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THE SENATE DEBATE
ON THE
LEAGUE OF NATIONS

Presented by
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The Treaty of Versailles and, more importantly, the Covenant of the League of Nations contained in that treaty have been the subjects of much debate and speculation since their final defeat by the United States Senate in 1920. This debate has centered on the question of who was responsible for the defeat of the treaty. Some blame Wilson for his obstinacy in refusing to allow the Democratic senators to vote for ratification of a treaty containing Republican reservations. Others put the responsibility in the hands of the Republican majority led by Senator Henry Cabot Lodge. A number of influences shaped the reactions and attitudes of the various senators and caused them to vote the way they did. As the Senate debate unfolded the position of each individual senator and of factions within the Senate became increasingly clear.

President Wilson began talking and writing about a league of nations before the United States even entered the war with Germany. As early as 1914 he suggested that all nations should become part of an international association designed to maintain peace in the world. His January 1917 speech to Congress elaborated a number of points, including one on the establishment of a league of nations, that were later incorporated into his Fourteen Points address, delivered in early 1918. His war message on April 2, 1917 and a message to the Russian people in May of the same year also expressed his belief in the need for an international peace organization that would be set up at the peace conference at the end of the war.
Opposition to Wilson's proposed program came primarily from the Republican camp, especially the Republican members of the Senate. Henry Cabot Lodge, Minority Leader of the Senate and ranking Republican on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, had been opposed to Wilson's league idea since the beginning of 1917. He felt it contained too many new ideas that could be dangerous for American interests. As the war progressed Lodge was joined by other Republican senators who felt that Wilson's power should be curbed and that control of the country's policies should be returned to Congress where it had been before the great increase in presidential power due to the war. The severity of the attacks on Wilson and his policies during the Congressional election of 1918 prompted him to go before the country and appeal for a vote of confidence. He asked the voters to return a Democratic majority to both houses of Congress in order to allow him to conduct the peace negotiations as he had proposed and to continue the programs he had already begun. The Republicans took this appeal as a direct insult to their abilities and as a challenge concerning who really represented the country. The election of a Republican Senate in November, although only by a majority of two seats, seemed to them to indicate that the public had repudiated the President's leadership and was demanding a change.

Wilson's determination to go to Paris himself as a peace negotiator and his failure to appoint any senators, either Republican or Democrat, to the peace commission despite the outcome of the election served to crystallize the growing Republican opposition in the Senate. Even before the treaty was submitted to the Senate for ratification the
members had split into three camps: the irreconcilables, who were opposed to the treaty in any form; the mild reservationists, who supported a league of nations in principle but desired amendments to the league as proposed by Wilson; and the senators, almost all Democrats, who supported the league exactly as it was brought from Paris by Wilson. Henry Cabot Lodge, now Majority Leader and chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee, attempted to hold together the Republican majority, made up of members of all three camps, in order to prevent Wilson from achieving his goal. The Republicans were determined not to allow Wilson to gain any more prestige or power over governmental affairs. They wanted to reassert the control of Congress after the great gains in presidential power made during the war and to prevent Wilson from gaining more personal glory both at home and abroad. Wilson was equally as determined that the treaty would be ratified exactly as it was presented to the Senate. All through the debate he continued to instruct the Democratic minority to vote against any reservations or amendments introduced by the Republicans. As a result of the bickering the treaty was voted down by the Senate twice in November 1919, once by the opposition of the Democrats to the treaty with the Lodge reservations attached and once by the Republicans voting against an unamended treaty. The treaty was brought back for reconsideration at the next session of Congress (1920) and again defeated for the final time.4

Virginia had three different senators involved in the league debates, Thomas S. Martin, Claude A. Swanson, and Carter Glass. Martin, who had been elected to his fifth term in the Senate in 1918, was in line to become Democratic floor leader in the 66th Congress. Wilson was opposed
to Martin's election because of Martin's opposition to Wilson's nomination at the Democratic National Convention. When Martin saw his support dwindling he withdrew from the race and John W. Kern of Indiana was elected. The Wilson-Martin feud ended at this point. A great believer in and supporter of party unity, Martin supported most of Wilson's programs simply because the two men were of the same political party. Wilson also buried the hatchet and made a special effort to win Martin's support because he needed every vote he could get to carry out his programs. In 1916 Martin was elected Majority Leader and continued to serve as head of the Democratic party in the Senate until his death. He took no actual part in the debates on the league due to his absence from the Senate in the early stages. Having been taken seriously ill in the early part of June 1919, he died on November 12, 1919, just one week before the league was voted on for the first time. His ability to keep the Democratic senators in line and his mastery of parliamentary procedure were sorely needed in the struggle with the Republican majority over the league. As early as June people recognized that Martin's absence was a definite disadvantage to the Democrats trying to carry out Wilson's peace policy.

Claude A. Swanson, also a leader of the Democratic machine in Virginia, was a member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. Although he too originally voted against Wilson at the convention, he became an active campaigner for Wilson and a staunch supporter of Wilson's policies. He was chosen to give the opening speech for the administration in the treaty fight and had a number of conferences with Wilson to discuss strategy.
Appointed by Governor Westmoreland Davis to fill the vacancy in the Senate caused by the death of Senator Martin, Carter Glass accepted his new position the day before the first vote on the treaty was taken but did not actually assume his seat until February 1920. He therefore missed most of the inter-party wrangling over the treaty and the league. His intimate friendship with Wilson, stemming from his sponsorship and guidance of the Federal Reserve System bill in the House and his term as Secretary of the Treasury, was an added factor in his unfailing support of Wilson's peace program.

More important than the fact that the league was defeated is the part played by certain individuals and groups in bringing about this defeat. Everyone had his own idea on what the league and the treaty meant or would mean to the United States and to the international situation. At times these ideas came in conflict with each other and made agreement on the treaty difficult if not impossible. Wilson's own attitude toward the league was particularly uncompromising. He saw the League of Nations as absolutely essential to the preservation of world peace and United States participation in the league as the only means whereby the league would be effective. In addition, this league must be formed at the peace conference in order to insure that all nations would join and agree to follow the principles set forth by Wilson. His idealistic attitude toward the league and what it could accomplish was not shared by the other negotiators. Both Great Britain and France tried to write into the peace treaty more provisions to benefit themselves and to protect themselves from future German aggression. They also tried, with some success, to prevent adoption of amendments desired by American public
opinion that they felt would weaken the parts of the treaty they already considered too weak. They were finally forced to back down on their claims somewhat by Wilson's threat to pack up and leave if the peace principles were not accepted. When Wilson returned home, he was faced with another fight to get the treaty ratified by the Senate so that the United States could become a member of the League of Nations. As the Senate fight progressed it became more and more apparent that Wilson was unwilling to accept any amendments or reservations to the league, not even those proposed by members of his own party. After he had been asked to compromise numerous times, he answered his opponents by saying that he had no moral right to accept changes in something that had already been signed. To accept reservations would be highly detrimental to the country's honor and would lose the United States much of its prestige abroad. Then too, accepting American reservations might induce the other countries to try to gain concessions they had been unable to achieve before. Many people contended that if the United States Senate added amendments or reservations, the treaty would have to be resubmitted to the peace conference, giving the other countries a chance to propose new amendments. This would also create problems with the Allies' ability to force the peace settlement on Germany. This is one of the reasons Wilson considered anything but acceptance of the treaty exactly as it stood as a nullification of the treaty, the league, and the principles behind them.

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At first most of the Democrats supported Wilson whole-heartedly despite any personal reservations they might have had to his demands for passage of the treaty exactly as it was submitted to the Senate. The division along party lines on many of the votes, such as those on the Fall amendments and the appeals to the Senate on Vice-President, Marshall's rulings, indicates the extent to which the Democrats followed Wilson's desires. Swanson's statements on the Fall amendments are fairly representative of the Democratic attitude to the treaty. Swanson voted against all of these amendments. To him, amending the treaty meant that it would have to be sent back to the conference for acceptance in its new form, causing a long delay in implementation of the treaty and establishment of the league. He felt that the United States had an obligation to the other countries to see that the treaty was properly carried out; therefore, no restrictions should be put on United States participation on any commission set up by the treaty, as adoption of some of the Fall amendments would have done. Swanson also announced that if Senator Martin had been present he too would have voted against all the amendments. Swanson's views reflect somewhat Wilson's idealistic belief in the necessity of United States participation in the league if it was to succeed. He also emphasized the urgent need for a quick acceptance of the treaty so that its provisions could be put into practice immediately to alleviate the chaotic situation in Europe.

There were, however, some members of the Democratic wing in the Senate who, unlike Swanson, came to feel that unquestioning support of Wilson was not necessarily in the best interests of the country. As long as they thought the president would accept whatever kind of treaty
the Senate was willing to pass even if it were not in the form he had requested, the Democrats would stand by Wilson and vote as he wished. After his statement of early March saying that he would refuse to accept any reservations then being considered by the Senate the Democrats realized that the situation was hopeless. They had to decide either to stick with Wilson and defeat the treaty or to desert him and take the best terms they could get under the circumstances. Many of the Democrats did not approve of the president's attitude toward the treaty. They considered him fanatically attached to an ideal that the rest of the world was unready to accept. The advocates of reservations were only trying to safeguard America by guaranteeing her continued sovereignty; they were not attempting to prevent the actual establishment of a league. As evidenced by the final vote taken March 19, 1920, twenty-one Democratic senators, having decided that an amended treaty was better than no treaty at all, voted against Wilson's leadership by voting for the approval of the amended treaty. Even this was not enough to bring about passage of the treaty. It failed to obtain a two-thirds majority and was sent back to Wilson with a note to the effect that the Senate refused to consent to it.

The irreconcilables or bitter-enders, led by Senators Borah and Philander Knox, were the most vocal in their opposition. They were against any mention of a league in the peace treaty and took the initiative in the debate in the weeks and months before any details of the settlement were known in the United States. The activity of this adamant group gave the unmistakable impression that the treaty was going to be a partisan issue. Although Senator McCumber, the only Republican who voted for ratification
no matter what the terms, tried to convince the public that the Republican party as a whole was not opposed to a league, the pro-league Republican faction was strangely silent. It allowed the irreconcilables to get the upper hand at the very beginning and made it impossible for the party to unite on any of the crucial votes later. Not even Senator Lodge with his great abilities as a leader was able to get the irreconcilables to adhere to the program of reservations supported by the Republican majority. The question of whether Lodge really wanted a treaty with reservations or whether he personally sided with the irreconcilables is not particularly relevant to this discussion and will not be taken up here.

Lodge was the leader of the mild reservationists, those who were for a league in principle but who were unwilling to accept Wilson's league. They felt that certain amendments would have to be made to Wilson's proposal before it would be acceptable. Most of the changes involved were simply measures to insure the continued sovereignty of the United States over its international relations and to guarantee that Congress would retain its constitutional control over the president. The key argument of the mild reservationists for reservations seemed to be the safeguarding of American ideals and security. During the July debates Senator Lenroot based his entire justification of the necessity of reservations on the upholding of the principle of "Americanism" and the need for clarifying a number of points that many senators felt might later jeopardize the position of the United States. Although all of the amendments introduced failed to receive a two-thirds majority, the Lodge reservations were approved and attached to the resolution of ratification.
before any of the final votes were taken. (Note: an amendment could be attached only to the original treaty; a reservation, often containing the same revision as a previously proposed and defeated amendment, was attached to the ratification resolution to serve as an indication of conditional acceptance. Both had the same purpose, to prevent the treaty from being adopted in the form in which it was proposed.) The inability of the mild reservationists to get the Republican irreconcilables to agree to a joint program or to gain anything but token support from the Democrats made it impossible for the treaty with reservations to pass. Neither could the Democrats muster a majority for their program. The whole situation was a total impasse.

With the Senate divided into three camps one might assume that the number of votes for and against various proposals made during the debates would vary considerably, depending on the measure being voted on and the combining of two of the factions on one side or the other. In most instances this turned out not to be the case. The voting split was almost exclusively on the basis of partisanship, straight Democrat-Republican, with the exception of a very few senators who completely switched sides and voted as if they were loyal members of the other party. Party politics was one of the major factors in shaping the attitudes of many of the senators toward the treaty and the league. They gave no real thought to what either the treaty or the league meant and blindly followed the party leaders' dictates. This made their stand at times inconsistent and unrealistic.

The hearings in the Foreign Relations Committee were a prime example of the role of partisanship in steering the course of the treaty. President
Wilson had presented the treaty to the Senate on July 10, 1919, in a speech in which he tried to explain the nature of the provisions and to give reasons for the quick approval of the treaty. Democrats generally were very enthusiastic about the effect of the speech. Swanson called it "magnificent, able, eloquent and inspiring" and said that "The reasons presented for the ratification of the treaty, including the league of nations, were strong, cogent and unanswerable." Most of the Republicans were highly critical, accusing Wilson of explaining the general principles behind the treaty and neglecting the specific details. Borah claimed that Wilson refuted his own statement about it being a league to enforce peace by stating that the league was "an alliance for war." Swanson attempted to defend Wilson by asserting that it was not expected or possible to discuss details of the league in a speech of the kind given by Wilson. The audience lacked the background knowledge and the technical experience to be able to grasp these details from such a short mention of them.

The Senate referred the treaty to the Foreign Relations Committee where the Republicans immediately began a complete reading aloud of the treaty in order to give themselves time for the formulation of amendments. Lodge also requested additional information from Wilson on the treaties with Poland and France, information which, according to Lodge, was absolutely vital to further consideration of the treaty. The Democrats on the committee were against any delay in consideration. At first they did not think it was necessary to request more information from the President, but they finally consented to ask Wilson for the treaty with Poland and two agreements on the Rhine. At the same time Lodge proposed...
an amendment regarding the provision on Shantung, Swanson objected vigorously to this beginning in the middle of the treaty. He felt that the committee should begin by considering the league provisions and work straight through in order until it reached the end. To Swanson, jumping in the middle at Shantung made it appear that a majority of the committee was trying to pick out something to make it clear that the majority's object was the defeat of the treaty. Swanson voiced the hope that a majority of the whole Senate would not support this particular amendment. He was confident that enough Republicans would vote with the Democrats to defeat it. Perhaps Swanson was closer to the truth than he was willing to admit even to himself. It is possible that the Republicans were trying to show the Senate that it was useless to try to get any kind of treaty except the one the Republicans were willing to allow. At any rate, this exchange does serve to show the partisan character of the struggle.

As the Foreign Relations Committee finally ordered the treaty reported back to the Senate it contained approximately forty-five amendments and four reservations, most of which had been approved by a vote of nine to eight, the Republican-Democrat split of the committee. The majority report refuted all the charges of unnecessary delay leveled against the committee and said there would be no problem in getting the amendments approved by the other powers since the conference was still in session in Paris. The report also requested immediate Senate approval on all amendments and reservations in order to protect American interests. Total acceptance of this recommendation, however, would have meant virtual
rejection of the league as far as the United States was concerned. These provisions took away what little control the league would have had and gave the final decision in any controversy to the Congress.

The minority committee report, introduced by Senator Hitchcock, Minority Leader of the Senate, and signed by all Democratic members of the committee except Shields, demanded immediate ratification of the treaty without amendments or reservations and charged the majority members of the committee with obstructing the treaty. The report stated that the reservations were introduced solely for the purpose of destroying the league and nullifying the treaty. 23 Obviously this charge-trading did nothing to ease the animosities between the two sides; on the contrary, it more than likely tightened the lines and made it even more difficult to achieve a middle ground. One of the points it should have begun to make clearer was that the issues were not being decided on their own merit. The senators were not really considering what would be in the best interests of the United States or of world peace. They might have thought and said they were, but in reality the issues were being decided on the basis of party politics.

Partisanship continued to dominate the debates and the voting in the Committee of the Whole in the Senate. In an editorial in mid-October the Richmond Times-Dispatch quoted Senator Hitchcock as having stated publicly that he was assured of forty Democratic senators who would vote against ratification of the treaty if it were weighed down with reservations. This statement played right into the hands of the Republicans, especially the irreconcilables. If the treaty were defeated the blame would be put on the Democrats even though the Republicans were the
ones to whom it was unacceptable in the first place. Hitchcock's announcement was an open invitation to the Republicans to load the treaty down with amendments and reservations in order to make it more onerous to the Democrats.\textsuperscript{24} This example shows how party politics distorted the issues and turned the whole question of the league into a farce. The league was not being discussed on its own terms but on the basis of what one party or the other thought about it. The complete reversal of party support from what one would expect to find indicates the ridiculous lengths a group of men would go to in rallying around the standard of party loyalty.

Despite his earlier statement, Hitchcock continued to claim that, even though the Democrats would vote against the treaty with reservations, the treaty was by no means dead. If the Lodge reservations were defeated, the Democrats would offer a resolution asking ratification of the unamended treaty. If that also failed, the way would then be open for a compromise resolution that would permit passage of the treaty. Hitchcock believed that he could muster enough votes to get the treaty in a deadlock and make this compromise possible.\textsuperscript{25} Considering the extreme partisanship that characterized the debate over the treaty Hitchcock's position was a little ludicrous if not downright naive. He never explained how he intended to effect this compromise and he seemed not to grasp the difficulties in his plan.

A further partisan dispute rose out of Hitchcock's plan to try to get a compromise resolution. The Republicans questioned whether the treaty would still technically be under Senate consideration after having been defeated twice already. According to the rules of the Senate further
consideration depended on the ruling of the presiding officer, in this case Vice-President Marshall, a Democrat. Marshall stated that he would allow another ratification resolution in the interests of reaching a compromise. The Republicans objected vigorously, saying that a simple majority vote could overrule the presiding officer's decision and that they had enough votes to do so should Marshall allow another resolution. This was precisely what did happen. Lodge objected to Marshall's ruling that the treaty be brought back for reconsideration in the Committee of the Whole. The question was put to a vote in which the Senate overruled the decision on a straight party vote, putting reconsideration in the Senate itself instead of the Committee. The Senate also overruled fifty to forty-three Marshall's ruling that amendments could be made to the Lodge reservations when they were brought back for reconsideration.

In an editorial published two days after the first two defeats of the treaty, the Richmond Times-Dispatch took an "I-told-you-so" attitude toward the whole subject. The editorial stated that the Democrats had been outmaneuvered in the parliamentary proceedings and had been forced into the position of having "to vote for a resolution that so restricted the treaty in its operation as virtually to destroy its original vitality, or else assume responsibility for its defeat." It was a trap set by the Republicans which the Democrats deliberately walked into on the chance of getting a vote on an unreserved ratification resolution and/or Republican support for a compromise. The paper criticized the Democrats for not being willing to yield to reservations that would not have really hurt the treaty at a time when it would still have been possible for enough
Republicans to join them in saving the treaty and the league. By the
time the Democrats realized they had to make some concessions the
Republicans had a plan and were not about to change their minds. The
editorial grasped very succinctly the heart of the whole problem of
ratification. Neither side was willing to bend or take the first step
for fear of losing party support or of being accused of disloyalty. No
one really considered what would have to be done to effect a compromise
because no one ever really expected the debate to reach a stage where
compromise would have been possible. Subsequent events seem to support
this contention that compromise was never really possible.

In mid-February, the Republicans took the initiative in bringing
the treaty containing modified Lodge reservations back to the Senate.
They believed there would be little or no opposition to these reserva-
tions, since they had been proposed by the mild reservationists. Hitch-
cock gave up on trying to get Democratic modifications to these
reservations. As long as the situation was still controlled by the
Republicans they were the ones who would have to take the initiative to
modify the treaty so that it would be acceptable to the Wilson
supporters. The Republicans were unwilling to modify the reservations
to suit the Democrats. According to the Republicans, any reservations
acceptable to the Wilson supporters would be too watered-down to achieve
the purpose for which they were proposed by the Republicans. It was
readily apparent that the only hope of ratification lay in a serious
break of the administration forces. As the final vote approached, the
Republican leaders hoped that, if ratification failed on the first
attempt and a second attempt was made, after making their opposition a point of record, enough Democrats would come over to the reservationist camp and save the treaty from complete failure. A number of Democrats did bolt on the final vote but not enough to obtain ratification of the treaty.

Another thread inextricably woven with that of party politics was Wilson's participation in and guidance of the whole league fight. He was the strongest advocate of an unamended treaty and was determined that no one was going to prevent him from achieving his goal. Wilson maintained such strong control over the Democratic members of the Senate that the leaders could neither make a proposal nor accept or reject one made by the opposition without first consulting Wilson. From the very beginning Wilson was adamant on getting the treaty his own way or not getting it at all. In June 1919 the Senate cabled Wilson in Paris and asked him to officially release the contents of the treaty to them before he returned to the United States. A number of Wall Street businessmen already had a copy of the treaty and were using it to their own advantage. Wilson refused, saying he had promised not to release the treaty until he could lay it before the Senate in person. As soon as he did return he held a long conference with Senator Swanson, who was to open the debate in the Senate. There was no record made of their conversation, but it was quite possible that Wilson suggested to Swanson the major points to be included in his speech. Swanson also made clear his own feeling that few amendments or reservations would be passed. He based this assumption on the fact that, given Wilson's intense desire to see the treaty passed without reservations and his power of rejecting the treaty
as reported by the Senate if it displeased him, a majority of the Senate would be willing to go along with Wilson's idea.

During the hearings in the Foreign Relations Committee the entire committee went to the White House to confer with Wilson on some aspects of the peace negotiations known only to him. The Republican members of the committee were rather dissatisfied with the answers Wilson gave to their questions. They had been hoping to get supporting evidence from Wilson for some of their grievances against the treaty. Instead, they gave Wilson an opportunity to present his side of the picture and to inspire his supporters to fight more fiercely to defeat any amendments. The Republican leaders said that the treaty would never pass without some kind of reservations, but Wilson remained adamant on unreserved ratification. He would not even give his approval to Senator Pittman's proposal for interpretive reservations that would be kept separate from the actual ratification resolution. Pittman's proposal was allowed to die by the rest of the Democratic leadership because Pittman had failed to get it approved by Wilson before announcing it.

By early September, however, Wilson had begun to change somewhat his attitude toward reservations. He was still completely opposed to any changes that would involve sending the treaty back to Paris, but he also stated that he would not oppose interpretive reservations if they were absolutely necessary. The president did not consider any of the amendments or reservations already proposed as belonging to the second category and noted a definite drift to reservations other than interpretive. This last observation became more and more true as the debate wore on. After the defeat of the Fall amendments by the opposition of the
Democratic minority, the Republicans almost conceded that there would be no amendments passed. Instead, they turned their attention to pushing for reservations to the ratifying resolution.

At first the Democrats were uncertain as to how far they would go in opposing these reservations. All through the fight over the amendments they had solidly supported Wilson's program of ratification of a treaty that would not have to be resubmitted to the peace conference. If they remained loyal to this principle, and there was no reason for them not to, they would also vote against any reservations that were unacceptable to the administration. While the Lodge reservations were being debated the Democrats decided to ask Wilson whether to vote for ratification of the treaty if the reservations were passed. They wanted to put the entire decision in Wilson's lap and were willing to abide by his decision whatever it might be. Wilson told the Democratic leaders that the reservations were trying to accomplish the same ends as the previously defeated amendments and were, therefore, unacceptable to him. The President maintained this attitude until the very end, when all hope of ratification was past. He even threatened to take the treaty back and lock it up in his desk if the reservations were passed without being modified. The Democrats attempted to introduce substitute reservations which were either turned down by Wilson as unacceptable or defeated by the Republicans.

Wilson's whole attitude during the hearings and debates was obstinate and unrelenting. He was absolutely determined that the peace was going to be his peace or no peace at all. He could not exercise any real control over the Republicans, but he could and did dictate to the Democrats.
Because the Democrats were willing for the most part to vote the way Wilson wanted them to vote, they never really stopped to consider the implications of their actions. It does not appear that any of them really understood what the treaty or the league meant in terms of the future, the international situation, or the position of the United States. When it finally began to dawn on them that they were in a hopeless situation and that there was almost no possible outcome except defeat of the treaty, a little less than half of the Democratic membership decided any treaty was better than no treaty at all, regardless of what the President or anyone else said, and voted for ratification. Unfortunately, seven more votes were needed for passage, but they were not forthcoming. The rest of the Democrats stuck with Wilson and permitted the treaty to die on the Senate floor. 36

The failure of the compromise program was due in large measure to Wilson's insistence that he have first approval on any proposal made by or to the Democrats. Both sides attempted a number of times to reach some kind of compromise, but none of the attempts were successful. Although both Republicans and Democrats said they were hoping for a compromise resolution of ratification, neither group was willing to keep a really open mind or modify its conditions sufficiently to achieve a compromise. Party politics, as well as Wilson's unyielding attitude, played a major part in keeping the lines firm and in preventing any kind of agreement.

The Democrats started off with a qualification to any type of compromise that might be proposed. They could only accept modifications or
reservations that Wilson would approve. Swanson indicated, after his talk with Wilson on July 10, that the Democrats would support certain reservations as long as these changes did not make the covenant superficial or take away all of its real meaning. The stipulation obviously limited the ability of the Democratic leaders to bargain with the opponents of the treaty for a settlement that would be acceptable to both sides.

By early November it had become obvious that the Democrats were getting nowhere in their ratification fight. Wilson had continued to ignore those senators who told him, as did Senator Watson (Rep.) of Indiana, that the only way to get the United States into the League of Nations was to accept the Lodge reservations. He refused to even listen to any reservations that would, as he put it, "nullify" the league. With the situation becoming more hopeless every day, Hitchcock went to visit Wilson. His task was to tell Wilson that the Democrats could not raise even a simple majority, much less the required two-thirds, for ratification of the treaty without reservations. He urged the President to compromise on the Lodge proposals as the only means of getting the United States into the league. Wilson answered emphatically to let Lodge do the compromising if any were to be done. Hitchcock then suggested that perhaps Lodge would do this if the President indicated in some way that he was willing to make peace with the Republicans. Wilson's reply to this suggestion was complete indignation. He told Hitchcock that the first move and most of the concessions would have to come from Lodge, not from any Democrat, especially himself. Granted that Wilson was a sick man and might not have understood exactly how bad the situation was, this was
still a rather astounding position for the President to take. His refusal to make any effort at compromise, when failure to do so meant almost certain defeat of a measure that he saw as the only means of achieving world peace, seems to be completely inexplicable.

Despite this adamant refusal the Democrats made another attempt to find out what the President would accept in the way of reservations. They asked Lodge to write down what he would ask for if Wilson agreed to accept private terms given by Lodge. This list of terms was sent to the White House, but it was never mentioned again by either side. Lodge took this lack of a reply as the final insult and ceased making any attempt to bargain with Wilson. Hitchcock realized that there was no way to pass the treaty as the President wanted it. By securing the support of the mild reservationists, who only wanted safeguards on the use of United States troops, he hoped to be able to bring about passage of a modified treaty. With this end in mind the mild reservationists started a compromise move that would have permitted acceptance of the reservations of the Foreign Relations Committee without the requirement that they had to be approved by the other powers. This would have eliminated one of Wilson's major objections to the reservations. At the same time the mild reservationists announced that they were not entirely opposed to modification of the committee reservations but that they would vote against the administration's program.

In a last ditch effort Lodge and Hitchcock held a conference just prior to the first vote on the treaty. At this conference they agreed to allow a vote to be taken on unreserved ratification before the vote on the committee resolution of ratification containing the Lodge reservations.
This was what the Democrats had been fighting for all the time. In return the Democrats submitted to Lodge a proposed set of compromise reservations showing the modifications necessary to obtain Democratic support for the reserved treaty. Lodge insisted that all compromise efforts had to be made before any vote was taken on the committee resolution. Clearly Lodge wanted to know for exactly what concessions the Democrats were asking before he went into the final debate and vote. He was confident the Republicans could defeat the resolution of unreserved ratification no matter when it was voted on. He lost nothing in agreeing to have it voted on first. He probably saw it as giving him a certain psychological advantage over his opponents since he had refused to accept the modified reservations proposed by Hitchcock. If the Democrats saw that their unreserved resolution had failed and realized that the choice was a reserved treaty or no treaty at all, enough of them might have been willing to vote for the reserved treaty to obtain its passage. Lodge's maneuvers did not work in November, but the situation in March followed his reasoning almost exactly.

Developments between November and March brought no real change in the status of the compromise efforts. A bipartisan committee attempted to draft a set of reservations that would be acceptable to a two-thirds majority of the Senate. It was almost prevented from meeting by Senator Lodge, who tried to keep the committee under his thumb because he feared it might upset his plans. At the same time a group of thirty Democratic senators met and declared themselves in favor of interpretive reservations. Some of these Democrats accepted a number of the Lodge reservation, and it appeared that the treaty might pass on the votes of
these Democrats and the Republican mild reservationists. The irreconcilables prevented this, however, by threatening to repudiate Lodge's leadership. Lodge was forced to give in and to agree that the reservation would remain as they were introduced. The bipartisan conference committee broke up over the reservation to Article X of the League of Nations Covenant. The Democrats were willing to accept the Taft wording of Lodge's original proposal, but Lodge was forced by the irreconcilables to refuse even this concession. Party politics prevented Lodge from accepting a compromise that had a fairly good chance of being passed.

In February Carter Glass, now junior senator from Virginia, made another attempt at a compromise. After talking with many Republican senators, he discovered that they were willing to back down on their demands if Wilson would agree to accept the Taft reservation to Article X, which was merely a wording of the original Lodge reservation to the article. He wrote to Wilson agreeing that it would be a betrayal of the Democratic Party to accept the Lodge reservations but pointing out that the party must be able to say it tried every possible means to compromise short of completely destroying the treaty. If the Taft reservation were proposed by the Democrats and then voted down by the Republicans, responsibility for defeat of the treaty would rest on the Republicans, not on the Democrats. Promising that Wilson's name would be kept completely out of the discussion, Glass asked for Wilson's approval before introducing the reservation. Wilson's reply questioned the good faith of Taft's proposal and stated that the Democrats taking the initiative at this point was probably all wrong. Glass said that his suggestion was not intended to change the Democrats' stand, only to sound out the
Republicans; however, if the President felt it would be detrimental to the party, he would drop the whole subject. Again a Democrat, against his own better judgment, had bowed to the wishes of the President.

The lack of understanding of what the peace treaty, and especially the League of Nations, really meant or could have meant to the United States seemed to affect most of the senators, President Wilson, and a large portion of the general public. Partisanship and a certain naivete characterized the entire Senate debate on the treaty. Most of the senators labored under some kind of preconception about the treaty and the league. They saw the league as either the greatest hope for world peace or as an instrument for involving the United States in squabbles in which it had no real interest. Because of these preconceptions and the partisanship none of the men involved in consideration of the Treaty of Versailles had a very realistic picture of the treaty or the League of Nations. Perhaps if they had been more willing to keep an open mind and to consider the treaty objectively the outcome might have been different. At the very least the treaty would have received a fairer hearing and, if defeated, would have been voted down on its own merits or lack thereof.
FOOTNOTES


2. Ibid., pp. 15-6.

3. For a more detailed discussion of the development of the League of Nations idea and the early opposition to it, see Fleming, Chapters 1 and 2.


12. Richmond Times-Dispatch, March 10, 1919, p. 4.


15. Those interested in exploring this question are referred to Fleming, Chapter 20.


24. Ibid., October 13, 1919, p. 6.
27. Ibid., November 20, 1919, p. 4.
28. Ibid., November 21, 1919, p. 4.
30. Ibid., March 17, 1920, p. 4.
34. Richmond Times-Dispatch, October 25, 1919, p. 1.
35. Ibid., November 18, 1919, p.1.
36. Holt, p. 278.
38. Smith, pp. 59, 114.
41. Ibid.
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Primary Sources


Criticizes Wilson for pledging U. S. to league without consulting Senate first; against Wilson's foreign policy.


Discusses international organizations already in existence that will be taken over by league; interesting but no relevance.

Hill, D. J. "Covenant or the Constitution?" North American Review, (March 1920), 321.

Anti-Wilson; discussion of what Covenant means to decision-making in Congress.

"How the New Peace-League Plan is Received." Literary Digest, LXI (April 26, 1919), 9.

Gives opinions of various groups and individuals on treaty; good cross-section.

"How the Press Answer the President's Plea." Literary Digest, LXII (July 19, 1919), 9.

Good for general public opinion of Republican and Democratic newspapers.


General analysis of the idea of a league and study of the major problems involved; no specifics for this paper.

"Is the League Issue Paramount?" Literary Digest, LXVI (August 21, 1920), 14.

Shows public feeling around country after League defeated and considers whether League is really an issue in Presidential election.

"Is Wilsonphobia to Defeat the League of Nations?" Current Opinion, 66 (June 1919), 344.

Deals with Republican opposition; little mention of Democrats.
"League as Chief Campaign Issue." Literary Digest (July 24, 1920), 9.

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Good but too late.


Good survey of both sides.

Low, A. M. "Conflict Between President and Congress." Nineteenth Century and After, 87 (May 1920), 895-903.

Very general description of bases of conflict between Senate and President; no details.


Very good for details of treaty fight and editorial comment.


Reasons for giving League a chance; little on Senate fight.

Richmond Times-Dispatch, March 1919-March 1920.

Excellent for progress of debate and public opinion; one of the major sources for this paper.

Swanson, Claude A. Pamphlets, clippings and other miscellaneous matter relating to the Swanson-Davis campaign for U. S. Senator from Virginia, 1922. Richmond: 1922.

Gives stand on league; interesting but not very useful.


Very useful for attitudes in Senate, details of debate, votes.


Full transcript of committee hearings; shows early stages of treaty fight.
Secondary Sources


Good analysis of situation; too late for much use in this paper.


Overview of Senate debate; very sympathetic to Wilson.


Very detailed on peace conference but does not include treaty fight.

Bartlett, Rubal J. The League to Enforce Peace. (Chapel Hill: 1944)

On pressure group working for passage of League; little on debate.


Very good summary and analysis.


Excellent detailed explanation of treaty fight; includes public opinion, attitudes of protagonists, analysis; one of primary sources of information for paper.


Sketches of prominent Democrats and what they contributed to the country and the state. Good synopsis for background.


Good analysis of motives of participants.


On Wilson's general foreign policy; little on League, nothing on Senate debate.

Very biased account; attempt to defend self from charges brought on by actions on treaty.


Concerned mainly with state-level politics; some mention of representatives on national level.


Very complimentary portrayal, concentrates on Federal Reserve System and related matters; of little use for this paper.


Concerned almost exclusively with state matters; very good footnotes and source notation.


Gives personal insights into relationships of protagonists of treaty debate; contains much anecdotal material.


Popular account of Glass's life; used correspondence and papers.