

*From Senator William S. Borah speech, November 19, 1919, *Congressional Record*, 66th Congress, 1st Session, Vol. 58, Part 9, 8782-84.

DOCUMENT A

What is the result of all this? We are in the midst of all of the affairs of Europe. We have entangled ourselves with all European concerns. We have joined in alliance with all the European nations which have thus far joined the league, and all nations which may be admitted to the league. We are sitting there dabbling in their affairs and intermeddling in their concerns. In other words, Mr. President—and this comes to the question which is fundamental with me—we have forfeited and surrendered, once and for all, the great policy of “no entangling alliances” upon which the strength of this Republic has been founded for 150 years.

My friends of reservations, tell me where is the reservation in these articles which protects us against entangling alliances with Europe?

Those who are differing over reservations, tell me what one of them protects the doctrine laid down by the Father of his Country. That fundamental proposition is surrendered, and we are a part of the European turmoils and conflicts from the time we enter this league.

YOUR SUMMARY:

DOCUMENT B

Lodge Reservation to Article X (November 1919)

The United States assumes no obligation to preserve the territorial integrity or political independence of any other country or to interfere in controversies between nations—whether members of the League or not—under the provisions of Article X, or to employ the military or naval forces of the United States under any article of the treaty for

YOUR SUMMARY:

any purpose, unless in any particular case the Congress, which, under the Constitution, has the sole power to declare war or authorize the employment of the military or naval forces of the United States, shall by act or joint resolution so provide.

DOCUMENT C

On November 19th the Senate was to vote on the reservations. Senator Hitchcock came to tell me that unless the Administration forces accepted them, the Treaty would be beaten—the struggle having narrowed down to a personal fight against the President by Lodge and his supporters. In desperation I went to my husband. "For my sake," I said, "won't you accept these reservations and get this awful thing settled?"

He turned his head on the pillow and stretching out his hand to take mine answered in a voice I shall never forget. "Little girl, don't you desert me; that I cannot stand. Can't you see that I have no moral right to accept any change in a paper I have signed without giving to every other signatory, even the Germans, the right to do the same thing? It is not I that will not accept; it is the Nation's honor that is at stake."

His eyes looked luminous as he spoke, and I knew that he was right. He went on quietly: "Better a thousand times to go down fighting than to dip your colours to dishonorable compromise."

BY — Edith B. Wilson, *My Memoir* (1939)

YOUR SUMMARY:

DOCUMENT D

If Wilson had not written his letter to the Democratic caucus, calling on them to kill the treaty rather than accept the reservations, the treaty would have been ratified on the 19th of November. There would have been enough Democrats voting with us to have done it. It was killed by Wilson. He has been the marplot from the beginning. All the delays and all the troubles have been made by him.....

BY — *Lodge Blames Wilson (1919) in a letter to his friend, former Secretary of State Elihu Root*
The Senate voted on the treaty with the Lodge reservations on 11/19/19; the vote was 39 yeas to 55 nays with the bulk of the Democrats voting against the treaty.

YOUR SUMMARY:

E. The Issue of Article X

The Text of Article X (1919)

Wilson regarded the League of Nations as the backbone of the Treaty of Versailles, and Article X of the League Covenant, which he had partly authored, as the heart of the League. He envisaged the members of the League constituting a kind of police force to prevent aggression. What weaknesses are contained in the wording of this article?

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 the obligation shall be fulfilled.

[All member nations were represented in the Assembly of the League of Nations; only the great powers (originally Britain, France, Italy, and Japan) were represented in the Council. The same general scheme was adopted by the United Nations in 1945.]

2. Editor George Harvey Belittles Article X (1919)

The journalist George Harvey, who had launched a Wilson-for-President boom as early as 1906, ultimately became a venomous Wilson hater. Founding Harvey's Weekly in 1918 as a vehicle for his barbed irony, he consistently jeered at "The Fourteen Commandments." In this excerpt, is he right in his view that Article X is completely toothless?

¹ *Senate Executive Documents*, 67th Cong., 4th sess. (1923), vol. 8, no. 348, p. 3339.

² *Harvey's Weekly*, August 9, 1919, pp. 6-7.

If Article X of the League Covenant means what Mr. Wilson says it means, then it means nothing. If it means nothing, then its proper destination is the wastebasket. It should be stricken out *in toto* as so much sheer surplusage.

The first sentence of the Article provides that "the members of the League undertake to respect and preserve as against external aggression the territory and existing political independence of all members of the League." The second sentence provides that the League Council shall advise upon the means by which the obligation involved in the first sentence shall be fulfilled.

Mr. Wilson's interpretation of this second sentence, as presented in his message transmitting the Franco-American alliance treaty,* is that after the League Council's advice has been duly given, the League members will do precisely as they please about following it. In the first sentence, the members of the League solemnly agree to respect and protect each other as against external aggression. In the second sentence—according to Mr. Wilson's interpretation—a League member will act upon the League Council's advice in a given aggression case "only if its own judgment justifies such action." In other words, the second sentence of the Article completely cancels the first sentence, leaving zero as the remaining total.

Mr. Hughes [Republican nominee in 1916] said of Article X that it was an "illusory engagement." Mr. Wilson goes Mr. Hughes one better. He says, in substance, that it is no engagement at all, illusory or otherwise. The League Council may advise until it is black in the face, and the League members may go serenely on their respective ways without giving the slightest heed to this advice. And both League members and League Council will equally have done their full duty under Article X.

If Article X be interpreted to mean anything, that meaning necessarily is that we engage to send our armed forces wherever and whenever a super-government of foreigners sitting in Switzerland orders us to send them. If it be interpreted as Mr. Wilson interprets it, the foreign supergovernment's powers extend only to the giving of advice which we agree to heed or ignore as our judgment dictates. One interpretation is an insult to our self-respect as a nation. The other reduces the whole of Article X to a vacuum.

The way to treat Article X is to strike it out.

3. Wilson Testifies for Article X (1919)

The already ominous mood of the Senate had grown uglier when Wilson conspicuously snubbed that body in framing the peace. The Republican majority was led by the aristocratic Senator Henry Cabot Lodge of Massachusetts, who was also chairman of the potent Committee on Foreign Relations. He was determined to Republicanize and Americanize the pact by adding reservations that would adequately safeguard U.S. interests. To avert such a watering down, Wilson met with the entire Foreign Relations Committee at the White House on August 19, 1919, and underwent about three and a half hours of grilling. Much of the discussion revolved about Article X. How persuasive is Wilson's defense?

* This alliance, signed by Wilson at Paris, was designed to defend France against future German aggression. The Senate pigeonholed it.

³ *Senate Documents*, no. 76, 66th Cong., 1st sess. (August 19, 1919), vol. 13, pp. 6, 19.

[The President.] Article X is in no respect of doubtful meaning, when read in the light of the Covenant as a whole. The Council of the League can only "advise upon" the means by which the obligations of that great article are to be given effect to. Unless the United States is a party to the policy or action in question, her own affirmative vote in the Council is necessary before any advice can be given, for a unanimous vote of the Council is required. If she is a party, the trouble is hers anyhow. And the unanimous vote of the Council is only advice in any case. Each Government is free to reject it if it pleases.

Nothing could have been made more clear to the [Paris] conference than the right of our Congress under our Constitution to exercise its independent judgment in all matters of peace and war. No attempt was made to question or limit that right.

The United States will, indeed, undertake under Article X to "respect and preserve as against external aggression the territorial integrity and existing political independence of all members of the League," and that engagement constitutes a very grave and solemn moral obligation. But it is a moral, not a legal, obligation, and leaves our Congress absolutely free to put its own interpretation upon it in all cases that call for action. It is binding in conscience only, not in law.

Article X seems to me to constitute the very backbone of the whole Covenant. Without it the League would be hardly more than an influential debating society. . . .

Senator [Warren G.] Harding. Right there, Mr. President, if there is nothing more than a moral obligation on the part of any member of the League, what avail Articles X and XI?

The President. Why, Senator, it is surprising that the question should be asked. If we undertake an obligation we are bound in the most solemn way to carry it out. . . . There is a national good conscience in such a matter. . . .

When I speak of a legal obligation, I mean one that specifically binds you to do a particular thing under certain sanctions. That is a legal obligation. Now a moral obligation is of course superior to a legal obligation, and, if I may say so, has a greater binding force. . . .

[Never too respectful of the "bungalow-minded" members of the Senate, Wilson remarked several days later that Senator Harding, destined to be his successor, "had a disturbingly dull mind, and that it seemed impossible to get any explanation to lodge in it."]

4. The Lodge-Hitchcock Reservations (1919)

Wilson finally agreed to accept mildly interpretative Senate reservations that the other powers would not have to approve. He balked, however, at the more restrictive terms of the fourteen Lodge reservations. These were made a part of the resolution of ratification and would require the assent of three of the four other major powers (Britain, France, Italy, Japan). To Wilson, such a course was unmanly and humiliat-

⁹Quoted in T. A. Bailey, *Woodrow Wilson and the Great Betrayal* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1945), pp. 388, 393-394.

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ing; besides, he detested Senator Lodge. He insisted that the Republican Lodge reservations, notably the one on Article X, devitalized the entire treaty. In the following, on the left, appears the Lodge reservation to Article X, which Wilson resentfully rejected. On the right appears the Democratic interpretative reservation, which Senator Hitchcock (the Senate minority leader) had drafted after consulting Wilson.* This version Wilson was willing to accept. What are the main differences between the two versions? Are those differences substantial enough to justify Wilson's refusal to accept the Lodge reservation?

Lodge Reservation to Article X (November 1919)

The United States assumes no obligation to preserve the territorial integrity or political independence of any other country or to interfere in controversies between nations—whether members of the League or not—under the provisions of Article X, or to employ the military or naval forces of the United States under any article of the treaty for any purpose, unless in any particular case the Congress, which, under the Constitution, has the sole power to declare war or authorize the employment of the military or naval forces of the United States, shall by act or joint resolution so provide.

Hitchcock Reservation to Article X (November 1919)

That the advice mentioned in Article X of the covenant of the League which the Council may give to the member nations as to the employment of their naval and military forces is merely advice which each member nation is free to accept or reject according to the conscience and judgment of its then existing Government, and in the United States this advice can only be accepted by action of the Congress at the time in being, Congress alone under the Constitution of the United States having the power to declare war.

F. The Defeat of the Treaty

1. Mrs. Edith Wilson as Assistant President (1919)

Rather than knuckle under to Lodge, a weary Wilson spurned the advice of doctors and embarked on a spectacular speechmaking appeal to the country. He journeyed as far west as the Pacific Coast and, on the return trip, collapsed after delivering an emotional speech at Pueblo, Colorado. Shortly thereafter he suffered a stroke that paralyzed the left side of his body and left him bedridden for many weeks. He did not meet with his cabinet for more than seven months. Here his devoted wife tells how the government was run. Should Wilson have resigned? Were the interests of Wilson as an individual put above those of the country? To what extent was Mrs. Wilson actually president of the United States?

*The Hitchcock reservation follows almost verbatim a reservation that Wilson had himself secretly drafted in September 1919 and on which Hitchcock had based his. Ibid., p. 393.

¹Edith B. Wilson *My Memoir* (1939), pp. 288–290. Copyright 1938, 1939 by Edith Bolling Wilson.

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WOODROW WILSON and HIS Second Wife, 1917

Edith Bolling Galt became the second Mrs. Woodrow Wilson in 1915, following the death of the President's first wife the preceding year. Here they are shown returning from Wilson's second inauguration. When Wilson was incapacitated by a stroke in 1919, Edith Galt Wilson became his protector and voice—and, said some, the de facto president. (Brown Brothers)

This method of handling interviews was another suggestion of the doctors. It is always an excitement for one who is ill to see people. The physicians said that if I could convey the messages of Cabinet members and others to the President, he would escape the nervous drain audiences with these officials would entail. Even the necessary little courteous personal conversations that go with an official interview would consume the President's strength.

These instructions from the medical men were far from easy to carry out. Picture the situation when my husband was stricken: his tour a success; public sentiment which had been worked upon incessantly by the enemies of the League once more responding to Mr. Wilson's logic; the initiative again in the hands of friends of the Treaty; Mr. Hitchcock and the other pro-Treaty Senators eager to push their advantage. And then—the President laid low, ruled out of the fight which he would have continued though he knew it would cost him his life.

Upon all sides I was literally besieged by those who "must" see the President. But I carried out the directions of the doctors—and my heart was in it. Woodrow Wilson was first my beloved husband whose life I was trying to save, fighting with my back to the wall—after that he was the President of the United States.

Once my husband was out of immediate danger, the burning question was how Mr. Wilson might best serve the country, preserve his own life, and, if possible, recover. Many people, among them some I had counted as friends, have written of my overwhelming ambition to act as President; of my exclusion of all advice, and so forth. I am trying here to write as though I had taken the oath to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth—so help me God.

I asked the doctors to be frank with me; that I must know what the outcome would probably be, so as to be honest with the people. They all said that, as the brain was as clear as ever, with the progress made in the past few days there was every reason to think recovery possible. Dr. Dercum told me of the history of Pasteur, who had been stricken exactly in this way, but who recovered and did his most brilliant intellectual work afterwards. He sent me a copy of the remarkable book, *The Life of Pasteur*.

But recovery could not be hoped for, they said, unless the President were released from every disturbing problem during these days of Nature's effort to repair the damage done.

"How can that be," I asked the doctors, "when everything that comes to an Executive is a problem? How can I protect him from problems when the country looks to the President as the leader?"

Dr. Dercum leaned towards me and said: "Madam, it is a grave situation, but I think you can solve it. Have everything come to you: weigh the importance of each matter, and see if it is possible by consultations with the respective heads of the Departments to solve them without the guidance of your husband. In this way you can save him a great deal. But always keep in mind that every time you take him a new anxiety or problem to excite him, you are turning a knife in an open wound. His nerves are crying out for rest, and any excitement is torture to him."

"Then," I said, "had he better not resign, let Mr. [Vice-President] Marshall succeed to the Presidency, and he himself get that complete rest that is so vital to his life?"

"No," the Doctor said, "not if you feel equal to what I suggested. For Mr. Wilson to resign would have a bad effect on the country, and a serious effect on our patient. He has staked his life and made his promise to the world to do all in his power to get the Treaty ratified and make the League of Nations complete. If he resigns, the greatest incentive to recovery is gone; and as his mind is clear as crystal, he can still do more with even a maimed body than anyone else. He has the utmost confidence in you. Dr. Grayson [Wilson's personal physician] tells me he has always discussed public affairs with you; so you will not come to them uninformed."

So began my stewardship. I studied every paper, sent from the different Secretaries or Senators, and tried to digest and present in tabloid form the things that, despite my vigilance, had to go to the President. I, myself, never made a single decision regarding the disposition of public affairs. The only decision that was mine was what was important and what was not, and the *very* important decision of when to present matters to my husband.

He asked thousands of questions, and insisted upon knowing everything, particularly about the Treaty. He would dictate notes to me to send to Senator Hitchcock, who was leading the fight for the Treaty in the Senate. Or he would tell me what Senators to send for, and what suggestions he had to make to them. These directions I made notes of, so in transmitting his views, I should make no mistake; and I would read them to him before going to the interviews.

2. The Aborted Lodge Compromise (1919)

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Colonel Edward House, Wilson's onetime intimate adviser, had also fallen ill and was confined to his bed in New York. He turned to Stephen Bonsal, a distinguished newspaper correspondent who had been attached to the U.S. peace mission in Paris. Bonsal was instructed to go to Washington, confer with Lodge, and ascertain the senator's minimum terms for compromise. The meeting took place late in October 1919, and on November 16 Bonsal recorded the following account of the conference. In what respects does this account qualify the traditional concept of Lodge as a vindictive and uncompromising former Harvard student who was locking horns with the former professor from Princeton?

The Senator and I went over the [League] Covenant, Article by Article. Here are some of the details. In our final session there was an official copy of the Treaty on the library table, also one of the so-called Lodge Reservations before the Senate but, so far as I can remember, we did not once refer to them. It was on the printed copy of the Covenant that I brought with me that the Senator made the changes and inserted the interlineations which, if accepted, he thought would smooth the way to ratification.

The changes ran to about forty words, the "inserts" to about fifty. It seemed to me they were more concerned with verbiage than with the object and the intent of the instrument. In my judgment, they were complementary to, rather than limiting, any substantial purpose of the Covenant. In this they differed sharply from the Reservations Lodge had introduced into the Senate and which are now blocking the path to ratification.

The Senator, frankly and repeatedly, stated that his interest, or, as he put it several times, his anxiety, centered around Article X, which the President often refers to as the "heart of the Covenant," and his suggestion, indeed his demand, was to the effect that none of the obligations or commitments incurred under this provision should be undertaken without the approval of the Senate and the concurrence of the House.

When Lodge had finished what he had to say, I expressed my pleasure at the helpful collaboration of the chairman of the Committee, and with reason. I think. What he asked for now was decidedly milder than the reservations before the Senate, but there was, I ventured to point out, one drawback to any change, even if merely of verbiage, because, in this case, the document would have to be referred back to all the co-signers of the Covenant, and this might open the gates to other changes and would certainly result in delay.

I also ventured to say that the clarification of Article X which he urged was implicit in the Article itself. I argued "it goes without saying," for a variety of obvious reasons, that the sanction of the Senate and the approval of the House, which alone can furnish the money, would have to be forthcoming before aggressive or even defensive action against an aggressor nation could be undertaken.

"If it goes without saying," commented the Senator somewhat tartly, "there is no harm in saying it—and much advantage."

Good-naturedly the Senator now chaffed me about the expression I had used,

²Excerpt from *Unfinished Business* by Stephen Bonsal (New York: Doubleday and Company, 1944), pp. 274-275.



Teaching Him What to Say
Democratic cartoon stressing Lodge's partisan obstructionism. The Republicans emphasized Wilson's uncompromising stubbornness. (New York World, 1920)

"it goes without saying," which he thought was a "barbarism." He then went on to express his opinion of the language in which the world charter was drawn, and it was a poor one.

"As an English production it does not rank high." Then, more in chaff than in earnest, he said: "It might get by at Princeton but certainly not at Harvard."

[With high hopes, Colonel House dispatched the new Lodge concessions to the White House. There was no reply, no acknowledgment. Perhaps Mrs. Wilson thought the memorandum unimportant—or too important. Wilson might be upset and suffer a relapse. Or Wilson may have decided merely to treat Lodge's proffered hand with the contempt that he felt for the senator. Rebuffed and perhaps humiliated, Lodge now fought even more adamantly for his Fourteen Reservations.]

Wilson Defeats Henry Cabot Lodge's Reservations (1919)

The debate in the Senate ended in November 1919, and Lodge was ready for a vote on the Treaty of Versailles with his Fourteen Reservations attached. In general, these reaffirmed the United States' traditional or constitutional safeguards. But Wilson believed that if the odious Lodge reservations were voted down, the treaty would then be approved without "crippling" reservations. Yet the Democrats, now a minority, could not muster a simple majority, much less the two-thirds vote needed to approve a treaty. The naturally stubborn Wilson, shielded from disagreeable realities by his anxious wife, believed that the great body of public opinion was behind him and would prevail. He evidently had not been told, or would not believe, that public opinion was shifting around in favor of reservations. When the Democratic Senator