

Covenant are of more or less importance to us. The one that causes anxiety is Article X which reads as follows:

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 and in case of any threat or danger of aggression, the Council shall advise upon the means by which this obligation shall be fulfilled.

Have our representatives forgotten that we still have in Canada a constitution, the British North America Act, by which our right or power to participate in wars is limited to the defence of our territory? This constitution has not been altered. How can we then pledge ourselves to such obligations as the one mentioned in Clause X quoted above? "To guarantee the territorial integrity and the existing political independence of"—all these nations, 27 in number if we exclude the five British colonies already mentioned?

This agreement is not, in my opinion, binding upon Canada, and cannot be so, so long as our constitution remains what it is. "The King cannot give and withhold at the same time." He has given Canada a constitution, which is called the "British North America Act". He has entered into a contract with the people of this country and, in my opinion, cannot make any change in this contract without the consent of the Canadian people. If, however, in Parliament assembled, the representatives of the people signify their assent to such obligations, this move of ours will amount to a word of honour, which given by such respectable people as the Canadian people, will have the same effect as a change in the constitution itself.

If such is the effect of approval without reservations we should not for a moment hesitate in making our position clear. We have been, and rightly too, for many years, past, very jealous and quite sensitive as to our rights to declare whether we should or should not take part in certain wars. There is no reason why this feeling of the Canadian people should not be respected. If this right of ours were of no value, no one would attempt to take it away from us, but it is valuable and for this reason the Imperialists want to wrest it from our constitution. Imperialists do not like Canada's political freedom, and for the past twenty years or so, have made constant efforts to change our status, so as to be at all times sure that we would join in any war and in any expenses which Britain might enter or incur. These men have,

[Mr. Parent.]

up to the present, met with failure. To attain their purposes they had to resort to means which I cannot express better than in the following words of Mr. John S. Ewart:

The Scheme—And now it is time to indicate why it is that Canada is asked to "ratify" a treaty to which she is not a party. To those who have closely followed the schemes of the imperialists, the reason is obvious. These men have always grudged Canada her right to refrain from participation in British wars, if, upon any particular occasion, she so desired. They have endeavoured in various ways to make abstinence impossible—by Imperial Federation, by an Imperial Council, by agreements for co-operation. They have done their best and failed. Now they see their opportunity. "Ratification" cannot help or hurt the treaty, but by it they would deal a fatal blow at one of the principal features of Canada's political freedom. By means of the most cleverly conceived artifice, they hope to procure from our parliament such action as shall place Canada, for war purposes, in the hands of the British Government. Her present freedom will be gone if Canada "ratifies" the treaty. For by so doing, she will indicate her approval of the position in which she has been placed by "the High Contracting Powers." And thereafter her war-participation will be regulated by a small council sitting at Geneva—a council in which Canada will have no representation, and in which the United Kingdom will dispose of "her dominions," according to British conceptions, from time to time, of British interests.

I have said that Canada has already been placed in that position. That is true. But it has not been done with her assent, and the imperialists seek to foreclose that objection. They pretend that "ratification" is necessary. They know that it is not. But they want something which can be pointed to as Canada's approval of the effacement of her war-freedom. Canada would not knowingly make that surrender, and the imperialists are too cunning frankly to propose it. Very few know that from Canada "ratification" means resignation of a right which she has always enjoyed, and which has never been questioned.

If it be said that Canada will be in no worse position than any of the other twenty-two smaller nations, the first reply is that every one of the smaller nations (except those of the British Empire) will have a chance of becoming a member of the Geneva Council, whereas Canada will not. And the second reply is that it is extremely doubtful whether any of these other smaller nations will supply troops for a war in which they are not individually interested. Of the twenty-two smaller nations, eleven are Spanish-American. The number of men which they contributed to the last war may be taken as something of a gauge of the number which they would send to the next. Canada will fulfil her obligations. Let her be careful of making foolish promises.

These words, Sir, are to the point; they deserve to be recorded in Hansard so that we may refer to them as occasion presents itself. They are only part of a series of articles which the Ottawa Citizen has asked Mr. Ewart to present on this situation. I would have liked to record them in their