34)

It was this aspect of the controversy which La Presse repeatedly emphasized during the summer and fall of 1919. In its news coverage it followed closely the discussions surrounding the reservations, and in its editorials it hammered out the injurious effects on international peace. But like The Star, it was forced in late summer to concede success to the reservationists and to predict the treaty's ratification with these modifications. After the November rejection, however, La Presse's interest in the battle appeared to dwindle. Not only had the Treaty of Versailles finally become effective in January, 1920, but it had become increasingly evident that the question of American ratification would probably not be decided until the November, 1920 election.

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33. La Presse, December 2, 1919, editorial, p.4.

34. Ibid., August 20, 1919, editorial, p. 4.



Understandably, La Presse stressed the international repercussions after the Senate's November rejection of the League. It was a blow to world peace and more especially to the Allies who had counted heavily on American aid during the postwar reconstruction. The League, of course, would suffer; but it was less the result on the infant organization's survival than the implications the American isolation would give the Allied cause that concerned La Presse. It was a victory for the Germans and could only give them greater confidence in returning to their old belligerent ways. Thus La Presse viewed the American decision with disappointment and fear mingled with a sense of betrayal.

"Cette impression, au reste, est à peu près la même chez la plupart des peuples alliés, qui croient que la république aux couleurs étoilées veut leur fausser compagnie, et que le récent geste du Sénat des Etats-Unis est l'équivalent d'une victoire allemande et bolchéviste. Espérons que ce sentiment disparaîtra le 1er décembre, date probable de la prochaine convocation du Sénat américain." (35)

There were far fewer comments in La Presse after the March rejection of the peace treaty, but in essence they reiterated the fear that German interests would gain since Germany in her renegotiations with the United States could probably obtain greater concessions than she had secured in Paris the year before. (36) Thus La Presse, which had stood for total victory over "les Boches" during the war and for a vindictive peace in Paris during the Peace Conference, most feared the advantage the American rejection of the peace treaty might give the Germans.

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35. Ibid., November 22, 1919, editorial, p. 4.

36. Ibid., March 23, 1920, editorial, p. 4.

L'Événement devoted less attention to the senate opposition than either La Presse or The Star and did not frequently editorialize on the league debate or on its ramifications. It did, however, regularly carry news stories covering the debate but generally limited to a neutral description of the Senate's deliberations. If L'Événement, like the other papers, emphasized the violent rhetoric and the determined nature of the opposition, it usually refrained from making any judgment or criticism of its action. Indeed, its only real grievance was the effect the interminable discussions over the League in the United States would have on the reestablishment of world peace. This appeared to be the one common criticism voiced by the Quebec press. To L'Événement, should the American Senate repudiate the League, it would also at the same time reject the Treaty of Versailles and consequently, endanger international peace which was so urgently needed. (37) It was for this reason that it felt the Senate should ratify the peace treaty as quickly as possible. "C'est pourquoi il nous paraît souverainement utile à la paix du monde et à la paix des sociétés qu'on en finisse avec ces discussions interminables." (38)

This same sentiment may have applied to L'Événement's assessment of the Senate's eventual rejection of the peace treaty. Although no editorials were devoted to this subject, it probably continued to fear the international consequences of the American action. Nevertheless, the lack of any editorial opinion after both the Senate's November and March votes really attests to the paper's declining interest in the League's American fate.

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37. L'Événement, September 13, 1919, "Sénat contre Président," p. 6.

38. Ibid.

Fewer and fewer articles touching the senate fight were carried in the period between these two votes. Obviously, the paper was not greatly concerned by the Senate's refusal to ratify the treaty or it would have commented, to some degree, on the decision. Perhaps too, it did not consider the American ratification of the treaty necessary for international peace once the protocol of the Treaty of Versailles had become effective in January, 1920. Thus, in the final analysis, there are few clues concerning L'Événement's reaction to the consequences of the Senate's decision. The outcome appeared to hold little importance for the paper.

L'Action Catholique carried far less material on the senate debates than the other Quebec newspapers studied. Indeed, its coverage followed the same pattern noted earlier in respect to the League of Nations and to Wilson. The comments were terse and descriptive, rather than analytical, and generally refrained from taking any position for or against the senators. Thus if the paper did follow the fluctuations of the league fight, rarely did it ever editorialize on the manoeuvres of the opposition. It appeared to hope that some kind of compromise could be reached to put an end to the "ambroglio" which surrounded the peace treaty, but the paper never really specified what kind of compromise it would find acceptable. Interestingly, it was the "nauffrage" that awaited the Treaty of Versailles should the Senate refuse to reach a compromise which appeared to worry the paper rather than the harm such an action would cause the newly-formed League. In this, the paper reflected a general consensus that the American delay or refusal to ratify the peace treaty would be especially disastrous for the reestablishment of world peace.

Nevertheless, L'Action Catholique never really lingered on either the international or national consequences of the American refusal. After the

November vote, it fully expected a compromise to be reached once Wilson had resubmitted the treaty to the Senate and observed that for the moment the non-ratification would have more a commercial and financial effect rather than a diplomatic or political one. (39) By January and February, 1920 it, however, like the rest of the press predicted that "L'épineuse question restera au programme de la prochaine campagne présidentielle." (40) Little more was said on the issue. Again, the paper appeared basically uninterested in the League's fate in the United States; an opinion which seemed to stem from its distaste for the League and from a general apathy toward American politics. What information the paper carried on the senate fight was essentially a condensed form of articles appearing in other Quebec papers. Thus it becomes difficult to discover just what L'Action Catholique itself thought about the senate opposition and the results of its decision. We are left with the conclusion that it was not too interested in the ratification fight or in its eventual outcome.

Le Devoir which had not responded to Wilson or to the League very favourably, nonetheless, realized the importance of the debates in Washington although it carried fewer articles than either The Star or La Presse on them. The question of dominion status within the British Empire and of Irish independence particularly intrigued the anti-imperialist Le Devoir. "Il y a là un débat extrêmement intéressant à suivre. Il l'est deux fois pour nous, puisque M. Borah met précisément en cause le status des colonies britanniques." (410

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39. L'Action Catholique, November 22, 1919, p. 9.

40. Ibid., February 23, 1920, under l'Information, p. 1.

Although the paper recognized the delay tactics employed by the opposition through the addition of reservations, it was not outraged by this manoeuvre. Many of these reservations, it felt, would not really change the treaty or the League, and others appeared basically justifiable such as those concerning Ireland and Article X.

Indeed, Le Devoir seemed much more aware of the strength of Wilson's adversaries than any of the other papers studied and more sympathetic to them. La Presse and The Star frequently referred to the League's opponents as obstructionists, Le Devoir as "oppositionnistes" an important distinction. The Senate was well within its constitutional bounds in dealing with the treaty's ratification. In its adherence to the national interests of the United States and in its rejection of the false international edifice desired by Wilson, the American Senate was acting quite justifiably. In an editorial December 5, 1919 several weeks after the Senate's rejection of the peace treaty, Le Devoir commented more fully on the national significance of the Senate's action. It was, it said, a violent nationalistic reaction against the engagements assumed by Wilson in London, Paris and Rome, engagements which did not directly affect American interests or needs. Moreover, the American senators were not interested in Wilson's naive promises of international utopias and should be thanked for striking the first blow against them.

"Quant aux sénateurs américains qui ont démoli le frêle échafaudage et jeté à bas la statue du pape laïque, ils n'ont fait que leur devoir. On peut discuter la valeur ou l'à-propos de telle et telle de leurs attitudes ou de leurs 'réserves'. Ce n'est pas aux détails qu'il faut s'arrêter. Leur mérite, c'est d'avoir porté le premier coup de pied dans ce faux décor de paix derrière lequel les pitres de la diplomatie préparaient leurs nouveaux

grimaces et démasque quelques-uns des pires forbans de la démocratie." (42)

It was the defeat of Wilson's great world crusade which Le Devoir appeared to consider the major consequence of the Senate's decision. Of course, this action would create a malaise in Europe and hinder the effectiveness of the Treaty of Versailles since the United States was still legally at war with Germany. But the rejection of the League and consequently the rejection of Wilson's international peacekeeping role was of far greater importance than any temporary derangement in world peace. Le Devoir had always eyed Anglo-American political and economic preeminence in the world suspiciously and had not looked to the United States for some kind of leadership role in the postwar period. It, therefore, did not share that sense of betrayal which both The Star and La Presse had expressed at the American refusal to ratify the treaty. It also appeared far less concerned with international affairs than either of these two newspapers at this time. Thus, the second round of senate debates in the winter of 1920 received very little attention and the second and final rejection almost no comment. The subject bore little relation to the national, and increasingly religious, concerns of Le Devoir.

As could be expected, it was only the pro-league papers, The Star and La Presse, which devoted much attention to the senate fight and which were outspoken in their criticism of the opposition's tactics and final action. The Star's overwhelming belief in the League of Nations as the cornerstone

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42. Ibid., December 6, 1919, "Banqueroute de la Papauté Laïque," p. 1.

in the foundation of world peace led it to be the most critical of the Senate's efforts to modify the League and the most fearful of the consequences of its decision on the League's future. La Presse, on the other hand, criticized the Senate for delaying the treaty's ratification and not for modifying the league pact. But even La Presse appeared to lose interest in the controversy after the Senate's first rejection of the League.

In November, it seemed likely to most observers that Wilson would re-submit the treaty to the Senate which would not this time allow another deadlock to ensue. In March, 1920 not only did it appear that the question would remain unresolved until the next election, but the Treaty of Versailles had also at last become effective in January. Whatever the reason, all of the four French-language newspapers devoted less and less attention to the senate debate after the November vote. Indeed, Le Devoir was the only anti-league paper to indulge in a detailed analysis of the reasons behind the Senate's action, and the only paper studied that sympathized with its decision. L'Événement and L'Action Catholique limited their coverage to a fairly neutral resumé of the senate debates and rarely engaged in any discussion of its causes or implications.

## CONCLUSION

In this study, we were first struck by the remarkable consistency shown by each paper in its political temperament and individual character to its reaction to the American refusal to ratify the League of Nations and in the form of coverage given to the American Senate's debate. Each paper emerged with a distinct personality which largely dictated its overall opinion of the conflict and the importance attached to it. Thus the imperialist Montreal Star, most oriented to world affairs, gave the highest priority to the debate and, in its commitment to internationalism, remained the most hostile to the senate opposition. La Presse's liberalism and popular orientation brought its endorsement of the League and its enthusiasm for Wilson as well as a keener interest in the American controversy. Both papers' larger format also increased their inclination to allot far greater space to the senate debate and subsequently enhanced their coverage of it. L'Événement, however, because of its hard-headed political realism and pragmatism scoffed at the League, and because of its greater concern with national politics as a party organ put little emphasis on the American debate. In L'Action Catholique, its ultramontane views determined its hostility to the League and its basic indifference to the debate. And the Catholicism and anti-imperialism of Le Devoir dictated both its opposition to the League and its sympathy with the American senators while its nationalist outlook led it to give far less attention to the controversy. The stricter format of these last three newspapers necessitated a greater attention to space and brought a greater likelihood of ignoring international stories since national events were the



first order of business for each paper.

But even if the political and morphological nature of each paper played a formative role in their delineation of the American league controversy, certain common attitudes can be discerned. The central issue at stake in the American debate was the controversial League of Nations. And it is precisely around the league issue that press opinion took shape and was maintained. Thus what becomes most evident from our study is that the majority of the French-language press, three out of four newspapers, found the League of Nations unacceptable. They could not hail it as mankind's single hope of redemption and peace; first, because they could not accept its founding principles based as they were on national self-determination and popular sovereignty; and secondly, because they did not believe man alone had the power to create a utopian, secular society. Inherent to this opposition in all three papers appeared to be a continuing Catholicism which for both Le Devoir and L'Action Catholique manifested itself in a strict adherence to papal authority and to the papal peace program. This was less evident in L'Événement, but even it condemned league advocates for their sin of pride and insisted that only Christianity could achieve world peace and harmony.

Of equal importance to their disapproval of the league organization for Le Devoir and L'Action Catholique was their fear of the international obligations membership would impose on Canada. They distrusted the internationalist credo of the League which under Article X, they feared, would throw Canada into the vicious circle of international conflicts from which she had remained removed for so many years. The spectre of another war, similar to the one from which Canada had but recently emerged with still unhealed battle wounds from both the European and home fronts, only reenforced a desire to get

back to the national needs of Canada, and more especially of Quebec. Le Devoir had preached the necessity of acting for national ends before international ones before and during the war in its crusade against British imperialism. It is hardly surprising then that in peace it was not ready to see Canada join a new international organization which would seemingly defeat this very aim by denying Canadian autonomy and by engaging her in all future wars. Interestingly, L'Action Catholique, which had supported the war effort, in 1919, seemed reluctant to see Canada continue in her international role. It strongly urged Canadians to consider the implications of league membership and felt Canadian interests could best be served by remaining apart from the vortex of international politics. Although L'Événement did not apparently fear the international orientation of the League, this appeared to stem basically from its own scepticism concerning the League's future and the League's ability to enforce Article X. The League would be essentially an impotent organization, so there was really no reason to worry about the consequences of membership. It should also be noted that L'Événement was one of only two papers which believed that the preservation of America's policy of non-entanglement in foreign alliances was the leading and legitimate factor in the Senate's opposition to the League; and indication of a certain sympathy with isolationism.

Only La Presse and The Montreal Star endorsed the league concept and fully believed that it represented a great new undertaking for mankind. La Presse's endorsement appeared to stem partly from its mass orientation and partly from its liberal philosophy. It enthusiastically played up the League in the initial states of the Paris Peace Conference when it was the leading news story and when it was being hailed by many world leaders. As the league issue retreated from the focal point of international affairs, La Presse's

interest appeared to decline. Perhaps more than the other papers, it tried hardest to please its readers with the latest in popular trends. Nevertheless, it was the only French-language daily which espoused the principles of the Fourteen Points indicating that paper's definitely liberal and more secular outlook. La Presse, however, did not feel the League's creation should supersede the interests of world peace. It willingly would have sacrificed the League in order to gain the American ratification of the Treaty of Versailles.

The Montreal Star remained then the only paper fully committed to the league cause throughout the entire period studied. It had advocated closer ties with Great Britain before the war in the debates over Canada's role in imperial affairs. This imperialist outlook apparently did not falter during the war since in 1919 The Montreal Star was prepared to take up the great international crusade proposed by the League's creators. This orientation to international affairs can be partially explained by The Montreal Star's ties with the British Empire which led it to look overseas and to feel a part of a British and an imperial community. Moreover, many of the League's founding principles, resting as they did on basically Anglo-Saxon institutions, were bound to be more easily acceptable to The Star than to its French-language counterparts. Thus, in the long run, it was only the English-language Montreal Star which remained firmly behind the league cause. Le Devoir, L'Action Catholique and L'Événement could never endorse its creation while La Presse's fervour subsided once it became obvious that the League alone was preventing the ratification of the peace treaty in the United States.

The press reaction to President Wilson's league policy both in Paris and the United States was strongly conditioned by their attitude to the League of Nations. The same elements which determined each paper's approval or

disapproval of the League reappear in their judgment of Wilson. Again the three anti-league papers disliked Wilson who they qualified as pompous, self-righteous and naive. Le Devoir and L'Action Catholique resented especially his self-assumed role of moral arbiter in international affairs. As Catholic newspapers they felt only the Pope wielded a moral authority that merited international respect and obedience. L'Événement, and to a lesser degree Le Devoir, had no use for Wilson's utopian dreams and instead preferred the realistic policies voiced by the French at the Peace Conference. Le Devoir, following its anti-imperialist tradition, alone foresaw a latent imperialism in Wilson's actions abroad and disliked him as well for his imposition of American cultural and political institutions on other nations. Given their disapproval of the League, it seems quite understandable that these papers should feel little sympathy for Wilson, who was after all the League's leading spokesman. But it also seems evident that their dislike of Wilson went beyond one of political disagreement to a more personal level. They disliked the man for his moral arrogance. If this represented more a French-Canadian than English-Canadian, opinion, it is difficult to say without more information on the English-language press throughout Canada. Nevertheless, it seems likely that the Catholic philosophy of these papers enhanced their distrust of Wilson's lay leadership, and that they naturally could feel little identity with him, representative as he was of a powerful Anglo-Saxon nation. Throughout Wilson's battle with the Senate, these papers did not change their views; in fact, the most critical editorials written by Le Devoir appeared in December, 1919. Both Le Devoir and L'Événement felt Wilson through his rigidity had brought on much of his troubles with the Senate. L'Action Catholique never really voiced any opinion on this subject.

La Presse then was the only French-language paper which hailed Wilson as a great precursor of peace. But again, this apparently stemmed from Wilson's position on centre stage during the Peace Conference and from the general enthusiasm shown for him abroad. After his stroke in October, he was mentioned less and less frequently although it can not really be said that La Presse no longer supported him. He was just no longer at the centre of the league controversy or even of the American government, i.e., he was not making headlines as he had done abroad. It did not hold him responsible for the League's rejection, but considered him a victim of the machinery of the American government. Thus if La Presse's interest in Wilson diminished, it did not really question his policies or political philosophy.

Again only The Montreal Star remained actively behind Wilson throughout the league controversy. He was always for The Star the noble forerunner of peace who unfortunately alone could not defeat the reactionary forces at work in the world. It completely accepted Wilson's policies and reflected his views in its analysis of the senate controversy, a factor which again seems due to its complete faith in the League and to its greater affinity to Wilson's objectives and principles. Thus only The Montreal Star and La Presse found Wilson an inspiring world figure, the other papers felt little sympathy for him and wanted nothing to do with his utopian dreams.

In their reaction to the senate debate itself, the importance given by each paper to the League appeared to determine the significance each attached to the battle shaping in the United States. The Montreal Star and La Presse, from their priority to news and from their desire to see the League ratified, showed a keener interest in the Senate's deliberations and gave their readers a greater insight into the political manoeuvrings in Washington and into the

major characters involved in the struggle. The amount of attention given to the fight in The Star almost doubled that accorded by La Presse. Evidently, the English-language newspaper had easier access to news sources but this does also indicate its greater concern with the issue. Through their sympathy with the League and with Wilson, both papers were inclined to castigate the senators and assign to them the more petty motives of partisanship and spite. It also led them to foresee dire results to an American decision unfavourable to the League and to severely condemn the final decision although La Presse became less interested and less concerned by the American fight after January, 1920. The Star honestly believed the League's future depended on an affirmative American vote; La Presse worried more about the consequences on the peace treaty which were minimal once it came into full operation in January, 1920.

The three anti-league newspapers, although they followed the debate, gave far less attention to it particularly in their editorials. Indeed, we found only one editorial in L'Événement in September, none in L'Action Catholique and only three in Le Devoir, all in December shortly after the Senate's first treaty rejection. This paucity of comment on the league fight came both, it seems, from a disregard to the League's fate and from a greater preoccupation with national rather than international news. The American fight they considered to be an internal battle between Wilson and the American Senate that did not involve Canadians. Although they became impatient with the Senate's bickering over fine details concerning a document as important as the Treaty of Versailles, they did not condemn its actions. Le Devoir's nationalism led it to consider the Senate's rejection a legitimate defense of the national priorities of the United States, and L'Événement, although it did not endorse its action, felt the Senate had justifiable grievances and in many instances

was sincerely motivated. L'Action Catholique said little, but by its very silence, it is evident that it was not outraged by the Senate's decision. None of the papers predicted any serious international consequences to the American decision indicating again the little attention given to foreign affairs in each of these papers.

We have thus found that only two of the five Quebec newspapers studied gave a substantial coverage of the American senate debate - La Presse and The Montreal Star. This is apparently explicable in relation to their orientation to international events not encountered elsewhere in the press which led them to endorse Wilson's peace program and urge the creation of the proposed League of Nations. They, thus, naturally attributed a greater importance to the American ratification of the League and followed the debates more closely than the other papers which clung to the more insular concerns of Canada. This reflected a definite sense of isolation from the international community shown in their hostility to the League of Nations and to the international idealism of Wilson and in the relatively little importance attached to the American debate over the League's ratification. Perhaps much of this can be explained by a general postwar letdown and by a natural North American remoteness from, and disinterest in, European affairs which was bound to re-surface at the war's end. Nonetheless, it is significant that three major French Canadian dailies could not join the chorus of world approval for the League and could not become greatly alarmed by the American refusal to ratify the League of Nations.

Even La Presse abandoned much of its coverage of the senate debate after the November vote, and in March, 1920 did not appear greatly disturbed by the

final negative outcome. It is difficult to say whether this represented a weariness with international affairs in general or simply the belief that the American decision no longer had much importance to world peace. A further study of La Presse in the postwar period would be needed to discover any change in orientation. And whether this isolationism was stronger in French Canada than in English Canada can not be answered without a more thorough investigation of English Canadian attitudes to determine if The Montreal Star in fact did represent a majority English Canadian view in its support for the League of Nations and in its extensive coverage of the American senate debate.

Thus we have seen that the majority of the French-language press in Quebec remained singularly unconcerned with the American League debate, which was after all one of the more important international news stories of 1919, and singularly undisturbed by the American Senate's league rejection, which augured poorly for the newly-born international organization. We can attribute this, in the first instance, to a fundamental disagreement with the League. But on a broader scale, it reflects a diminishing interest in world affairs, a growing preoccupation with internal needs and a desire to be left alone to look to these needs. Since the press reflects public opinion, we can assume that a significant proportion of French Canadians shared this growing absorption with national affairs and this reluctance to be drawn again into the maelstrom of world conflicts as the decade of the 1920's got underway.



APPENDIX A \*\*  
LES JOURNAUX

	<u>LE DEVOIR</u>	<u>LA PRESSE</u>	<u>THE MONTREAL STAR</u>	<u>L'EVENEMENT</u>	<u>L'ACTION CATHOLIQUE</u>
1.	Siège de la rédaction et de l'administration 43 Rue St-Vincent Montréal	coin St-Jacques et St-Laurent Montréal	245 ouest de la rue St-Jacques Montréal	30-32 côte de la Fabrique Montréal	103, rue Ste-Anne Montréal
2.	Périodicité quotidienne	quotidienne	quotidienne	quotidienne	quotidienne
3.	Date de fondation 10 janvier 1919	15 octobre 1884	16 janvier 1869	13 mai 1867	21 décembre 1907
4.	Date de disparition *	*	*	*	*
5.	Tirage 1910 - 12,529 1930 - 13,507	1913 - 121,085 1940 - 147,074	1899 - 28,160 1940 - 126,479	1913 - 12,255 1932 - 23,556	1913 - 13,100 1940 - 59,641
6.	Format 7 colonnes 8 pages	8 colonnes 20-40 pages	8 colonnes 22-24 pages	7 colonnes 8 pages	7 colonnes 8 pages
7.	Direction et rédaction Henri Bourassa (dir. et red.)	A. Berthiaume (dir.)	Hugh Graham (red.)	J.-L. Demers (dir.) L.-P. Pelletier (red.)	Jules Dorion (dir.) Leon K. Laflamme (red.)
8.	Tendance politique Indépendant	Libérale	Conservatrice	Conservatrice	Catholique

\* Le journal paraît encore aujourd'hui.

\*\* Les données sont tirées de André Beaulieu et Jean Hamelin, Les Journaux du Québec de 1764 à 1964, Québec, Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 1965.

