

*German Reparations*

I would say to my hon. friend that I hope when he reflects upon the views which have been expressed here, when he reflects upon the possible bearing of his resolution in its relation to the situation overseas at this particular time, he will see well to withdraw it altogether. But if he does not see fit to take that course, I hope this House will see well to defeat his resolution, because I fear were it passed its purpose would not be understood in any such sense as that in which he says he has put it forward.

Right Hon. ARTHUR MEIGHEN (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I have no particular desire to address the House and to in any way pretend to add to the importance of this resolution. At the same time I do not want to be even seeming to attempt to evade any part of my duty or responsibility here.

The resolution may be viewed from the standpoint of its own merits and debated. To its being so presented, I have not any particular objection. But even so presented, disrobed of all the other trappings with which it was introduced, I would oppose it.

But the resolution has been presented in a speech which sought to press its acceptance on grounds that reflected on the bona fides of our country and of our Allies in the war from which we have emerged. It would take an assertion of fact pretty hard to overcome, to secure my support after it had been paraded before us to accompaniments of that kind. I cannot, I am sorry to say, agree with the Prime Minister (Mr. Mackenzie King) in the way he meets the suggestions of the hon. member for Centre Winnipeg (Mr. Woodsworth). I do not base my belief in the good faith of Britain and of France, in the complete and absolute accountability of Germany for the war, on any admission exacted from Germany under the pressure of the Conference of Peace. I would not regard even a voluntary admission by Germany as of much value or as necessary at all. I base my belief on facts that the world knows, facts that have been flared before the face of this generation so clearly that none except those of kinked and super-heated minds can doubt their manifest and eternal import. There is some weight attaching to the statement of a man who, like Prince Lieknowsky, who sitting as a German ambassador at the very centre of events, watching the course of Germany, of Great Britain and of France throughout the crisis, had the courage to state that, knowing what he knew, his own country was solely the cause of the conflict, the aggressor from beginning to end. But this matter does not admit of discussion. Do not let us in any way ennoble the suggestion of

[Mr. Mackenzie King.]

the hon. member for Centre Winnipeg by discussing the matter of the accountability for the Great War that scourged this country.

Now, taking the resolution itself, aside entirely from what has been urged in its support—apparently with some measure of acceptance to the hon. member for Calgary East (Mr. Irvine)—it proposes that Canada should now assert to the world that she abandons all claim to any share of reparations. The argument in its favour, aside from what I have already described, is that it is going to aid world peace, that it will be an exhibition of mercy, an acceptance of some scriptural injunction, and in that way be an evidence of the high moral standing of this country. Well, Mr. Speaker, if that is true, it applies to France, it applies to Britain, and it applies to Belgium just as clearly as it would to this country. If the right way to bring about world peace is to take the man who, with uplifted arm, enters your house to slaughter your family, and say to him: Now, we forgive you, go and sin no more;—if we have come to that day in this world, all right, let that be general. We do not find that course possible in this Dominion nor anywhere else in the world. Penalties are still the law of this universe, and no man entitled to enjoy liberty and be at large would suggest that any other principle is possible in the conduct of the affairs of men.

Why, if it is right at this time to say to Germany: You were wrong, but we forgive you, we do not ask that you pay for any of the damage that you committed;—well, my idea is that we place the biggest premium possible on the repetition of German aggression. Germany escaped unhurt from the consequences of her crime of 1870; she escaped unpunished from the consequences of her crimes of 1862 and 1866. And because she so escaped—the aggressor in all those instances—though she exacted a penalty from France, when the time came again that she thought she could strike, she was again the aggressor. In 1914 France, which just forty years before had been called upon to pay an indemnity of a billion dollars, stood at bay until German arms were raised, and until France knew that unless she rose in her own defence she would suffer a repetition of the woes of 1870. If Germany had been made to pay for her crime in 1870, there would not have been a war in 1914.

Now, I ask hon. gentlemen just to reflect. How would you like to stand to-day in the face of the people of France and say to those people: There are your cities desecrated; there are your young children murdered; there are your women folk outraged;