

there are your sons slaughtered—for no cause attributable to you at all; there is your country to-day, a desolation—now be good enough just to restore all those ruins yourselves and let the destroyer pass by unrepentant and unpunished. What kind of suggestion would that be to make to France? Well, by just the same argument it is an outrageous suggestion to make to this country. I know we have not suffered as France has; our measure of reparation is that much less than France's, but our right is just the same as theirs. To ask this parliament, then, to abandon that right, to throw it away, is indirectly to suggest the same thing to Belgium, to Poland and to France.

I do not want to be understood as saying that this country is probably going to collect the measure of reparation that now, under the covenants, is our due. I do not think myself that that is probable. But, parenthetically, I am not quite able to understand the contention that it would be a great and noble thing to give up our right to all reparations, when followed by the assertion that the reparations are no good anyway because German marks are useless. I cannot follow that argument.

I am going to give my idea of the principle on which reparations should be founded. There is no doubt that German damage in this war is beyond all power of Germany to pay. If I go out and commit damage, of course I ought to pay for it all, but if I go on a rampage and destroy the city of Ottawa there would be very little use in assessing me for the value of the city. I should, however, be made to pay all that by the power of my hands and my mind I can bring to production in the course of my life. In my judgment the same principle should apply to the aggressor in the late war. Germany should be made to contribute all that the German people can stand; all that they can by production turn over to those who suffered by their wrong. Now, there is a point—and I admit it is very difficult to find—beyond which if you add to the burden you destroy the capacity to produce; you turn the country down the hill rather than over the hill and disable it from performing its contract. The best minds of the world should address themselves to the task of finding as nearly as they can where that point is, and, that done, let all the Allies see to it, by whatever means are essential, that up to such point Germany pays without abatement.

I find myself wholly in accord with the Prime Minister in his statement that before we set about to determine just what we

should insist on, we should meet with the other countries of the Empire and seek, in concert with them, to come to a decision applicable to all. In fact, I would go further than by the terms of his speech the Prime Minister indicated he would go to-day. I am one of those who believe that in all matters affecting the common concerns of the Empire, of which this is only one, it is fundamental and contributes to world peace if we sit down with the other nations of the Empire and seek in conference with them to find a common course. But applying the principle only to this, it is evident that before any step is taken now in derogation of what we did in association with the other nations of the Empire, we should sit with them and see what the wisest step, having regard to the interests of all, may be.

That we should do, but when we get there I hope the attitude of this government—and I believe it is the will of this parliament that such should be the attitude—will be that they will endeavour to find, in the light of the best evidence that the economists of the world can produce, the utmost limit that it is possible for Germany to pay in satisfaction for the damage she caused this world, and thus commence the colossal task of restoring those countries, the restoration of which is not only an act of justice for which the world is longing but as well an event of vital importance to this Dominion. You are not going to restore Europe by taking Germany's burden and putting it on the back of France. You are not going to restore Europe by virtually saying to every citizen of Germany: Any time you want to repeat the outrage of 1914 you can count upon us, after the war is over and we are weary of it all, to say to you that the penalty is entirely revoked. No, you will not restore Europe in that way. There must be left in the minds of all the people of the world a sense of justice done before the first essential, the corner stone of restoration, is put in place. If something is done that forever will rankle in the mind of France as an injustice to her; rankle in the mind of the British taxpayer, whose trials are only in short measure understood; rankle in the minds of these people as a gross iniquity born of soft-minded flabbiness on the part of the nations of the world, then you have only postponed the day of a reconstructed and a rehabilitated Europe.

Yes, Germany signed the peace treaty. Germany, of course, signed it under duress; I fully admit that. Germany's signature to my mind means this and this only: she decided it was better to sign it and undertake its obligations than to accept the only alternative. That is why Germany signed.