The Debate on Ratification of the League of Nations Covenant

Directions: Read the documents with your group and fill in the graphic organizer deciding whether each document supports the United States joining the League of Nations or whether the document opposes joining the League of Nations.

The League of Nations Covenant, Article X.
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.

Senator William Borah, December 6, 1918.
The proposition is force to destroy force, conflict to prevent conflict, militarism to prevent militarism, war to prevent war.

If it is necessary for the security of Western Europe that we should agree to the support, say, of France if attacked, then let us agree to do that particular thing plainly, so that every man and woman in the country will understand the honorable obligation we are assuming. I am in favor of that. But let us not wrap up such a purpose in a vague universal obligation under the impression that it really does not mean anything likely to happen.

Chicago Daily Tribune, December 27, 1918.

Interrupting the Ceremony

Sen. Henry Cabot Lodge, August 12, 1919.
Our first ideal is our country, and we see her in the future, as in the past, giving service to all her people and to the world. Our ideal of the future is that she should continue to render that service of her own free will. She has great problems.
of her own to solve, very grim and perilous problems, and a right solution, if we can attain to it, would largely benefit mankind.

[...] We would not have our politics distracted and embittered by the dissensions of other lands. We would not have our country’s vigor exhausted or her moral force abated, by everlasting meddling and muddling in every quarrel, great and small, which afflicts the world.

Our ideal is to make her ever stronger and better and finer, because in that way alone, as we believe, can she be of the greatest service to the world’s peace and to the welfare of mankind.

**President Woodrow Wilson, September 5, 1919.**

When you read Article X, therefore, you will see that it is nothing but the inevitable, logical center of the whole system of the Covenant of the League of Nations, and I stand for it absolutely. If it should ever in any important respect be impaired, I would feel like asking the Secretary of War to get the boys who went across the water to fight, [...] and I would stand up before them and say, 'Boys, I told you before you went across the seas that this was a war against wars, and I did my best to fulfill the promise, but I am obliged to come to you in mortification and shame and say I have not been able to fulfill the promise. You are betrayed. You have fought for something that you did not get.'

**President Woodrow Wilson’s Final Address in Favor of the Covenant, 25 September 1919.**

[...] We have got to do one or other of two things—we have got to adopt it or reject it. There is no middle course. You cannot go in on a special-privilege basis of your own. I take it that you are too proud to ask to be exempted from responsibilities which the other members of the League will carry. We go in upon equal terms or we do not go in at all; and if we do not go in, my fellow citizens, think of the tragedy of that result—the only sufficient guaranty to the peace of the world withheld!
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The Gilded Age and Progressive Era
Unit 3, Lesson 2: The Rise of American Power in the World
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